

A Structural Equation Model on E-Booking Intentions among Guests of Hotels in Region XII, Philippines

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Abstract: The primary purpose of this study was to determine the best fit model on e-booking among hotel guests in Region XII. There are four conceptual models applied in this study which is composed of service quality, customer loyalty, brand equity and e-booking were studied and further determined their relationship. This research undertaking was done in Region XII with 425 respondents in which it utilized a quantitative non-experimental research design. To determine the best fit model of the study, a structural equation modelling technique was employed. Based on the findings, service quality, customer loyalty, and brand equity significantly correlate with e-booking intentions of hotel guests. Also, all the variables have a very high rating as indicated by the overall mean scores. Accordingly, service quality, customer loyalty, and brand equity are considered to be the most important component of e-booking. Therefore, these elements form a part of the booking journey of guests when looking for accommodations online. As to the best fit model of the study, reliability and tangibility remained under service quality, cognitive loyalty and action loyalty remained under customer loyalty, brand awareness and brand image remained for brand equity and for e-booking price and purchase intentions remained.

Keywords: *brand equity, business administration, customer loyalty, e-booking, service quality, Region XII, Philippines*

I. Introduction

Tourism and hospitality were considered to be one of the ever rapid-growing businesses in the world and the Web continues to gain prominence in the tourism industry (Crnojevac, 2010). Nonetheless, the fact that hotel websites actually do not allow customers to stay on their website and book there is of great concern and became a widespread problem among hoteliers (Vianen, 2018). Scholars have identified several issues when booking online hotel accommodation. These include time, sensitivity (Wong & Law, 2005), payment related safety concerns (Wong & Law, 2005), and price (Law & Chung, 2003). More so, the use of online services has also been linked to data protection threats for a very long time. The sharing of private data and online information makes the internet users exposed to unintended and deliberate harm from other internet users/subscribers (Lutz, Hoffmann, Bucher & Fieseler, 2017). Moreover, as online reviews gain continuous popularity, the information overload problem occurred, making it more difficult for hoteliers to use online evaluations to determine the e-booking intentions of hotel guests (Zhao, Wang, Guo & Law 2015).

Currently, the internet is used to carry out business services as a result of the enormous development in the usage of the internet throughout the globe. The hotel's website/page gives hoteliers gigantic chances to generate income by directly making reservations in their website (Emir, Halim, Hedre, Abdullah, Azmi & Kamal, 2016). The number of visitors to hotel websites is also increasing, as with the rise in online shopping (Tan, 2015). Consumers considered online social media analysis normally helpful when taking decisions on buying a product or experiencing a service (Shan, 2016). Studies showed that online readers are looking into personal data, experience and credibility of the online reviewers (Forman, Ghose & Wiesenfeld, 2008; Liu & Park, 2015). Several research suggests that prospective travelers read reviews before booking during the hotel selection process (Yaniv, Choshen-Hillel & Miliavsky 2011). This will probably affect their intention to reserve a hotel. Confidence in the hotel may contribute to the purpose of reserving

consumers (Sparks & Browning, 2011). Confidence and trust in hotel brands can therefore be a significant aspect of the booking intention of the customer (Zhang, Craciun & Shin, 2010; Zhu & Zhang, 2010).

Recognizing the importance of e-bookings on the side of hoteliers, the researchers reviewed literatures that exemplify their association or those which may have bearing on it. Literatures showed that service quality of hotels has something to do with the e-booking intentions of guests. For instance, Kim and Singh (2012) revealed the significant relationship of electronic service quality to online hotel room booking. Because of the ever-growing number of internet subscribers and networks, service rendering establishments have appreciated the significance of e-service quality in their business (Doherty & Ellis-Chadwick, 2009). Second, customer loyalty is linked with e-booking intentions. As customer loyalty permits repeat purchasing behavior (Hsu et al., 2015), it is also possible to increase customer retention (Rahi & Ghani, 2016). Vesel and Zabkar (2009) identified that customer loyalty allows a better degree of commitment to repurchase certain products or services of hotels. Further, brand equity is a factor that definitely affects e-bookings in case of hotels. According to Aghekyan-Simonian, Forsythe, Kwon and Chattaraman (2012) and Chen, Yen, and Huan (2014) the development of brand status boosts guest's plans of making a reservation online. The image of a brand was primarily identified as a vital element that directly influence e-booking or purchase intentions of consumers. In addition to that, Zhou (2011) proved that strong brand equity leads to higher perceived value, which increases the intention of a customer to book online.

