WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT
FOR ONLINE RETAILING

Case Study: Viet Center Tourist Co., Ltd

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Abstract

As information technology grows day by day, the role of E-Commerce is more emphasized in world economy as it promotes direct distribution and empowers B2C and B2B. At the same time, the growing business of Travel and Tourism opens more opportunities for applying technology advancement. Understanding and being able to apply information technology in Travel and Tourism helps companies winning various advantages.

At the moment, Vietnam is promoting the growth of Travel and Tourism and starts increasing the application of technology in the field. The topic of the thesis focuses in the online business of a travel agency in Vietnam-Viet Centre Tourist Co., Ltd, in order to promote E-Commerce via the website of it. Website is the most common form of online retailing and plays decisive role in purchasing of the product.

The methodology breaks in 2 parts: qualitative and quantitative parts. By combining both methods in this study, the author hopes to seek for improvement in different perspectives.
The qualitative part was conducted with the opinions and ideas of experts in web design and net-users' experience development. The quantitative part was meant for net-users to evaluate the existing website of the company and they can give suggestion to upgrade the website from customer-oriented point of view. The study hopefully helps the company to realize the problem of the website and proposes potential changes to upgrade and uphold the use of E-Commerce in the business of the company.

In conclusion, the study is a great opportunities for the writer in exploring website quality management and promoting E-Commerce in Travel and Tourism field.

Keywords Website quality management, E-Commerce, Online Retailing, Travel and Tourism
Miscellaneous

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1 INTRODUCTION

It has been merely 17 years since the World Wide Web came to life; life has changed a lot since then. Not only does it bring opportunities for accessing to data over the world but the Internet also boosts up the exchanging flow of online activities and promotes business. It is undeniable that the Internet has equipped people with better facility for trading with less physical effort.

In Vietnam, even though the country is still a developing country and lacks information technology facilities, the rate of Internet users has been dramatically growing from 0.3% of the population in 2000 to 34% of the population in 2012 (Internet World Stats, 2012). The high intensity of Internet users has given rise to optimistic visions of a boom in online trading. One of the most expected industries that have been foreseen to be benefitting from the Internet is Travel&Tourism. In 2020, Viet Nam aims to receive 10-10.5 million international arrivals and 47-48 million domestic tourists. The total revenue from tourism would reach US$18-19 billion, accounting for 6.5-7% of the country's GDP. These figures are expected to be doubled by 2030 (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2011). It is believed that with the help of Internet in raising the impression of Vietnam's tourism on tourists, the set targets have high possibility to be reached.

Viet Center Tourist Co., Ltd (VC Tourist) is one of the leading Vietnamese providers of tourism services in the Indochina area. The company's wish is to expand its operations service to attract more international tourists to Vietnam, attempting to contribute to the country's tourism. Though the company owns a website, they actively noticed that changes should be implemented to promote online retailing. Hence, the company allowed the author to do research on the changes. Considering the current needs of the company, two research questions were established:

- What are Internet-users' perceptions of online retailing in Tourism
- What need to be changed on the VCTourist website in order to promote Online Retailing?

Both the company and the author anticipated the research would help the company to identify problems and make proposal for how the company's website should be changed.

2   VIET CENTRE TOURIST CO. LTD.

Viet Center Tourist Co. Ltd. (VC Tourist) is a privately-owned Vietnamese SME specializing in providing travel services in the Indo-China region. Part of the company's business is event organization for Vietnamese governmental organizations. Having been in operation since 2008 by Mr. Pham Huy Thong, VC Tourist is a young enterprise with 20 motivated, energetic, full-time employees (quite a considerable number for SMEs in the tourism industry in Vietnam). Even though the company has only one office in Hanoi (Vietnam), the business has been running smoothly thanks to a broad networking cooperation with the partners in the area.

2.1 Products and Markets

Technically speaking, VC Tourist has been mainly focusing on developing services by promoting M.I.C.E and inbound selling.

M.I.C.E: The idea of M.I.C.E (as known as Meeting-Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) tourism was shaped several decades ago but only in the last couple of years has it been popular and recognized as a driving force in promoting tourism industry of Vietnam. VCTourist has been very active as an operator of M.I.C.E events at ministerial level. The revenue coming from M.I.C.E activities can even exceed the income from inbound activities. However, this amount periodically varies due to the unpredictable frequency of tourists.

Inbound: VCTourist sells services to inbound tourists as separate packages: Cultural& Heritage, Adventure and Small Group Departures.

Culture& Heritage allows overseas partners to enjoy a broad range of tour and travel services, inclusively ticket booking, visa application procedures, packaged tours, accommodation booking, and transportation.

Adventure offers tourists multiple options for enjoying an adventurous trip including activities such as trekking, cycling, kayaking, canoeing and easy mountain climbing. Some of the activities mentioned above take place in the most mystical regions of Indochina.

Small Group Departures aims to offer a ready-made, easy-sell option throughout the Indochinese area. Also known as Book&Go, it is highly recommended for tourists who come in a sizable group with more than two persons and like to enjoy a problem-free trip.

Inbound selling is stable and generates a firm monthly income for the company. Due to market reasons, the company's markets have changed from the time it was established. *(vctourist.com)*

In the first 2 years after foundation, the company also works as tour operators for domestic customers. However, due to previous experiences with domestic customers and growth strategy, company moved its targets to foreign tourists, mostly from ASEAN region. Foreigners from the western cultures sometime appear as customers for VC Tourist but not on frequent level. These are just minority parts come from networking but not the desired markets of the company.

At the beginning of the operation, company focused highly on Thailand based on experiences and rich resources from the founders. Since 2009, the company expanded its business in Malaysian market and 2 years later, it entered Indonesian market. At present, it has one representative in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and one office in Jakarta (Indonesia). In these 2 countries, Vietnam is purely a novel, affordable place for traveling and the majority of tourists from those countries are senior people with tight budget, coming from low-income background. Besides, a number of customers of VCTourist are from Taiwan, Mainland China and countries in the Asian area. In the future, the company plans to enter Indian market.

2.2 Online Selling and Marketing

This is the link of the company's website: http://www.vctourist.com/home/ (last accessed on 28th April 2014)

The author contacted Ms. Vu Hoa - Head of sale department of the company in early September, 2013 to ask for more information about the current situation of the company. Responses from the receiver are included in Appendices.

According to Ms. Vu Hoa (2013), VC Tourist has been using the traditional direct sale with partners in the regions since it was founded. Same with many SMEs in Vietnam, it is a must for company to own a website to probably address itself to partners. The existing website basically serves as a bulletin, presenting general information of the company's business. Though the website was finished 2 years ago by a team of freshly-graduated students in a university, the company does not update websites frequently. At the time of collecting the information, it has been 6 months since the website was last updated. From the company's point of view, it is merely for marketing, they also acknowledge the problems in the application of online selling with the current website. For the time being, launching online selling via website requires a lot of resources, both human and financial capital.

3   ONLINE RETAILING AND TOURISM

Nowadays as the Travel&Tourism industry is the biggest industry in the world and the most international in nature, both competition and opportunities are open for this market's members (Kotler et al., 2010). Since the situation is getting tougher and tougher, the role of marketing is increasingly essential to gain competitiveness. By engaging E-Commerce and Online Retailing in the business, Travel & Tourism is growing more rapidly. This chapter of the research is meant to explore concepts that have been discussed regarding to the application of information technology in the field of Traveling&Tourism. In addition, the author also introduces how the process of online retailing in web stores occurs, both in general situation and in the context of Tourism particularly.

3.1 Marketing and Selling in Tourism

Most people only think of marketing as the combination of selling and advertising; however in reality, it is more complex than that.

"Marketing is the art and science of finding, retaining, and growing profitable customers" (Kotler et al., 2010, pp.11).

Since tourism offers customers a combination of tangible, services, information, or experiential product components. Due to the nature of services, it is more complicated to define the marketing and selling strategies for tourism. Since services are inclusive in tourism, it also carries features of intangibility, variability, perishability and inseparability. In addition to that, tourism also carries features that services do not have to offer:

- *Tourism is more product-driven/ supply-led than other services*

- *Tourism is often driven by short-term need rather than long-term perspectives*

- *Tourism is frequently susceptible to fixed capacity constraints*

- *Tourism is a high-involvement, high-risk purchase*

- *The tourism product is impacted on both positively and negatively by customer perceptions and is highly susceptible to external influences beyond its control*

- *The tourism product is highly complex and multi-faceted*

(Fyall & Garrod, 2005, pp. 40-42)

Hence, it was a controversial topic whether there was a separate definition of tourism marketing or it would only be a completely new domain. As claimed by Middleton (2001) in the work of Fyall & Garrod (2005, pp.37), tourism marketing merely presented an adaption of basic marketing principles in the context of tourism; therefore, engaging a wider spectrum of consumer products. However, due to the particular characteristics of tourism, it is worthy of a special status from the marketing point of view (Fyall & Garrod, 2005, pp.37). Overall, a definition for tourism marketing was formed:

"Tourism marketing is a managerial process of anticipating and satisfying existing and potential visitor wants more effectively and competitive suppliers and destinations. The management of exchange is driven by profit, community gain, or both: either way long-term success depends on a

> *satisfactory interaction between consumer and supplier. It also means securing environmental and societal needs as well as core consumer satisfaction. They can no longer be regarded as mutually exclusive."* (Lumsdon, 1997, pp.25)

3.2 E-Commerce and Online Retailing in Tourism

According to Chen & Chang (2003), Internet technology facilitates numerous changes in corporate infrastructure in information exchange and procurement and distribution process. The vast advancement of the Internet technology creates new opportunities that are hardly seen in the global economy. By quickly applying all the development in communication and information technology, companies can establish new positions in newly identified niches in an attempt to acquire new competitive advantages (Chen & Chang, 2003). This is a push for Electronic Commerce to become more visible in business world. In this part of the study, the author would discuss more about the concept of E-Commerce and Online Retailing as well as their roles and applications in Tourism.

E-Commerce

Electronic Commerce (E-Commerce) is not something invented overnight but dated back to the Berlin airlift in 1948 (Seideman, 1996). From this starting point, electronic data interchange (EDI) - the original stage of E-commerce –has evolved, later to become the foundation for computer-to-computer transactions. However, for the first 20 years, EDI was mainly used only for purchasing, transportation or transferring financial data within intra-industry contexts but without any world-wide standards. The arrival of the World Wide Web in 1993 brought a new definition for E-Commerce, making it more engaged with major information technologies and business practices. Nevertheless, it would be absolutely wrong to view E-Commerce mainly as a technological development (Zwass, Volume 1, Number 1, Fall, 1996).

There is no widely accepted definition of the term (E-Commerce). Over the years, there have been numerous definitions of E-Commerce made by experts and media:

E-Commerce is all electronically mediated information exchanges between an organization and its external stakeholders (Chaffey, 2004, pp.8).

E-Commerce as business is activities that base mostly on Internet and combination of 3 factors: the Internet, World Wide Web and wireless transmissions on mobile telephone networks (Schneider, 2011, pp.6-7). In Schneider's explanation, E-Commerce involves different activities such as B2B trading, internal processes within the company, selling, hiring, planning and other business activities.

Online Retailing

For the time being, Online Retailing has become inevitably prevalent. With the global increase in the access to the Internet, consumers are aided with technology to satisfy their shopping desires. According to the Internet World Stats (2012), 34.3% of the world population is online, increased by 566% compared to 2000.

Figure 1. Percentage of People Who Have Shopped Online by Area (Credits: Richard Scott Design)

Figure 1, which was adopted from the report of Nielsen (2010) by Richard Scott Design (accessed on 3ʳᵈ September, 2013), indicates that shopping online is a trendy practice with over 50% of the people on every continent using it. Though it is popular and shows no sight of decrease, there are geographical differences in the number of people shopping online. While most of the population on other continents pursues online shopping, especially Oceania with the highest percentage of 87%, a considerable number of residents living in areas such as Africa, Middle East and Pakistan had no experiences of shopping online.

Online Retailing in Tourism

Tourism is a social and cultural phenomenon that has developed into a significant economic enterprise in cities and regions throughout the world. It is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the economy and a major driving source of employment and investment (Wearing et al., 2010, pp.2-3). According to Britton (1991) in the work of Wearing et al. (2010), the most spectacular increase in tourism occurred in the last two decades of the last century and has turned it into a "quintessential feature of mass consumer culture and modern life". In some rich nations, the rise was a result from the increase in leisure time, disposable income and mobility, demographic changes and a shift in the axis of personal identity and meaningful social action from production to consumption (Wearing & Wearing, 2001; Wearing et al., 2010).

By the end of 2012, Travel&Tourism had generated 9% of global GDP, created 3.4% of all the jobs in the world. Investment from Travel& Tourism sector accounted for 4.7% of the worldwide investments. This progress was significant and highly positive regardless of the remaining impact of the economic crisis (WTTC, 2013). Within six decades, the annual number of international arrivals rocketed from 25 million in 1950 to 1035 million in 2012. By 2030, tourism is predicted to grow even stronger with a firm speed:

- *International tourist arrivals worldwide will increase by 3.3% a year from 2010 to 2030 to reach 1.8 billion by 2030 according to UNWTO long term forecast Tourism Towards 2030.*

- *Between 2010 and 2030, arrivals in emerging destinations (+4.4% a year) are expected to increase at double the pace of that in advanced economies (+2.2% a year).*

- *The market share of emerging economies increased from 30% in 1980 to 47% in 2012, and is expected to reach 57% by 2030, equivalent to over one billion international tourist arrivals.*

(UNWTO, 2013)

According to the World Travel& Tourism Council (2011), the last decade witnessed a boom of online travel, from both looking for information and booking. It is said that the advent of the Internet has made it significantly convenient for people to plan their travel. This results in a shorter time for preparations, last-minute decisions, special offers and tailoring packages offering various options.

In a recent research about online-shopping habits on a global scale launched by Nielsen (2012), traveling reservation ranked 3rd in the most likely to be online-shopped products in the next 3-6 months, immediately after apparel and books. The table below shows the result from the report:

Table 1. Top 5 most likely online-shopped products in the next 3-6 months

Rank	Products	%
1	Apparel/ Accessories/ Shoes/ Jewelry	37
2	Book/ Newspapers/ Magazines	33
3	Traveling Service Reservation	30
4	Entertainment Tickets	30
5	Computer/ Game Software	29

Meanwhile, the forecast of an increase in the number of mobile internet users guarantees a boost in online-shopping in tourism. In 2014, more than 3 billion of the world's adult population will be able to transact electronically via mobile or internet technology with a 90% mobile penetration rate and 6.5 billion mobile connections (WTTC, 2011). The increased number of travelers with an access to the Internet via smart phones is closely connected to the rise of mobility in booking. Empowered with smart phones, travelers are now able to transact information and payments with little effort regardless time and location.