Before the final buying decision, the purchasing plan is indeed necessary. Highlighting the main antecedents and mediators of booking preferences therefore is crucial for hoteliers to realize how they can have a progressive effect on customers during the pre-purchasing level. Additionally, research relating to online shopping is generally fragmented and offers contradictory results (Amaro & Duarte, 2013) and there is not much research that deals on tourism products or services (Kim et al. 2011). Although numerous researches have examined the different elements affecting virtual purchasing decision (Aghekyan-Simonian et al., 2012; Chen, 2009; Javadi, Dolatabadi, Nourbakhsh, Poursaeedi & Asadollahi, 2012), there has remained a very limited study conducted regarding online hotel booking/reservation in the Philippines and in Region XII in particular. Hence, it is on this context that the researcher decided to conduct a study on booking intentions incorporating the three other variables in Region XII as the tourism sector in this area continuously drew a substantial importance in terms of revenue generation and community development.

1.1 Research Objectives

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the best fit model on e-booking intentions among hotel guests in Region XII. It also seek to evaluate the level of service quality as observed by the hotel guests, assess the level of customer loyalty, gauge the level of brand equity, measure the level on e-booking intentions of hotel guests and identify the significant relationship between service quality and e-booking, customer loyalty and e-booking and brand equity and e-booking.

1.2 Hypotheses

There are two hypotheses of this study which are tested at 0.05 level of significance: there is no best fit model that predicts e-booking intentions and there is no significant relationship between service quality and e-booking, customer loyalty and e-booking and brand equity and e-booking.

1.3 Significance of the study

Through addressing the research objectives of this research undertaking, it aims to add to the knowledge or theories that relates to the different behavior and motivation of guests and travelers in booking a hotel room. Based on the implications of this empirical analysis, Results provide an integrative perspective of the models and factors that greatly influenced the intention of the guest to reserve a room. On the practical side, hotels maybe given or offered a practical guideline in establishing and positioning of their individual virtual booking WebPages as well as linking third party booking companies to increase their sales and profit.

Likewise, this research is advantageous to hoteliers as this will afford them with some knowledge in devising their loyalty programs to attract more clients/guests. A loyalty program is deemed necessary for this type of business because of the presence of frequent travelers who are usually businessmen. The substantial number of guests surveyed can provide a glimpse to the hotel owners what best loyalty program they can provide.

Finally, the local government unit and the Department of Tourism XII may benefit from the information of this research as they will be furnished with enough information regarding the number of tourists who are coming in to the region and may supply the needed information on the laws, ordinances, and government issuances which may be implemented by the department to boost the hospitality industry of the region.

II. Method

2.1 Research Design

A quantitative non-experimental design utilizing correlational method of research was used in this study. As described by McBurney and White (2009), Non-experimental research, also known as correlation analysis, explores through checking for associations between the variables. Non-experimental research designs aim to look for association or relationship among variables being studied (Polit & Beck, 2004). Further, this design does not manipulate the independent variable and are usually used to look for relationship or even association between variables (Baker, 2017). Relationships between variables are explored in correlation research. Furthermore, this type of research focuses on what exists in connection with previous events affecting or influencing present conditions/circumstances (Johnson, 2007). Specifically, this study utilized a correlational research approach since the study seeks to establish the connection of service quality, customer loyalty, and brand equity on e-booking intentions among hotel guests in Region XII.

Moreover, this study used a structural equation modelling. Structural equation modeling (SEM) is a dominant method in social science multivariate analytics that is popular today (Gonzalez, de Boeck & Tuerlinckx, 2008). This approach uses a range from simple study of the interactions between factors to complex analysis of primary and higher-order calculation devices (Cheung, 2008). It offers a flexible structure that allows researcher to measure the rationality of theory through the use of empirical models for development and analysis of complex connections between different variables. Perhaps the biggest benefit is that the calculation error which is one of the key drawbacks of the majority of studies (Beran & Violato, 2010).

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is a multivariate statistical method used to model complicated connections between directly and indirectly observable (latent) variables. Structural equation modeling is a universal method that includes the simultaneous resolution of linear equation structures and incorporates many strategies such as regression, factor inquiry, route analysis, and latent development slope coding (Stein, Morris, & Nock, 2012).

2.2 Population and Sampling

Scientific process was employed in selecting the respondents. Stratified random sampling was employed in determining the respondents for this undertaking. Stratified random sampling is a population sampling approach by which the population is split into subgroups and the units of the subgroups are picked randomly. Stratification is extremely common in interview samples of target populations (Frey, 2018).