3.3 Online Retailing through Websites

The operation of online retailing is based on the electronic nature of business transactions, which involves the use of Internet between sellers and buyers via online stores. According to Ernest&Young (2000), online selling is very sanguine for Internet and all interviewed companies answered with great expectation of increasing revenue by being online. In fact, a considerable number of companies admitted that their online sales by "bricks- and- clicks" even exceeded their store-based channel, all of them praised online sale as "great" and "excellent".

Description of Online Retailing through Website

Chen& Chang (2003) presents the process of online shopping in the diagram. According to the authors, the model of online retailing emerges with 3 components: Interactivity, Transaction and Fulfillment.
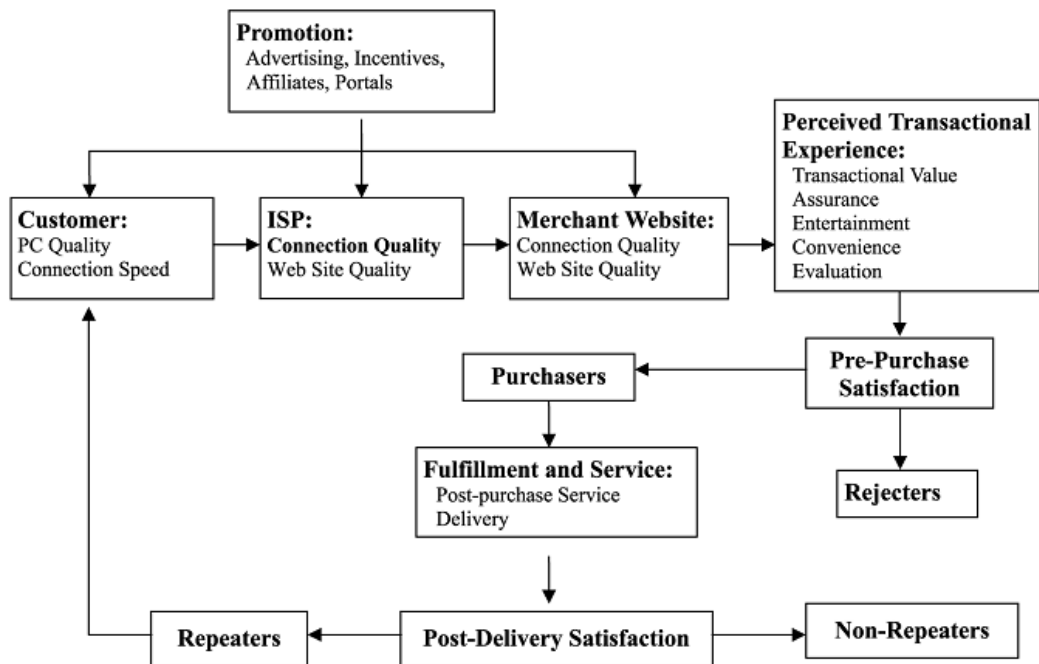
Figure 2. Process of Online Shopping via Website

The process starts with the intention to pursue online retailing as a result of promotions (advertising, PR, incentives). The interactivity involves 3 parties: customers, Internet service providers and merchant website. Chen &Wells's (1999) study, cited by Chen & Chang (2003), shows that interactivity is deemed as one of the attributors to the success of the flow, with sub-factors that shape one's attitude toward a Website. Customers' good PC quality and connection speed is required to easily access to the websites while the role of ISP and merchant website is to ensure the quality of connection and website quality. Later on, transaction of grouped items (values, assurance, entertainment, convenience and worthiness of products) happened. Customers have to make a pre-purchase decision; it could be a reject of buying or actual buying the products. If customers decide to buy the products, their order will be placed and fulfilled, delivery service will take care of logistic part. After getting the wanted goods, based on the consumption, customers will decide whether will continue purchasing products from merchant's web stores. As claim by Jedd (2000) in the work of Chen & Chang (2003), the obtained experiences of shopping online also reflect how online shoppers perceive Internet marketers.

Website Quality Management

When owning websites has becoming saturation, the question now evolves into how to develop a website to become a winner in Internet competition. Up till now, numerous multidimensional research has been done in order to draw answer for the question "what should be done to make retail-websites better?" Using a Website is actually using an information system and also making a marketing interaction with the transmission of information, fulfillment of customers' requests and transaction of purchasing (Loiacono et al., 2002). Therefore, improvements of Website quality should both based on the technical and marketing management points of views.

A combination for measurement of website quality management was developed by Loiacono and his colleagues (2002) with the theoretical framework adapted from previous researchers. Researchers utilized the Technological Acceptance Model developed by Davis (1989) as a part of the framework. This model took into consideration of Ease of Use and Usefulness of websites to measure website's quality. The group later used task-technology fit of Goodhue & Thompson (1995) which indicated that technology is useful when it fits the task the users are engaged in. The most generic tasks that users are likely to pursuing for online retailing are: gathering information and carrying out a transaction. The last dimension that comes in hand with utilization is entertainment value, meaning that supported activities that users might develop while conducting online retailing.

The research later on narrowed its scope to take a clearer insight in website quality by adapting different literature theories and was constructed with 14 factors. The result is shown in the table below.

Table 2. Assessment for Website quality (2002)

Dimension	Sub-dimensions	Description of Concept
Ease of Use	Easy of Understanding	Easy to read and understand
	Intuitive Operation	Easy to operate and navigate
Gathering Information	Information Quality	The concern that information provided is accurate, updated, and appropriate

	Tailored Communications	Communications can be tailored to meet the user's needs
Carrying out Transaction	Functional Fit-to-Task	The extent to which users believe that the Website meets their needs
	Trust	Secure communication and observance of information privacy
	Response Time	Time to get a response after a request or an interaction with a Website
	Consistent Image	The Website does not create dissonance for the user by an image in compatible with that projected by the firm through other media
	Online Completeness	Allowing all or most necessary transactions to be completed on-line (e.g., purchasing over the Website).
	Relative Advantage	Equivalent or better than other means of interacting with the company
	Customer Service	The response to customer inquiries, comments, and feedback when such response requires more than one interaction
Entertainment Value	Visual Appeal	The aesthetics Website
	Innovativeness	The creativity and uniqueness of a Website
	Emotional Appeal	The emotional effect of using the Website and intensity of involvement

Though the answer takes time to be found, it is obvious that online retailing often brings frustration to customers This is particularly attributed by ineffective of responsiveness to customers; difficulties in using site navigation; obscurity of

checkout process and lack of securities for transaction and personal information (Elliot & Fowell, 2000).

Web stores in Tourism

Since a website store is the only way online customers can find information about the products for sale, the layout of a web store is far more important than of the conventional stores. However, there has not been any concrete formula on how to develop a web store which can satisfy all travelers. This is partly due to what customers seek from e-shopping and the ways consumers use websites often being overlooked. Indeed, Sheth and the co-workers' (1991) work, later presented in the study of Sigala (2004), claims that a website is a complicated set of values affected by functional, conditional, social, emotional and epistemic utility but fell to be realized as trade of between quality and price. Due to the complex nature of tourism, the design and functionality of a tourism-traveling web store become more crucial. Therefore, identifying which website features and functionalities are more valued than others to online tourists, who may seek various experimental values when using a web store for purchasing travel products, is very exhaustive.

The definition of customer behaviors in a "virtual world" being online sounds rather complicated. Since there is no face-to-face contact, it is challenging to shape up the habits of online shopping. According to Park& Kim (2003), the commitment of consumers shopping online to a particular web store is highly related to their satisfaction with the information received and the related benefits. At the same times, these two factors are strongly engaged with products and service information quality, user interface quality and security perception. Constantinides (2004) includes web experiences categorized by functional (usability, interactivity), psychological (trust), and content factors (aesthetics, marketing mix) as components to customers' consumption habits.

In the tourism industry, consumer behavior is mainly perceived as information seeking. Decisions on traveling are made due to the need of internal and external information, which intensively required a lot of research or evaluating activities and

integration. Travelers actively and frequently ask for information as part of their effort when planning for traveling and at the same time reconsidering the components of travel experiences. Individual experiences of traveling can highly influence others. Therefore, information seeking plays a crucial role in reducing risk and uncertainty (Büyüközkan & Ergün, 2011).

4 RESEARCH PROCESS

The research process is described as a series of stages through which you must pass. The precise number of stages varies, but they usually include formulating and clarifying a topic, reviewing the literature, designing the research , collecting data, analyzing the data and writing (Saunders et al., 2009, pp.10)

In research design, writers must always rely on qualitative and quantitative research and their methodologies while mastering the traditional approaches as a prerequisite for designing research. In research, there is always a research problem that is solved using different research methods. A research problem may also consist of the development of an issue or a change. Methodologies are linked to each other and following each other in a chain while the front end of the chain dictates the available methods and tools (Kananen, 2013, pp.27).

According the nature of the problem, the author decided to use both quantitative and qualitative methods for the thesis work. A qualitative method is preferred when a new phenomenon needs defining. On the other hand, quantitative research is like a train that proceeds stage by stage in accordance with statistical rules (Kananen, 2011, pp.72). The research process starts with defining the research problem. Then the research problem is converted into research questions which are used to collect the material to solve the problem. In the case of VCTourist, it is the website of the company that brings out the research problem. However, in-depth research requires the interaction and cooperation of outsiders to clarify how the phenomenon should be dealt with. In this thesis, the research problems are:

- What are Internet-users' perceptions of online retailing in Tourism?
- What need to be changed on the VCTourist website in order to promote Online Retailing

One aim of the research work is to get an opinion of VC Tourist of how to get engaged with customers online and what potential customers think that should be improved on the company website. Through consideration, the author decided to use questionnaire surveys as the main research methods.

As claimed by Jankowicz (2005) in Saunders's work (2009), a questionnaire is usually used for exploratory or other types of research that require a large number of open-ended questions since it is the most popular research application in the business context and one of the best ways to get to know each respondent. In addition, all the responses are related to the same set of questions, which provides an efficient way of collecting reactions from a large sample prior to the quantitative analysis. Moreover, if worded correctly, it normally requires less skill and sensitivity to administer than semi-structured or in-depth interviews (Jankowicz, 2005).

The author decided to conduct the thesis using a mixed-method research approach. Mix-method research uses quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures either at the same time (parallelly) or one after the other (sequentially) but does not combine them. (Saunders et al., 2009, pp.152). Hence, the author planned to include two phases in the research: Qualitative research targeting specialists developing online users' experiences and Qualitative research aimed at Internet users with potential for becoming the company's customers.

4.1 Qualitative Research

The author contacted some of the specialists specializing in developing customers' online experiences to give some reviews on the trend of the market and propose potential changes to the company's website.

The questionnaire contains open questions of which regarding to the present situation for online retailing websites and improvements that can be drawn for VCTourist's website. It was sent out to three (3) specialists who work for FPT Vietnam, a multinational information technology company of Vietnam with branches in 14 countries. They are employees for FPT Vietnam-Hanoi Office with years of professional know-how in designing website and developing online users'

experiences. The questionnaire consists of open questions which allow respondents to freely raise their ideas and thoughts in two (2) main areas:

1. General Information of Selling Online

    What are criteria for a "Good" web store?

    What are features for travel agencies' websites?

    What is the future trend for web stores (technical and functional points of view)?

2. Evaluation of VCTourist's website

    What do you think about the website's function, content, and visuals?

    How should the process of change be in order to launch online-selling service for the website?

    Other comments

The questionnaire was written in English and sent via emails to experts. However, since all of them are Vietnamese, the collected answers were mainly in Vietnamese. Original answers were attached in appendices.

4.2 Quantitative Research

The questionnaire is meant to seek valuable opinions of internet users from VCTourist's website, at the same time getting the desired features of websites for traveling companies and customers behaviors while seeking for information for traveling. The questionnaire was launched via emails and Facebook. The open time for answering was two (2) weeks.

Due to the targeted group of respondents, it is almost impossible to deliver and collect responses by hand. The delivery and collection of answers were done through Internet.

Purpose of Questionnaire

The questionnaire is to collect:

*   Basic information of respondents;
*   Opinions and attitude of internet users to pursuing online-retailing in for tourism and traveling;

- Recommendation for developing VCTourist's website.

The questionnaire contains two parts:

- *General information of shopping travel& tourism services online*
- *VC Tourist's website*

While first part aims at making a profile of online shopper for traveling services, the second part seeks for opinions on the VC Tourist's website.

Targeted Group of Respondents

Segmentation of customers was considered while narrowing the scope of respondents. According to the author's experiences with the company, typical customer for VCTourist usually is non-Vietnamese aged from 30-40 from South East Asian area with average annual income. However, in reality, this segment is hardly being active for online shopping. Therefore, the author decided to launch the questionnaire mainly in other customer segments. The hypothesized respondents were young people with age ranged from 18-30. A small number of them are from 30 onwards.

From the network of the authors, the questionnaire was sent out to friends via Facebook and Email. The timeframe for completing the questionnaire was two (2) weeks to collect at least 80 responses.

Structure of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was introduced online via Webropol portal, the link was spread among people on Internet, starting with the writer's acquaintances and friends. Though circulating questionnaires online is time-saving, it took quite a considerable amount of time for getting the desired number of responses. A short introduction was included on top of the questionnaire indicating the aim and beneficiary of the research to motivate people to do it.

The web link of VCTourist's webpage is attached in the questionnaire. Online shoppers were supposed to take a look at the company's webpage for about 30 seconds and answer the survey.

Range of questions

In total, there are 23 questions in the quantitative questionnaire (See Appendix).

Background**:** People are asked to give basic information of Age, Country of Origin, Gender and Occupation. These factors are seen as contributors in making customer profile for the company.

Rating questions: Rating questions play a major part in the questionnaire. Values and options are changed in accordance to the nature of the questions. Unlike most of surveys and questionnaires, the writer decided to eliminate "mutual option", making the number of options an even number of 4. By offering answers without "mutual option", the writer expects people to be either "loving or hateful", but not "nice", adding the critical views for the research.

Example: What do you desire from a website of a travel agency?

Table 3. Sample Question

Clear Function	Disagree	Partly Disagree	Partly Agree	Agree
Trustful information about the destination				
Comments from previous customers				
Professional and attractive layout				
Security in payment methods				

Open questions: There are 2 open questions in the questionnaire, of which one is compulsory to answer. In some of selecting questions, open question is included as a clarification for people if their answers are not included.

5 RESULTS

The electronic quantitative questionnaire was launched from *19th November 2013 until 2nd December 2013*. Answers were collected during those days. In total, there were 84 responses collected.

The qualitative questionnaire was sent out on *15th November 2013* to three (3) people and all answers were collect by 20th November 2013

5.1 Qualitative Research

As mentioned above, the questionnaire contains 2 parts of which the former one is about fundamental features for e-shop websites and the latter is assessment of VC Tourist's website. The answers were collected from: Ms. Vũ Thị Quỳnh Mai, Mr. Phùng Quanh Huy and Mr. Vũ Xuân Hiếu who are all working for FPT Hanoi Office. There were a lot of contributions from the experts and a number of them were overlapped, therefore the author had to analyze and group the information and in accordance with the structure of the survey. Since ideas from experts are mostly similar, it is unnecessary for the author to clearly point out which ideas belong to whom.

General Information on e-shop websites

According to the experts' know-how, there are essential traits that a website needs to possess in order to run an online business effectively:

Content

In some cases, when customers enter a website, they need to make another "click" to enter the real homepage. No matter how the company defines their homepage, all the basic information should be immediately visible through one click.

Trust: When visiting a website for the first time, customers will be overwhelmed with the content and the first idea they have in mind will be "How can I trust it". A clear name, address, logos and symbols or any qualifications should be visible.

Range of products/ goods: A homepage should at least show all the ranges of products available for the customers. The customers should be able to find more detailed lists of goods while hovering around.

Instant update of information: any new occurrences or events regarding business activities (sales, expansion, new policy enactment, etc.) should be clearly displayed.

Effective searching tool: Customers do not always know what they should buy; purchases often result from randomly browsing a good list. Therefore, the company should either apply data-mining or search suggestions to provide recommended searched products for customers.

Support: Customers should be informed how to protect themselves against any faults caused either by a misunderstanding of purchasing or any unexpected mistake by the sellers. Versatile customer support (Email, phone, Skype, Yahoo, etc.) should always be available.

Figure 3. Homepage of WildChina-example of clear slogans/visions and certified accreditation

Feedback: A space for customers' comments regarding the latest purchases is highly recommended. Not only does it help customers to have a view of how the business is running but it also gathers data for the further development of goods or services.
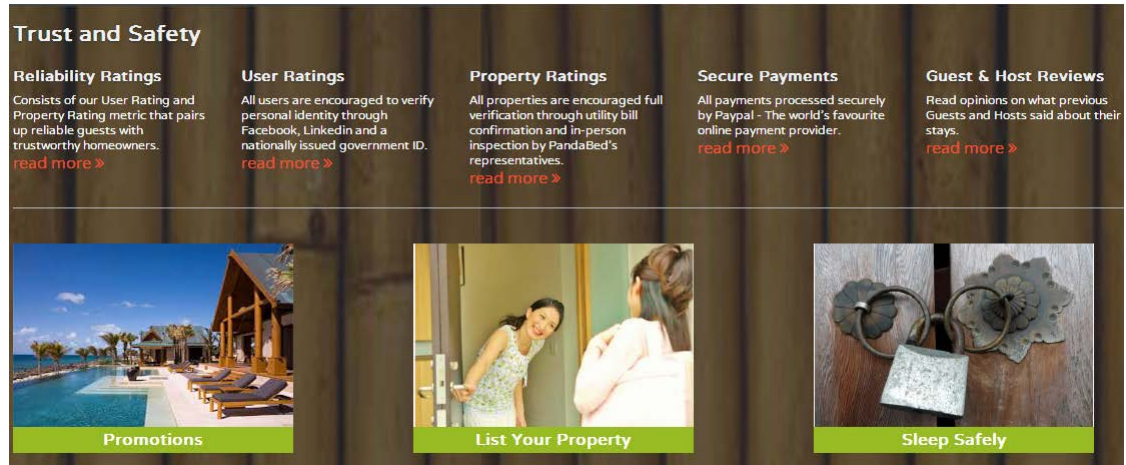
Figure 4. Homepage of Pandabed with full function of customers' feedback and ratings

Function and Layout

Clear website structure: Customers should always know where they are on the website as well as how they can navigate to the section they want. Discernable titles and headlines for accessing are important. A functional website map can be included.

Figure 5. Website of Fattoria Santa Vittoria with clear tabs of content, clear guiding users to find needed information

Smooth flow of payment: considering how customer should make their payments online i.e. re-clicking button or browsing new page. Every single step should be taken

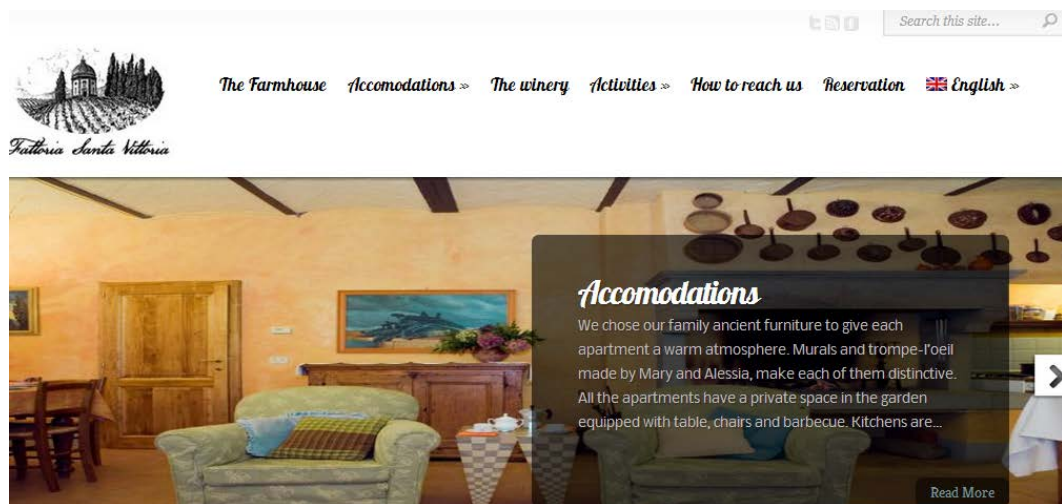into account to provide customers the easiest ways of paying but still creates a sense of security. PayPal, online banking with agreed banks or customized paying system can be implemented based on the choice of the company. An unambiguous description on the delivery process should also be included.

Advertising: Pop-up ads nowadays are overused and often create frustrations and disturbances for customers; therefore they should be moderated. The displayed ads should be interrelated with the goods you are offering, avoiding ads which can bring offensive feeling to clients e.g.: do not display violent game ads on the website selling children clothes. In addition, make sure that it is possible for users to turn the ads of.

Layout: Paying attention to the hierarchy of the texts, images, and ratio among them. Texts and images are collectively bonding. Most of the time, images are more effective in getting customers but texts are also needed to give elaborate information i.e.: prices, deals...

Some basic ideas of the use of colors, fonts, themes should be implemented. Most often bright but not to vivid colors are used e.g.: blue, green for tourism; pink, violet for female clothes, etc. Colors, fonts should be used to bring a harmony to the appearance of the website and spontaneously increase more accesses.

In particular, websites of tour agency often share some same characteristics:

1. Being able to display *authentic* marketed destinations through images or videos.

2. Being able to market related services with detailed prices concerning the destinations (visa issue, transportations, accommodation...)

3. Being able to have recommended plans for customers: trips for family with kids, just-married couples...

4. Being able to show detailed process of payment

5. Being able to have customer support in different channels (email, phone, Skype, Yahoo, Facebook...)

6. Testimonials from previous customers or certified organization (Tripadvisor, Lonely Planet...)

Trends for e-shop online nowadays are not only from technical point of view but also from the perspective of marketers.

Responsive and clean-and-clear outlook: increasing the scrolling view, screen size and ratio while accessing the website. Consideration of which device the customers use to access the website is needed, knowing in which most likely used device (laptop, PC, MAC, mobile) varies the designed templates and appearance for viewing and browsing. The homepage should be colorfully attractive but visuals should be moderated that will not bring too much distractions for users.
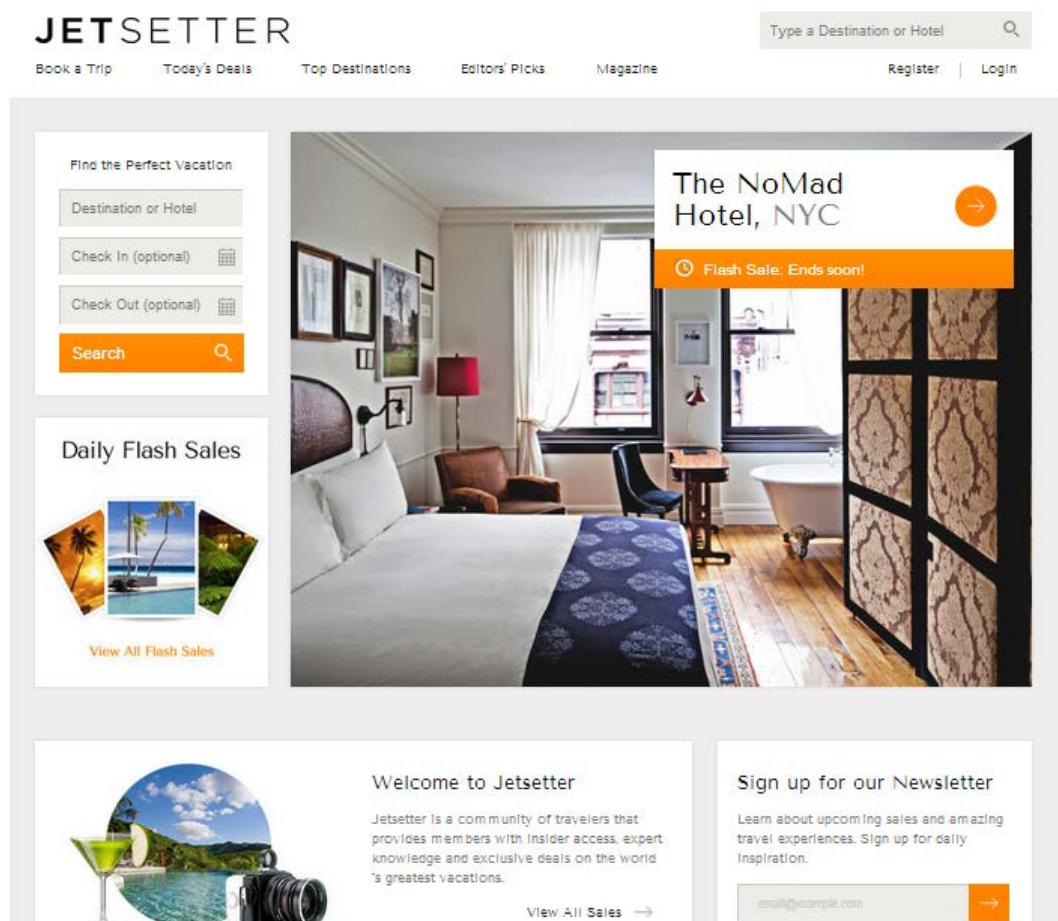

Figure 6. Homepage of Jetsetter's website

Mobile apps: e-shops will be more likely to develop mobile platform for their businesses.

Video: not only pictures but demonstration of products and shopping journey will be developed in videos.

Social networks: A majority of customers are now already on Facebook and Twitter, company should take advantages of online societies to increase the brand image. Deals and promotions will be more attractive and noticeable if they are published on social networks.

Daily deals and group buying: Even just an item on sale per day can help appealing more customers on a daily base. Group buying is dramatically increasing as people are trying to save by group shopping.

Evaluation of VCTourist's Website

According to the evaluations by experts, the current website of the company has both functional and technical pros and cons:

Pros	Cons
• Clear logo, clear slogans and certifications result in good brand awareness.	• Old layouts used for most the websites in the 2000s, were not interactive enough.
• Good "call to action": users can easily identify and access to the sections they want.	• A lot of typos.
• Good choice of images: being able to exactly show the marketed destinations and can mark the best tours for customers.	• Visuals and information should be arranged in more logical ways.
	• Lack of information on the actual sales price.
	• No payment function.
	• Unavailable customer support service.

| | • Lack of testimonials from previous customers. |
| | • Incomplete information in both versions (English+Vietnamese) |

Figure 7. Website of VC Tourist

Suggestions

Experts advise the website owners to reconsider the first part of the survey regarding trends and the desired features of websites. Some samples of currently well-known

websites (Jetsettet; Airbnb global) were given for comparison. Urgently, the company should launch an online payment system to start actual online retailing. Plus, it also needs to switch to a new modern outlook and plan a more effective-but-simple "click-and buy" flow of action.

The timeframe for changing can be varied as it depends on the detailed requirements from the company. However, in general, it can take maximum one and a half month to bring a new look to the website. If the company chooses to hire professional web designers , the cost can range from 5-15 million VND.

Remarkably, one expert suggested the introduction of sustainable travel on the website. Considering of a part of the company's business is M.I.C.E, this idea is definitely highly worth consideration and implementation. Since ethical traveling and sustainability are becoming an emerging phenomenon and an eye-catching concept, it is extremely practical for the company to raising their voice about that on their website. Indeed, sustainability has been introduced in Vietnamese tourism for the last several years and has started to gain more attention of the public.

5.2 Quantitative Research

After two weeks of launching-from 19th November-2nd December 2013, there were 84 responses collected for the quantitative questionnaire.

Customer profile

Ages: Among 84 people answered the questionnaire, almost 68% of them are 18-25 years old (67), the second largest group aged 26-35 (13)-accounted for approximately 13% and only 4 out of 84 were from the group of 35-55 years old. None of answers was from people aged older than 55.

The reason behind grouping people into particular age groups is that active Internet users in Vietnam range mostly from 18-25 for shopping perspectives. Meanwhile, people from 26-35 years old tend to use Internet for working and are rather reluctant to make virtual monetary transaction. Group of 36-55 owns a complex conservation shopping habits. In addition, in Vietnamese society 55 is the retirement age for women, considering the nature of shopping which is more favored by female, the author made this as a filter for further questions.
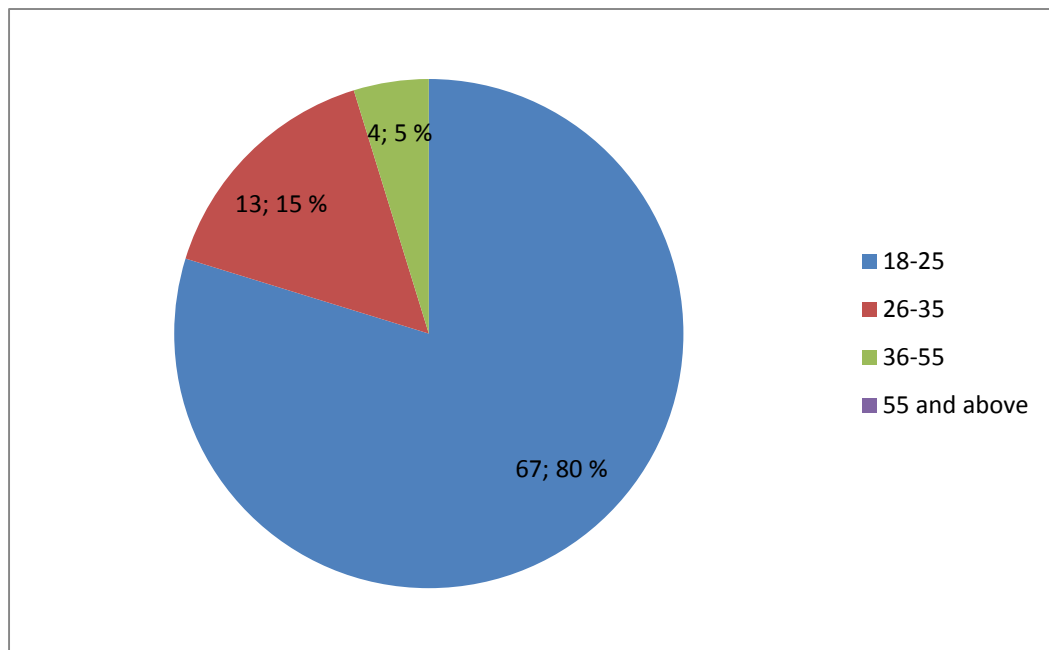

Figure 8. Age Group

Gender: Only a small portion of respondents were men (11/84), the rest of them were women.

Occupation: Since the majority of anwers was from the group age of 18-25, most of them were students, this group accounted for 86% of total answers with 72 people out of 84. Other major groups of occupations were office workers with 7 people (8%), labor workers with 3 people (4%). None of respondents was in their retirement. In addition, those belong to "other" group were freshly graduates and students from maternity leave (2%) with only 2 people.
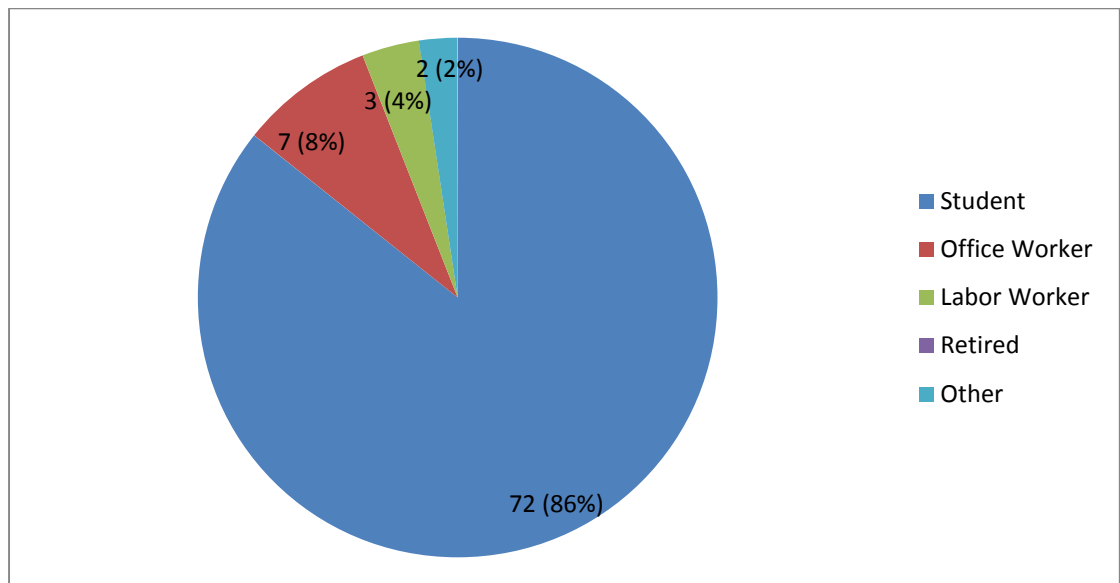
Figure 9. Occupations

Nationality: There was a quite diverse range of ethics answering the questionnaire. Overall, most of people were from Vietnam (29), China (Mainland and Hong Kong) (18) and Finland (15). The author tried to have people from South-East Asia answering the questionnaire; though there were respondents from that area however the amount of answers was only marginal. The chart presents the number of people did the questionnaire by countries of origin.

Figure 10. Country of Origin

Experiences of Online Shopping for Travel

Question 5 to 10 in the questionnaire dealt with the previous experiences of customers of purchasing travel services online.

Q5: Have you ever bought tourism/ travel service online through a travel agency's website?

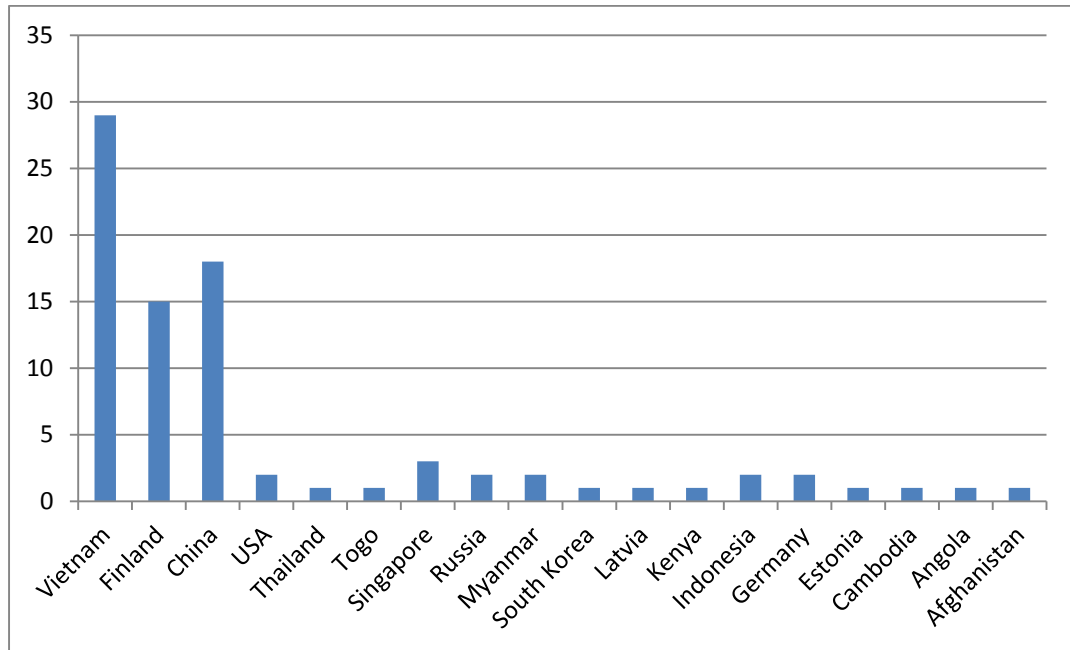According to the collected results, more than 80% (68) of the respondents had experience of purchasing travel/ tourism services e.g. tickets, bookings... online. The rest of them had no experience of shopping travel/ tourism services online before.

Q6: In general, how are you satisfied with the travel agency online services that you have used?

The result of the questions was reconsidered since the early question actually helped filtering out the respondents who had never made any purchases of services online. After filtering out the inappropriate answers, the result can be seen in Figure 11. Figure 11 shows that most of people gave positive feedback on the travel/ tourism service they had purchased online. Most of them considered the purchased services as "Satisfied" and "Quite satisfied", indicating a moderate and considerable

satisfaction. These groups accounted for 44% and 38% of the responses respectively. Critically, only 5 respondents expressed a high satisfaction with the same services, which accounted for 8% of the total answers. Only 7 (10%) regarded the purchased services as unsatisfying.
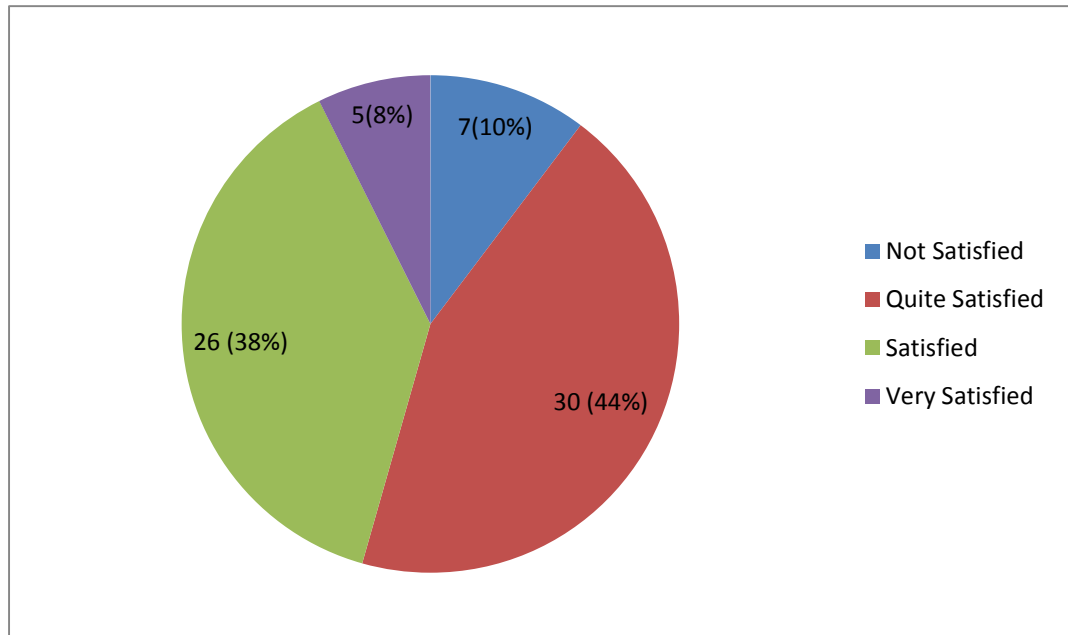
Figure 11. In general, how satisfied are you with the travel agency online services that you have bought?

Q7: How often do you book online with travel agencies?

According to Figure 12, most people found themselves making merely 25% of their trips with the help of travel agencies. This amount accounted for 22 out of 79 valid answers. The second largest option was of those who planned 75% of their trips with travel agencies' support. The number of people planning half of their trips with agencies and those who always made bookings on their own were similar (15 against 14). Only 9 people admitted planning all their trips with agencies, which accounted for 11% of total answers. Overall, on average, booking with agencies is more preferred than self-planning.
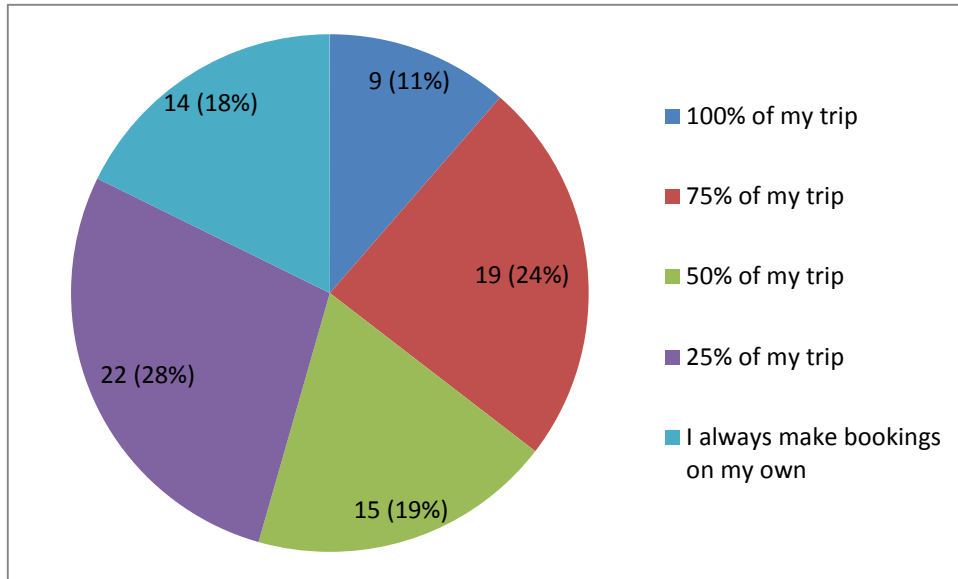
Figure 12. How often do you book online with travel agencies?

Q8: How do you choose a travel agency?

76 people commented on how they picked a particular travel agency in this question. The result is explained in Figure 13:
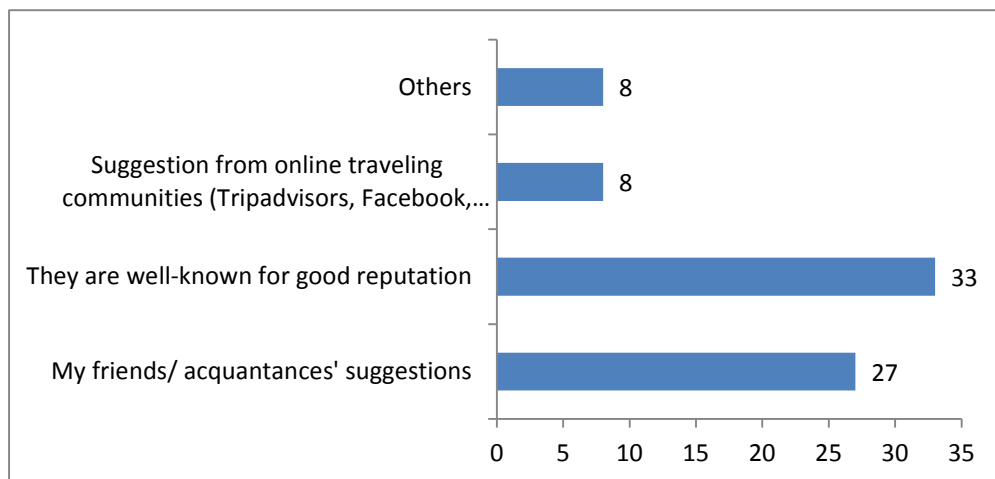
Figure 13. How do you choose a travel agency?

Based on the result, good reputation played a crucial role of how people choose a travel agency. Suggestions from close people (word-of-mouth) also highly influences the decision making. Online communities such as Tripadvisors could somehow affect the choice of travel agency. Other factors given by respondents listed out possible

constributors: good deals, ads on websites such as momondo.com or first results from Google search.

Q9: What do you think about these issues when online shopping through travel agencies' websites?

The main purpose of the question was to seek people's ideas towards shopping online from travel agencies' websites which can cause them insecurity and hardships while shopping. As presented from the chart, people had mixed views on some usual concerns regarding online shopping. However, in general, most of them expressed tendency of approval on listed ideas. Only for the claim that "I cannot find the service I want" that a majority showed their partial disagreement.
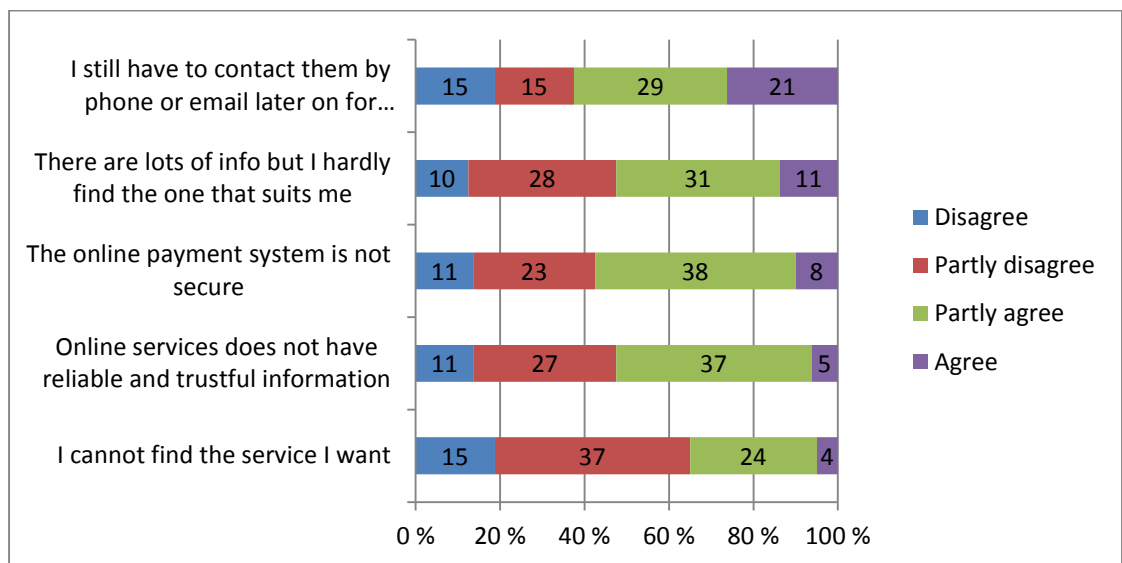
Figure 14. What do you think about these issues when online shopping through travel agencies' websites?

According to the figure, what made users most worried while purchasing traveling service online were the security of the payment system and the trust-worthiness of presented information. In some cases, customers would also be hesitated to make decision of buying if the information is too much but hardly can satisfy their need. A need for further contact the agency also makes the purchase less smooth and declined the chance of buying. Undeniably, a majority of answers shows that it is rare not to find information that they want to seek for from websites of travel agencies.

Q10: What do you desire from a website of a travel agency?
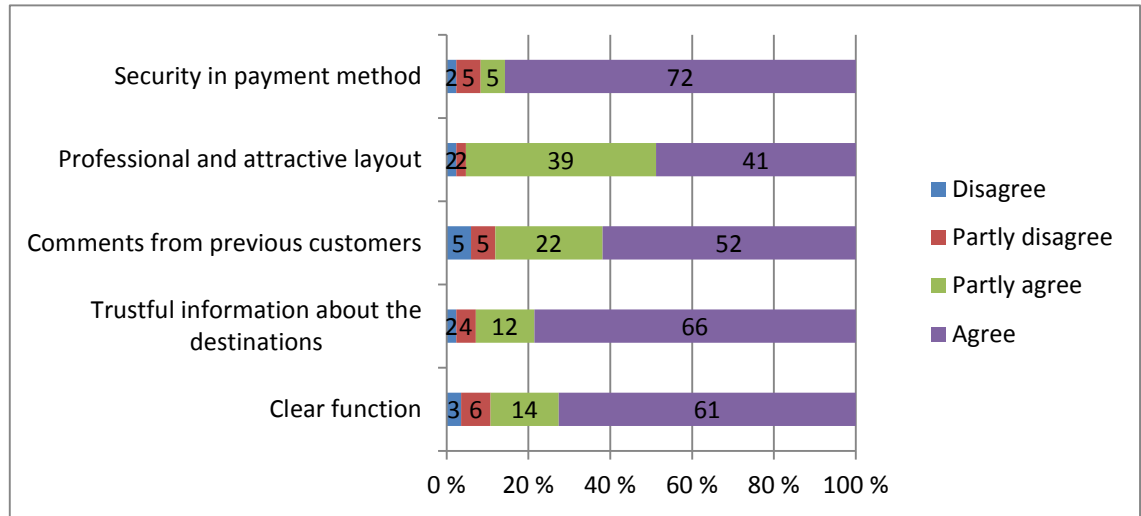
Figure 15. What do you desire from a website of a travel agency?

This question is meant to determine how much these factors are considered while re-designing the website. The order of them is: Security in payment method, Trustful information, Clear function, Comments from previous customers and Layout. Based on the outcome, company could acknowledge how customers value their website while online-shopping and could make the re-design with priorities to fulfill customers' needs.

Evaluation of VCTourist's Website

Questions 10-23 focused on seeking customers' ideas of the website of VCTourist.

Q11: Describe the websites in 3 words

The respondents were asked to briefly give their first impressions of the website in three words. The outcomes of the questions were diverse. In reality, it was somehow confusing if considering all the ideas in 3-word sets. However, after splitting up and reconsidering all the single words, the most often used ones are listed below:
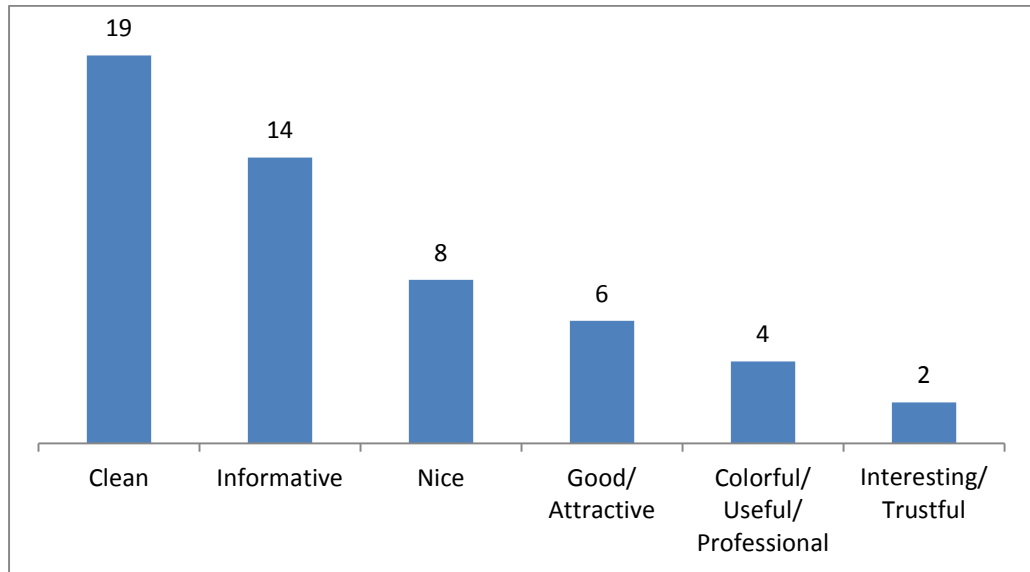
Figure 16. Most often used words (Positive) and times
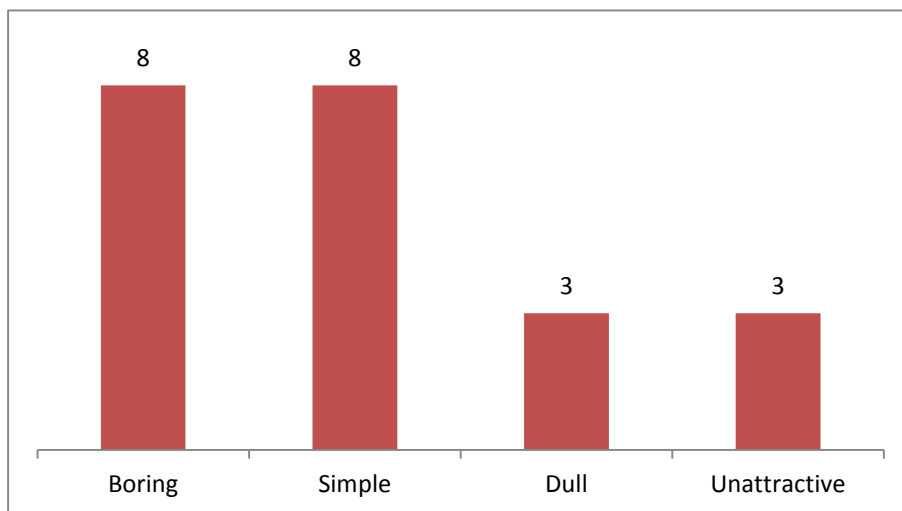
Figure 17. Most often used words (Critical) and times

Most respondents gave positive feedback on the websites. Words with a complimentary meaning such as "clean", "informative", "nice", "good", "attractive" and so were widely used. However, opposite expressions like "boring", "dull" and "unattractive" were also found.

While designing the questionnaire, the author found it crucial to collect first impressions of website users of the general appearance of the website since it is much simpler and faster than asking traditional open questions. However, after collecting the results, an undeniable drawback of the question was revealed: with

merely three words, it was difficult for people to explain their choices of words in details.

Q12: Based on your intuition, do you find the website trustful?

As a consequence, this question tries to make web-users rate the credibility of the website. According to the bar chart, over 75% of the respondents from all age groups said that they found the website accountable. Others while answering "No" mostly claimed the lack of trustfulness due to the missing information from previous customers and to the unprofessional layout. This section was made up by respondents of 18-25 years old.
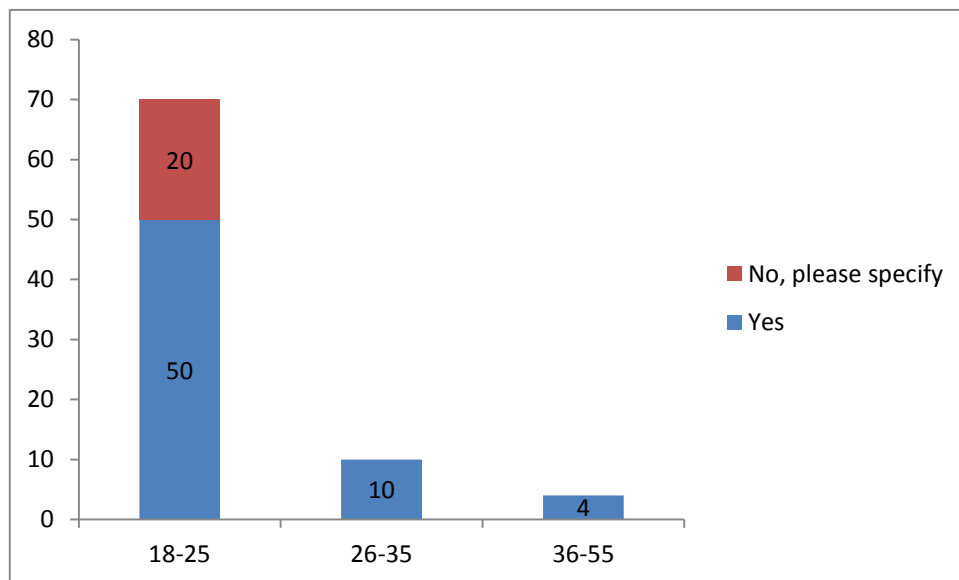
Figure 18. Based on your intuition, do you find the website trustful?

Q13: Does the website make you want to travel with the agency?

The particular question aims to understand customers' decision making habit. Resulted from the earlier question, most people admitted that they would like to travel with the agency. For those who gave "No" as the answer, they blamed the website for the unprofessional layout (boring, unattractive, unappealing pictures of destinations, etc.) and its complex navigation.
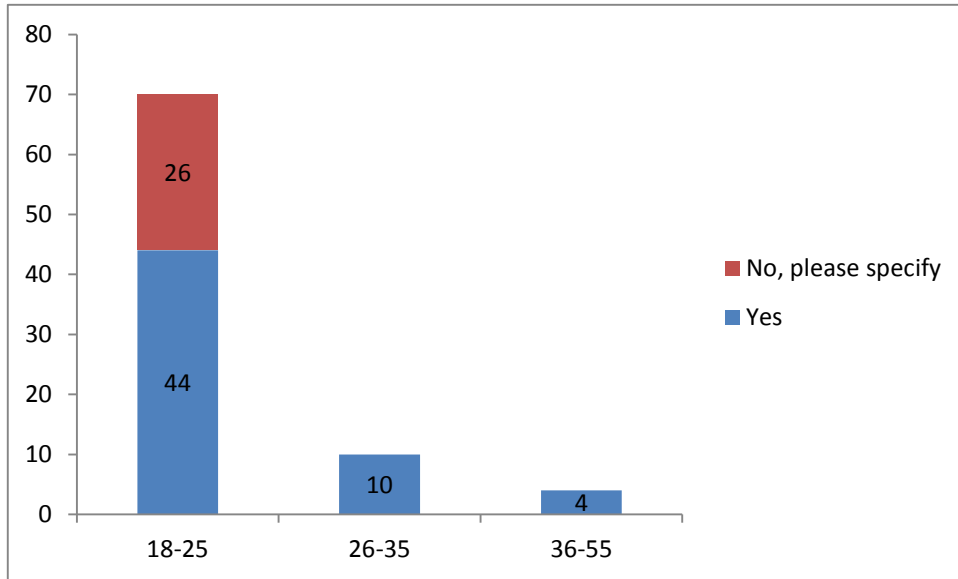
Figure 19. Does the website make you want to travel with the agency?

Q14: Do you find the website attractive and appealing to buy?
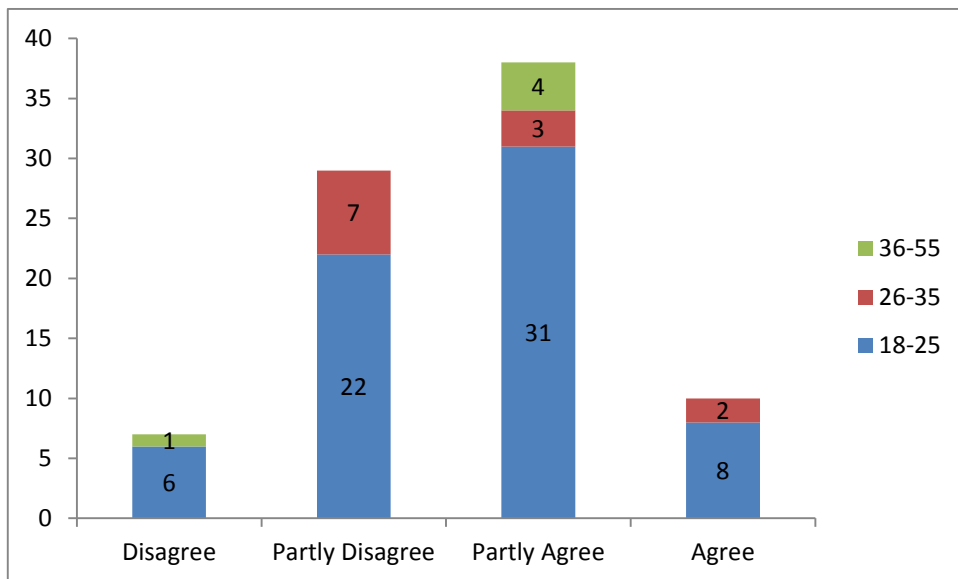
Figure 20. Do you find the website attractive and appealing to shop?

For this question, most people partly agreed that they found the website attractive and appealing to shop for services (38/84). The second most chosen answer was "Partly Disagree" with 29/84 answers. Those with answers "Agree" and "Disagree" came on third and fourth places with 10 and 7 answers respectively.

Q15: Do you find it easy to make reservation for accommodation from the website?
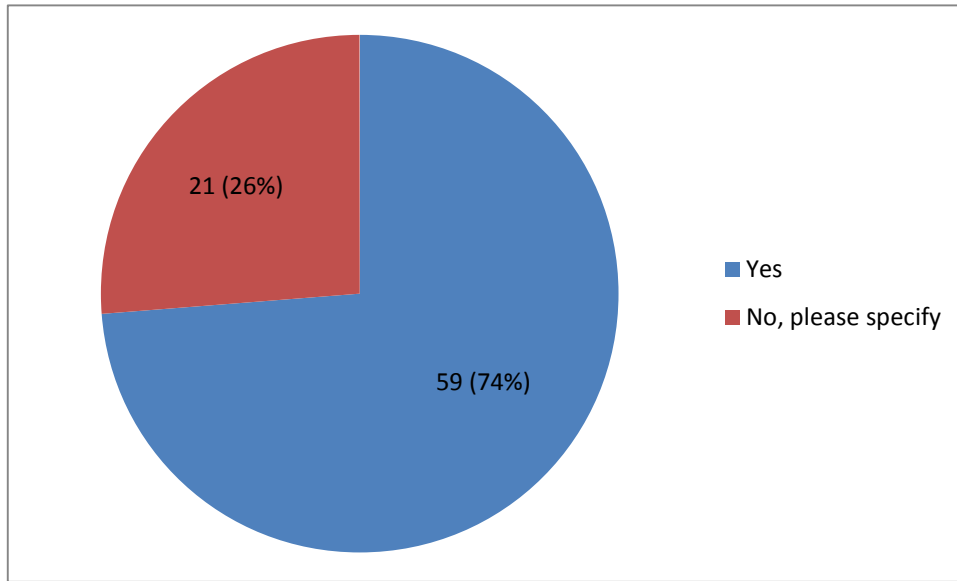
Figure 21. Do you find it easy to make reservation for accommodation from the website?

In question 15, people were asked how easy they found it to make reservation for accommodation on the website. 74% of people found it easy to make bookings while the rest of them answered "No" with clarifications such as:

- Undirectional navigation from the booking sites

-Online information of hotels without direct connection to online reservation

-Too much steps to make bookings

Q16: How do you rate the booking service for accommodation from the website?

This question is meant to support the earlier question, asking for the evaluation of customer on the accommodation booking services of the website. The majority of people (47%) evaluated the booking service as "Fair". The amount of those who rated it as "Good" was almost the same with 38 (45%) out of 84 answers. There were merely 6 (7%) critical reviews rating the online booking service as "Poor". Unremarkable only 1 user (1%) voted for "Excellent" service.
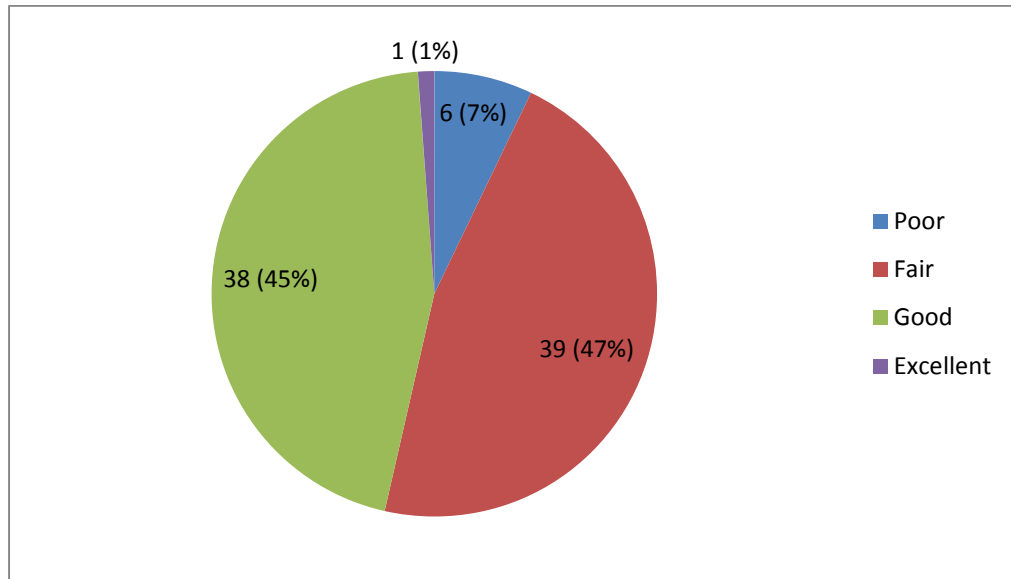
Figure 22. How do you rate the booking service for accommodation from the website?

Q17: Do you find it easy to purchase tour packages on the website?
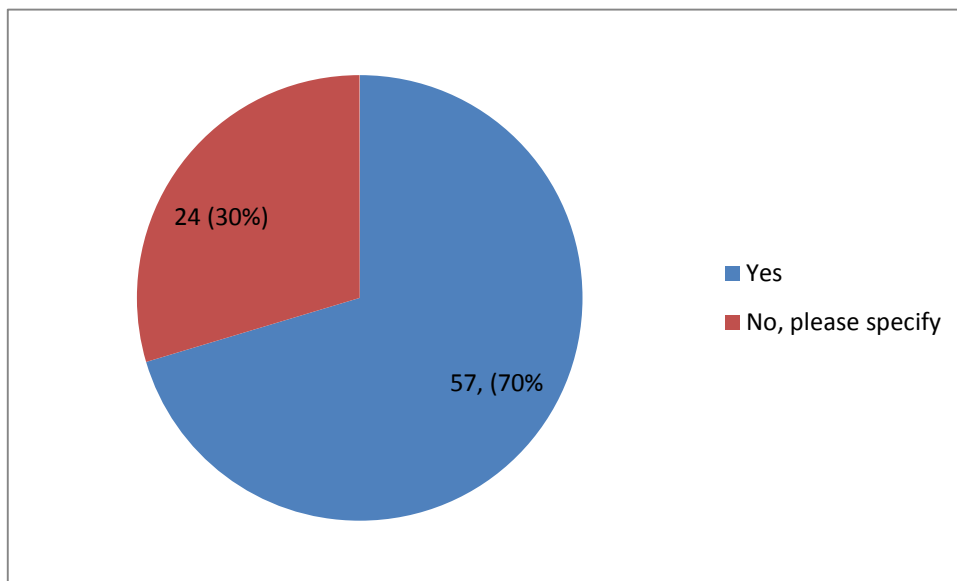
Figure 23. Do you find it easy to make purchase for tour packages on the website?

Figure 23 indicates how people evaluated the ease of booking tour packages on the website. Almost 70% of the respondents said that they found the booking function easy to use. For those who did not share the same thoughts, the main factor that caused disturbances of decision making was lack of actual information of price and payment method.

Q18: How do you rate the service of booking tour packages on the website?
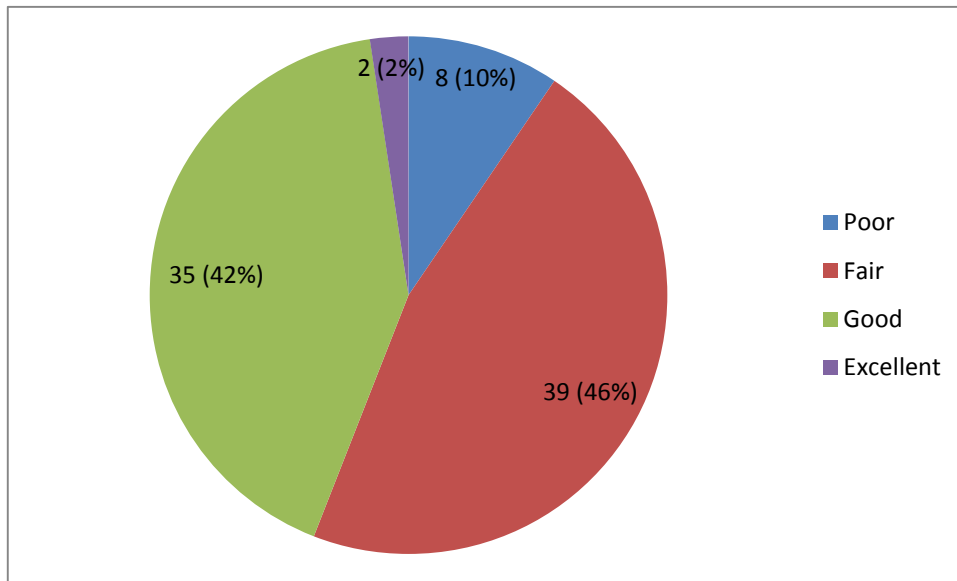
Figure 24. How do you rate the service of booking tour packages on the website?

Following the question 17, this question supports the previous question with more details of customers' evaluation of the booking function of the tour packages. The outcome of this question is chiefly similar to question 16 with a majority of respondents choosing "Fair" and "Good" (39 and 35 respectively). The number of respondents rating it as "Poor" was 4 times higher than of those rated it "Excellent (8 against 2).

Q19: How do you evaluate the navigation of the website?

According to the Figure 25, most users found it easy to navigate and hover around. However, there was a big gap between "Very easy to navigate" and "Easy to navigate". While only 24 people thought it was very easy to navigate the website, the number of those who found it somehow more difficult was over half of that amount (24 against 39). There was a slight discrepancy in the number of people found the website "Very easy to navigate" and "Hard to navigate" (24 and 21). Only 2 people thought it was very hard for them to navigate the website.
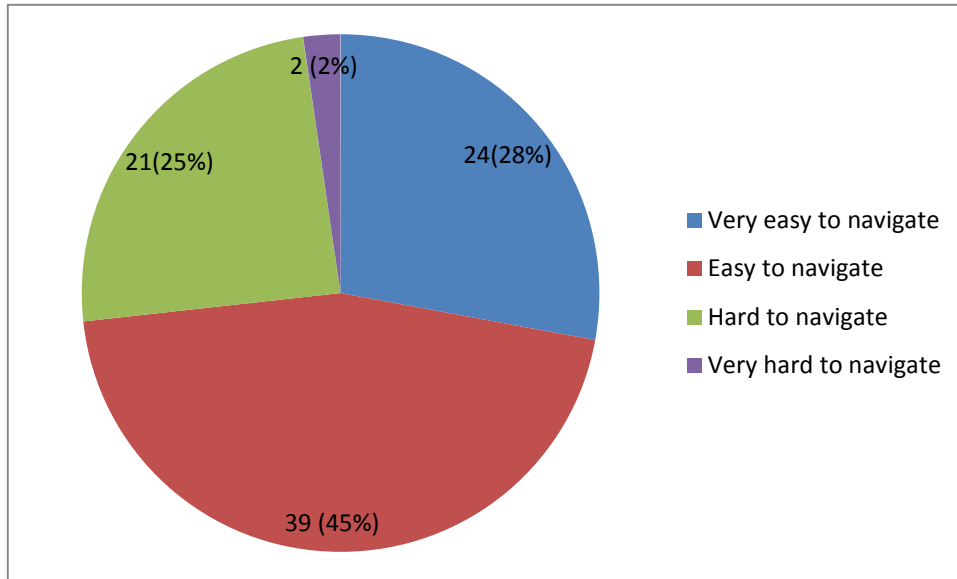
Figure 25. How do you evaluate the navigation of the website?

Q20: How do you evaluate the displayed information of the website?
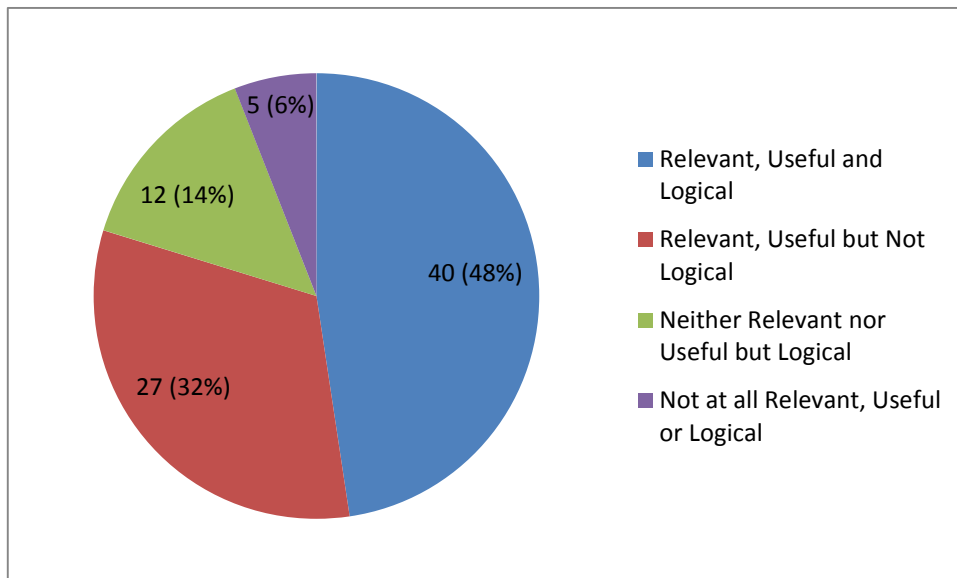
Figure 26. How do you evaluate the displayed information of the website?

Figure 26 presents the evaluation from users of the display of information on the webpage. According to the chart, most of people highly evaluated the given information as "Relevant, Useful and Logical", this number accounted for 48% of total answers (40 over 84). 27 people (32%) thought the information was important and useful for them but not logically displayed. Nearly half of this number (12 as

14%) chose the opposite answer, deeming information as logical but not relevant nor useful. Only 5 people (6%) found given information irrelevant, useless and illogically arranged.

Q21: How do you rate the layout of the website?
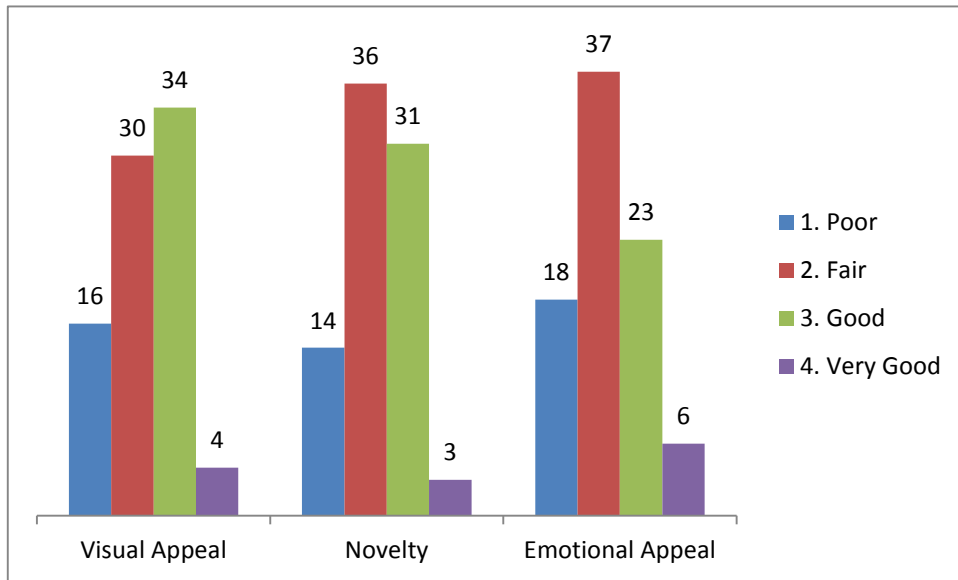
Figure 27. How do you rate the layout of the website?

Q22: The company plans to include the payment transaction on the website, how are your concerns of these factors?
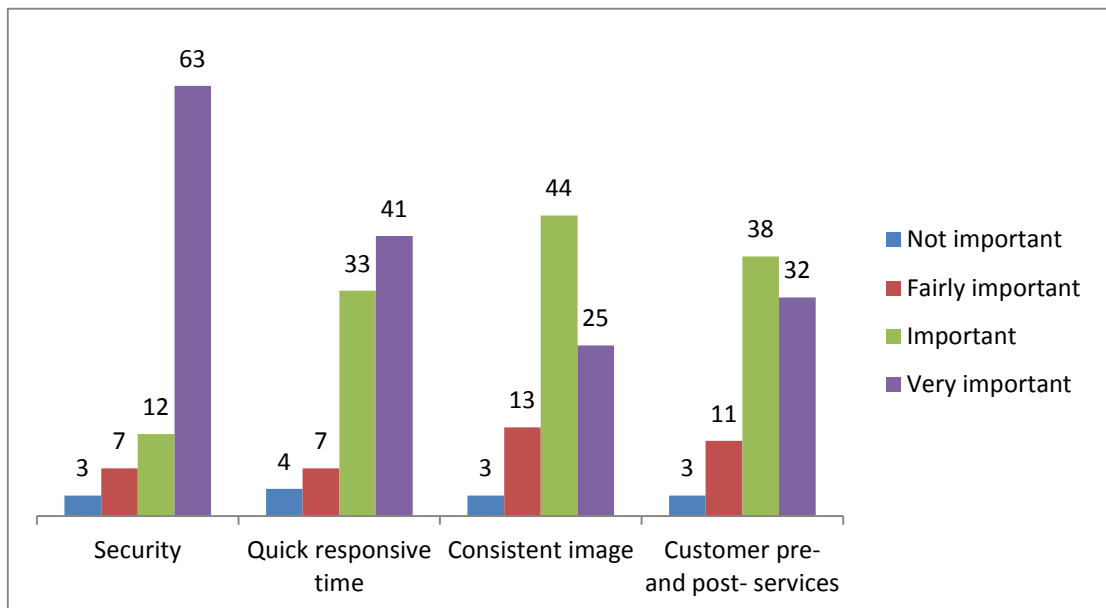
Figure 28. How are your concerns of these factors?

Figure 28 focuses on users' concerns of contributors to payment tranction which included: Security, Quick responsive time, Consistent image and Customers pre- and post-services. Among all answers, Security received the most significant concern with 63 respondents rating it as "Very important". The numbers of the same answer for other factors were 41, 25 and 32 correspondingly. While Security and Quick responsive time recieved most rating as "Very important", Consistent image and Customer services were primarily perceived as "Important" by 44 and 38 people respectively. For each factor, still there was a small amount of responses of "Fairly Important" and "Not important".

Q23: Other comments for further development of the website?

In this part of the questionnaire, website users were asked to freely give comments in order to develop website in the future. Valuable suggestions were recorded:

"Fix the typing mistake in the inquiry page. Longer motto"

"It would be more useful to see the price of the tours in the website. Sending inquiry then waiting for the reply is too long. Tourists want immediate info so they can compare among the options right away. Not all hotels and resorts have picture or more details info; once again, it's difficult to make comparison."

"The website layout looks good, but seems to have a lot of information I need to read. Personally I think before travelling, I will find some info about the destination I'll come by many channels. And here in this site I want to know more how I will experience the beauty here...maybe more pictures and activities"

"Need more supporters/customer care staffs, and should keep online 24/24 if you want to do international business, because tourists need help every time, but I see the number of customer supporters is too small."

"Little detail that caught my eye; in pictures changing, there are various animations used. I'd use only one and stick with the most basic one."

"Prices and deals play an important role, so as far as I can see there are no prices yet and in my opinion that is also important to indicate good deals on the website. Short video clips and more pictures of the tours would be nice instead of so much text."

"The website looks nice and is logical with good English language. However, the background seems quite dark and there is a lot of text especially on the front page. More pictures are needed elsewhere than only on the top of the page. Customer ratings and comments are needed."

"There are really nice footages of the destinations in the top bar when you access the website. I think colors of the website do not complete the bar rather takes away a bit from the pictures. I would change background of the site to something that would be relevant in traveling. In other words use the best advantage that site now has which in my opinion are the pictures to appeal customers"

"There must be the price list so customers can compare with other agencies, guaranteeing best price is good but you better show it rather than just saying (it will be a bother if you contact a travel agency just to know that the price is not preferable. If the price is not fixed then at least post it like "starting from...")"

"The homepage should be way clearer. The texts and pictures under "Best Selling Tour" look poorly made, and could be developed a lot. The search-bar is kind of "hidden in plain sight". I would place it somewhere else."

"Including real life videos or pictures from past customers may be a good idea. It can be both reviews from customers and can also be advertisement for that travel destination. Real-life pictures and videos can inspire travelers as well. (There might be some amazing photo from customers; the company can ask customers for commemorating pictures/videos. Otherwise, a photo competition, maybe?) "

"Large areas of plain white on a dark background give a bit too plain look; this should be fixed especially on right sidebar. The search bar is consistent and on every page, which is good. But please make it stand out more. Also the search text field doesn't need to be so wide; users won't write long page-wide search queries. Pages about the company and technicalities, for example About Us and Visa-related info, need to give the impression that the reader gets to know the company and that

it knows what it's doing. So these pages need good content and maybe even links to some references. The Contact Us page should have some introductory text to assure the user that their needs are being heard, instead of just giving the plain-looking form."

"To actually drive the business, the pages for tours and accommodation need a "call-to-action", attractive and obvious function to make a reservation. This could be done through the current Enquire Now pages, for example by providing more guidance so that the user knows what to include in their inquiry. If the actual reservation is to be done through email or phone and not through the website, state so somewhere, so that the user knows they are submitting a non-binding inquiry first."

"Users want security and smooth usability at the same time, so make sure any login action is simple but trustworthy. For online payments provider, I understand that OnePAY is very popular in Vietnam and is able to process payments by international cards."

The ideas for changes and upgrading were found to be similar to what the experts suggested in some aspects. The final proposal for changes is presented in the following section of the thesis.

6   RECOMMENDATIONS

The research allows the author to further understand customer behaviors in the context of online shopping, more particularly shopping for travel services. Since the number of responses received fulfilled the requirement of the research, it is possible to draw a few patterns of shopping habits based on the results.

- The most remarkable issue is that 80% of the respondents had experienced shopping for travel services online via a travel agency's website and the majority of them are women.

- The respondents who aged 18- 25 years old (mostly students) tend to shop online for travel services more often than older age groups.

- Most people rely on travel agency when planning for their trips; a majority of their bookings (25% and 75%) were managed by a travel agency.

- Most people feel satisfied with the purchased travel services.

- Firms' good reputation and words-of-mouth affect the choice of a travel agency.

- The foremost factors that people yearn to look for from a travel agency's while shopping are: security of online payment system and trust-worthiness of the presented information. Less concerning factors include inappropriate information, need of further contact and information exchange and lack of necessary information.

The outcome of the study also explains customers' perceptions about the website and gives ideas about what should be changed and how the changes should be implemented in details. Apart from that, some concerns about changes were also recorded. The website is considered as averagely good and easy to use to most of the users, which resulted in detailed recommendations given by them. In general the customers noticed the following problem: lack of payment online, use of visuals, layout arrangement and support services. After recognizing the drawbacks of the website, the company could implement the changes needed according to the customers' ideas.

Based on the collected data, the author managed to address the urgent problems with the current status of the company's website:

Function

- Lack of pricing details and payment methods: Most users found it impossible to pay online for the service/ products they desired, which recognizably cut off the "selling" function of the websites. The urgent need for developing online selling through the website is to equip it with an accredited payment system linked to the booking of tour packages and accommodation.

Content

- Unprofessional layout: in spite of the fact that "Professional" is frequently quoted in the responses in the 11th Question (Describing the website in a 3-word set), in open question, there were many complaints about the layout. The current status of the website is acceptable for most of the users but lack

of outstanding featuring which could increase the buying decision of customers. Doable solution to this matter is to reduce the number of currently in use visuals and make them more effective. Small but visible typos should be corrected.

- Overloaded information: even though there is much information on tours and accommodations, the information distracts the customers while they are buying. In addition, customers require more information about daily deals and the business situation of the company. Hence, the company should update the information more frequently than now. Moreover, according to the suggestions from the suggestions of the users, the company should also consider the idea of getting more interactive with the customers by creating a sense of community, which mostly means the introduction of a social space online.

- Shortage of customer's feedback: Undeniably, reputation is a decisive factor that makes customers choose the services of the company. Lack of testimonials from previous travelers reduces the credibility of the firm in the customers' eyes.

- Lack of provisioned customer services: since the selling function of the website is not working properly, it is extremely important to have a customer support service. However, the customer support service is not available 24/7 on the website. Considering the nature of selling in the international market, it will be crucial for the company to make their service more accessible.

To conclude, the author thinks that in order to operate online retailing on the website, VC Tourist will need to implement changes mostly in the technical features of the website and promote the content of it. Besides, the company should consider its resources (time, finance and human) to make a doable schedule for implementing changes.

7   CONCLUSION

Due to the advancement of information technology, the role of E-Commerce is increasing essential to the global business. Understanding how to implement online retailing in business helps companies to gain more competitiveness and win more trading opportunities. By focusing on website development, the author tried to present an example of how E-Commerce and online retailing can be engaged to business, particularly in Travel& Tourism field.

The thesis attempted to identify the issues that make Viet Centre Tourist Co., Ltd struggle with operating their website by using a customer-oriented approach. The data used in the thesis was collected from the available theories and the results of the survey. The outcome of the data is, hopefully, usable for VC Tourist to help them with the benchmarking-assisted development of the website to meet the customers' needs.

The results from the analyzed data show that the company should take immediate action in order to improve the current status of the website before launching actual online retailing on it. The problem mainly focuses on the technical features of the website as well as some changes should be implemented to improve the content of it. Lack of a safe online payment system greatly affects the current status of the website for online selling.

The advice from the experts provides the company with the whole picture of how online retailing is changing and is going to change in more details. Before officially launching online retailing, the website should be well improved. The company have to move fast to upgrade their website status on a daily basis. Interactivity and an easy purchasing progress are some of the emerging factors that directly affect customers' shopping experiences. Understanding of the use of colors and layout arrangement will also attract customers' attention and increase the visual attractiveness of the website. Consolidating the contributing elements to create a firm base for the website is the first and foremost thing the company should be focussing on. Only when the website as a whole is firmly established, any adaptation or change will be easy to make without affecting the current business. After finishing

solving the existing problems, the company really has to start choosing a suitable online payment method and introduce it on the website.

The presented result helps the author to gain more know-how of E-Commerce and online retailing, particularly from Travel& Tourism perspective. Besides, it also empowers authors with skills to understand how to implement changes in business and practice developing company's business from a customer-oriented perspective. The research process that involved both theoretical and practical parts helps the author to recognize the importance of combining theories and practices in reality. Even though the research was small in size, it encourages the author for further development and studies in research area. By learning how to properly processing a research step by step, the author has gained much experience in exploring new ideas by systematical and logical approaches. Practical difficulties such as low rate of response, disrupted contact with the company and experts helps the author to truly understand the hard site of researching.

Finally, as the theme of the topic is closely related to the professional field that the author is pursuing, it is very practical for her to learn about the subject and tools in order to explore more insights of the subject in the future.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – Responses from Ms. Vu Hoa - VCTourist's Head of Sale Department

Questions to Company

1. **Who designed the website for the company?**
   - ➔ A studen team who just graduate from univeristy

2. **From whose perspective was the website made for? Customers? Company's partners?**
   - ➔ At the moment, it is for company's partner. It is open to give the basic information about company (like a person have a name then a company must have a website).

3. **Which criteria that the company had the website designed? (Quality? Functions?)**
   - ➔ A website to do thier job is selling product is different where people can find information. Our current website is donot do their function of selling product.

4. **How long has the website been operated?**
   - ➔ The current website has been operated for 2 years.

5. **How often is it updated?**
   - ➔ It has not been updated for 6 months coz we do not have sales online team or IT for website.

6. **What is it meant for company's business? Marketing? Online Retailing? or both?**
   - ➔ A way to show company profile to agent. One kind of marketing.

7. **Comments on the current website?**

➔ you cannot do online retailing with this website. It must change a lot (as I share with you my schedule if want to do online retailing in some previous emails)

8. **Any intention for further development? Please list desired features for develop online retailing and marketing?**

➔ We are looking for a teamwork who has passion on online retailing & marketing (designer, coder, online sales staff,etc). After have a team, we will make plan for a "real" online retailing:

APPENDIX 2 – Qualitative Questionnaire

Website Development for Shopping Online of Travel Services Case Studies: Viet Centre Tourist

General Info for Selling Online

1. What are the crucial criteria of a "Good" website for **selling online**?

- From technical point of view

- Customers' point of view/ Any added value that customers would like to have

2. What are the most required features for **tourism websites**?

3. What is the trend of **e-shop websites** nowadays? (From technical and functional points of view)

Evaluation of VCT's website: **Viet Center Tourist**

4. What do you think about the website?

- o Functions
- o Contents
- o Visuality

5. What needs to be done in order to launch online-selling through the website? Can you recommend the process of changes?

6. Other comments on the website

APPENDIX 3 – Quantitative Questionnaire

Website Development for Shopping Online of Travel Services Case Studies: Viet Centre Tourist

Hello, this survey aims to develop customer's experiences on shopping tourism service online. The survey is done for Viet Center Tourist Co., Ltd. - A travel agency operated in Vietnam. By doing this survey, you are helping the company to get new ideas to develop its website. Your time and consideration are highly appreciated.

Part 1: General information of shopping tourism services online

According to your experience of traveling, please answer questions below

1. *Age?*

2. *Country of origin?*

3. *Gender?*

4. *Occupation?*
   - Student
   - Office worker
   - Labor worker
   - Retirement
   - Other

5. ***Have you ever bought tourism/ travel service online through*** ***travel agencies' websites******?***
- Yes
- No

6. ***How often do you book with travel agencies for traveling online?***
- 100% of all my trips
- 75% of all my trips
- 50% of all my trips
- 25% of all my trips
- I always make bookings on my own

7. ***How do you choose a travel agency?***
- My friends/ acquaintances' suggestions
- They are famous
- Online traveling communities (Facebook, Tripadvisors, etc.)
- Others, please specify:

8. ***In general, how are you satisfied with travel agency online services that you have bought?***
- Not satisfied
- Quite satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

9. ***What do you think about these issues while shopping through travel agencies' websites?***

Statement	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slight Agree	Agree
They don't always have the service I want				

Online services have reliable and trustful information				
The online payment system is not secure				
It's a mess, there are lots of info but I hardly find the one that suits me				
I still have to contact them by phone or email later on for further information				

10. What do you desire from a website of a traveling agency?

	1 Not necessary	2	3	4 Very much needed
Transparent functionality				
Trustful information about the destinations				
Comments from previous customers				
Professional layout and enticing visibility				
Security in payment method				
Other, please comment:				

Part 2: _VCTourist's website_

Please access the link below and familiarize yourself with the website (Open it with a new tab on your browser)

http://www.vctourist.com/home/

<u>Imagine that you need to shop for tourism services and answer below questions</u>

11. *What do you think of the website in general? Describe in three free words*

12. *Base on your intuition, do you find the website trustful?*
    - Yes
    - No
      Why?

13. *Does the website make you want to travel with the agency?*
    - Yes
    - No
    Why?

14. *Do you find the website attractive and appealing to buy?*
    1. Disagree   2. Partly Disagree   3. Partly Agree   4. Agree

15. *Do you find it easy to make reservation for accommodation from the website?*
    - Yes
    - No
      Why?

16. *How do you rate the booking service for accommodation from the website?*

Poor   Fair   Good   Excellent

17. Do you find it easy to make purchase for tour packages on the website?

- Yes

- No

  Why?

18. How do you rate the booking service for tour packages from the website?

Poor   Fair   Good   Excellent

19. How do you evaluate the navigation of the website?

- Very easy to navigate

- Easy to navigate

- Hard to navigate

- Very hard to navigate

20. How do you evaluate the displayed information of the website?

- Relevant, Useful and Logical
- Relevant and Useful but not Logical
- Neither Relevant nor Useful but still Logical
- Not at all Relevant, Useful or Logical

21. How do you rate the layout of the website?

	1. Poor	2. Fair	3. Good	4. Very Good
Visual Appeal				
Novelty				
Emotional Appeal				

22. The company plans to include the payment transaction on the website, how are your concerns of these factors?

	1. Not	2.Fairly	3.Important	4.Very

	important	important		important
Security				
Quick responsive time				
Consistent image				
Customer pre and post service				
Other, please specify:				

23. Other comments for further development of the website?

APPENDIX 4 – Responses from Experts (Qualitative Questionnaires)

1. Ms. Vũ Thị Quỳnh Mai (UX Designer - Research and Develop Department of FPT Hanoi)

The answer was sent to the author on 16th November 2013 via email.

General Info for Selling Online

1. What are the crucial criteria of a "Good" website for **selling online**?

- Based screen: dữ liệu cập nhật thường xuyên, nhanh chóng,

- các sự kiện: thúc đẩy mua hàng, đặt ở đâu

- 1 phần hàng hóa--> intimate customers để kéo xuống

- Mua bán: luồng mua hàng đơn giản nhất, data-mining (good suggestion)---> nhanh chọn đc sản phẩm mong muốn; essential point: nút đặt mua ở đâu

2. What are the most required features for **tourism websites**?

- Show đc dịch vụ: incentives and intimacy--- Hình ảnh

- Gợi ý về địa điểm, dịch vụ, giá cả, các yếu tố liên quan

- Cung cấp cách thức đến đó 1 cách đơn giản, dễ dàng và hiệu quả

- Cách thức lên kế hoạch/ lựa chọn

- Feedback từ các customers trước đó

3. What is the trend of **e-shop websites** nowadays? (From technical and functional points of view)

- Trends: Giao diện clean-and-clear

- Responsive: co dãn, phù hợp với kích thước màn hình

- Cấu trúc dữ liệu nhiều và chặt chẽ

Evaluation of VCT's website: <u>Viet Center Tourist</u>

4. What do you think about the website?

- Được:
    - logo rõ ràng, nhận diện thương hiệu tốt,
    - Slogan rõ ràng
    - Call to action
    - Hình ảnh tốt, ko đẹp nhưng rõ ràng
    - Show đc các tour
    - Biết lợi dụng điểm đến đặc biệt
    - Nhiều ảnh
    - Nhiều thông tin
    - Filter tốt
    - Visual: khá ổn
- Ko đc:
    - Visual: Quá nhiều, ko biết cách sắp xếp (nên loại hoặc phân lọc logic)
    - Content: Lỗi chính tả
    - Thông tin ko chọn lọc
    - Sale function (chú trọng về sale): Ko sale đc, đơn giản là marketing

5. What needs to be done in order to launch online-selling through the website? Can you recommend the process of changes?

Đối chiếu với phần trên để tìm phương pháp cải thiện thích hợp

6. Other comments on the website: No

2. Mr. Phùng Quanh Huy (UX Designer - Research and Develop Department of FPT Hanoi)

The answer was sent to the author on 19th November 2013 via email.

General Info for Selling Online

1. What are the crucial criteria of a "Good" website for **selling online**?

Có nhiều cách để đánh giá chất lượng cũng như tính năng của website. Nhìn chung, nếu là để phục vụ cho việc bán hàng qua mạng một website ổn cần đáp ứng các yêu cầu sau đây:

- Chiếm được niềm tin của người sử dụng: bằng cách này hay cách khác, công ty/ tổ chức chủ của trang web phải gây dựng được niềm tin với người tiêu dùng, về hình thức, cần có đầy đủ tên, logo, chứng cứ giám định tính an toàn của sản phẩm và người điều hành công ty.

- Hàng hóa được trình bày một cách bắt mắt và khoa học.

- Update thường xuyên các hoạt động của công ty.

- Dịch vụ hỗ trợ tư vấn bán hàng thường trực và approachable cho khách qua nhiều hình thức: đt, email...

- Phản hồi của khác hàng: cần được cập nhật thường xuyên để khách hàng tương lai tham khảo và để nhanh chóngc ải thiện dịch vụ

- Hệ thống thanh toán an toàn, đảm bảo

Về phần design của trang web, phải luôn đảm bảo được ngoài mặt thẩm mĩ, ko gây nhiều phiền nhiễu cho khách hàng khi sử dung, có thể có nhiều chi tiết nhưng phải sắp đặt một cách khoa học, thông minh

2. What are the most required features for **tourism websites**?

Thông thường các trang web du lịch/ cty du lịch cần thiết phải đáp ứng các yêu cầu sau:

- Thông tin đầy đủ và chính xác về giá cả+địa điêm

-Cập nhận thường xuyên về thủ tục đi du lịch

- Thông tin về tour và gợi ý tổ chức chuyến đi cho các đối tượng khách khác nhau

- Dịch vụ hỗ trợ tìm kiếm thông tin qua email, đthoaij

- Feedback từ khách trước đó

- Cách thức thanh toán

3. What is the trend of **e-shop websites** nowadays? (From technical and functional points of view)

Xu hướng của các trang web bán hàng điện tử ngày nay là:

- Mobile App: sử dụng các app trên smart phones, tablets để bán hàng, tuy nhiên chỉ phù hợp với công ty vốn lớn, lượng khách trung thành nhiều

- Bán hàng nhóm (group-buying): giảm giá sản phẩm và kích cầu khách hàng

- Về mặt kĩ thuật: yêu cầu thay đổi với từng loại sản phẩm cty bán ra, tuy nhiên giao diện tương tác tốt, bố cục hài hòa cần đặt lên đầu

- Sử dụng thêm social network để giới thiệu sản phẩm hiệu quả hơn. Có thể thiết lập một cộng đồng du lịch trên mạng xã hội để thúc đẩy hình ảnh của công ty. Bên cạnh đó cung cấp thêm thông tin du lịch cần thiết cho khách du lịch.

Evaluation of VCT's website: [Viet Center Tourist](#)

4. What do you think about the website?

Ổn:

- Tạo được niềm tin với khách hàng bằng việc trưng bày logo, certificate đầy đủ

- Hình ảnh, thông tin có chọn lọc

- Trình bảy tour ổn

Không ổn:

- Thiểu hệ thống thanh toán online

- Cách thức trình bày nội dung thiểu logic, đặc biệt là ở sự không đồng đều về thông tin ở phiên bản tiếng Việt+Anh

- Dịch vụ hỗ trợ ko làm việc hiệu quả

- Thiểu feedbacks

- Lỗi chính tả

5. What needs to be done in order to launch online-selling through the website? Can you recommend the process of changes?

- Chỉnh sửa lại những lỗi vừa được chỉ ra ở phần trên

- Tham khảo một vài trang web sau đây để học tập:

http://www.fattoriasantavittoria.net/farmhouse/?lang=en (cách bố cục danh mục và chức năng)

http://www.jetsetter.com/ (responsive outlook)

http://www.pandabed.com/ (feedback rõ ràng ngay đầu trang)

http://wildchina.com/ (cách bố cục làm nổi bật chữ tín ngay ở homepage với nhiều logo, chứng nhận)

https://www.airbnb.com/ (cách hover và suggestion)

- Ngoài ra, có thể nhấn mạnh vào Du lịch Xanh bảo vệ môi trường thông qua M.I.C.E mà công ty đang triển khai để tọa điểm nhấn.

6. Other comments on the website: Ko

3. Mr. Vũ Xuân Hiếu (UX Designer - Research and Develop Department of FPT Hanoi)

 The answer was sent to the author on 20th November 2013 via email.

General Info for Selling Online

1. What are the crucial criteria of a "Good" website for **selling online**?

-Hệ thống thanh toán an toàn, bảo mật

-Chữ tín của nhà kinh doanh vì trên mạng ảo, lòng tin của khách hàng với cty là vô cùng quan trọng

-Dự liệu đầy đủ, công cụ tìm kiếm thông tin hợp lý và hiệu quả

-Thông tin phản hồi từ khách hàng trước đó

-Thông tin đầy đủ về các mặt hàng giao bán

- Trang web nên được thiết kế bắt mắt nhưng nhấn mạnh vào cách thức mua hàng và thanh toán đơn giản nhất có thể, nếu đc, nên có hướng dẫn riêng giúp khách chọn mua hàng hiệu quả

-Quảng cáo vừa phải và nội dung phải thích hợp với sản phẩm đc giao bán. VD: ko chèn quảng cáo game bạo lực vào trang web bán đồ trẻ em. Phải đảm bảo là có thể tắt được quảng cáo và quảng cáo phải được điều tiết để tránh gây ảnh hưởng đến khách hàng khi họ đang lựa chọn sản phẩm trên mạng.

- Sử dụng màu sắc, font chữ vừa phải. Layout có tính tương tác, co dãn tốt, phù hợp với nhiều platform mà khách hàng sử dụng

- Có thể sử dụng nhiều hình ảnh và clip nếu cần thiết, tuy nhiên cần được bố trí một cách thích hợp, ko nên tham nhiều mà làm rối trang web và khiến khách khó tiếp cận thông tin họ cần thiết

2. What are the most required features for **tourism websites**?

- Trình bày cụ thể thông tin về tour, hoạt động, điểm đến

- Nhiều lựa chọn cho khách hàng lựa chọn

- Thông tin hỗ trợ qua điện thoại, email, skype

- Màu sắc bắt mắt, phù hợp với tính chất trang web

- Feedback từ khách hàng trước

- Phân bố dữ liệu thành column/ section thực tế và khoa học

3. What is the trend of **e-shop websites** nowadays? (From technical and functional points of view)

- Ứng dụng bắt mắt, cập nhật nhanh chóng, phản hồi nhanh từ người tiêu dùng

- Mua bán theo nhóm, giảm giá theo ngày

- Liên kết với mạng xã hội để marketing thương hiệu

- Sử dụng nhiều hình ảnh và video

- Responsive outlook

Evaluation of VCT's website: [Viet Center Tourist](#)

4. What do you think about the website?

OK:

- Visual tốt

- Dù thông tin nhiều nhưng có điểm nhấn

Not Ok:

- Thông tin chưa hoàn thiện (cả tiếng Việt+Anh), sai nhiều chính tả

- Hệ thống hỗ trợ khách hàng ko làm việc

- Thiếu thanh toán online

- Hình ảnh cần tiết chế và sắp xếp lại

5. What needs to be done in order to launch online-selling through the website? Can you recommend the process of changes?

- Design lại layout, layout của cty đang dùng là layout web cũ nhưng năm 2000, cần thay đổi để cập nhật với thị hiếu người tiêu dùng

- Thiết lập hệ thống thanh toán online

- Sắp xếp, điều chỉnh lại thông tin cho phù hợp

- Triển khai điều chỉnh lại customer services.

- Tùy vào yêu cầu cụ thể của cty, chi phí thường vào 5-15tr/website. Thời gian có thể thay đổi nhưng max là 1-1.5 tháng

6. Other comments on the website: xem lại phần trên