The total target respondents were computed using a slovin's formula at 0.05 significance level. Respondents of this study are the local and international guests of various hotels in Region XII who are travelling for business, leisure/vacation, or for personal purposes in which they had their bookings or reservations done online or through the hotel website. Walk in guests or those who do not book their accommodation online were be excluded from this study. The data collection period was done in the entire month of August 2019. The total number of guests who participated in this study is 450. Furthermore, the researcher utilized a purposive sampling technique. The researcher used stratified sampling because for a relatively homogenous group such as hotel guests, this method reduces the sampling errors and estimates generated by this kind of sampling method have a higher precision compared to other sampling methods.

2.3 Research Instrument

Primary data were used in gathering information about the study which contains of four parts, namely: service quality, customer loyalty, brand equity and e-booking intentions of hotel guests. The survey questionnaires utilized in the conduct of the study was sourced from various related researches Restructuring was carried out to make the instrument more applicable with the target respondents. Each questionnaire has undergone a content validation from four internal validators and then followed by an external validator. The overall average rating for the research instrument was 4.05 which is described as excellent. The Researcher conducted a pilot test of 60 samples to non-respondents and give the results to the statistician for Cronbach Alpha.

The statistical tools in analyzing the gathered data were mean, pearson product moment correlation, multiple regression and structural equation modelling. In this study mean was used to describe the extent service quality, customer loyalty, brand equity and e-booking intentions of hotel guests in Region XII, the pearsonproduct moment

correlation was employed to define the association between service quality, customer loyalty, brand equity and e-booking intentions of hotel guests in Region XII, the multiple regression was utilized to reveal the significant predictors of e-booking intentions and structural equation modeling was used to assess the interrelationships among the five hypothesized models and as well as to determine the best-fit-model for e-booking intentions. The core of this test is to ensure the exclusion of attributes with low correlations with the attributes of the other latent factors in the final model. In determining the goodness of fit, the following indices were considered: CMIN/DF 0<value<2, Tucker-Lewis Index > .95, Comparative Fit Index > .95, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation < .05, GFI >.95, p-value >.95, and P close fit > .05.

III. Results

This chapter shows the finding and results of the study based on its objectives. This part also showed the best fit model on the booking intentions of hotel guests in Region 12. Further, a comprehensive interpretation and analysis of the gathered data was done in order of the following objectives: the level of service quality, level of customer loyalty, level of brand loyalty, level of e-booking. The best fit model on e-booking of hotel guests is also presented.

3.1 Level of Service Quality

Shown in Table 1 is the level of service quality among hotels in Region 12. The overall mean score is 4.54, described as very *high*. This means that the respondents strongly agree with the overall level of service quality of hotels in the Region.

Table 1. Level of Service Quality

Indicator	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Tangibles	0.23	4.60	Very High
Reliability	0.27	4.56	Very High
Responsiveness	0.30	4.54	Very High
Empathy	0.29	4.51	Very High
Assurance	0.33	4.50	Very High
Overall	0.20	4.54	Very High

Particularly, the mean rating of the following indicators: tangibles got 4.60 described as very high; reliability obtained a mean of 4.56 which is in very high level; responsiveness got 4.54 also in very high level; assurance produced a mean score of 4.50 otherwise described as very high; and empathy got 4.51 which is also in high level.

Displayed in Table 2 is the level of customer loyalty of hotel guests in Region 12 and items of the indicators of this variable are analyzed and interpreted as shown in the appended Table A. As shown, a means ranging from 4.49 to 4.53 and the overall mean score is 4.50 described as very high. It can be seen from the data that action loyalty has the maximum mean rating of 4.53 and conative loyalty is the lowest at 4.48. These indicators have a descriptive level of very high.

Table 2. Level of Customer Loyalty

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Action Loyalty	0.28	4.53	Very High
Affective Loyalty	0.31	4.50	Very High
Cognitive Loyalty	0.28	4.49	Very High
Conative Loyalty	0.32	4.48	Very High
Overall	0.21	4.50	Very High

The level of brand equity is shown in Table 3 and the items of each of these variables were presented and analyzed in appended Table 3. Shown in the table is the level of brand equity of hotel guests in Region 12 with mean scores ranging from 4.46 to 4.51 with the overall mean score of 4.47 otherwise described as very high with a standard deviation of 0.299. It can be seen from the data that the indicators that have the lowest mean are brand image and brand

association. On the other hand, the indicator that obtained the highest mean score is brand awareness with a mean score of 4.51 described as very high level.

Table 3. Level of Brand Equity

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Brand Awareness	0.31	4.51	Very High
Brand Association	0.39	4.46	Very High
Brand Image	0.39	4.46	Very High
Perceived Quality	0.40	4.44	Very High
Overall	0.29	4.47	Very High

3.4 Level of E-booking

Shown in Table 4 is the data on the level of e-booking of hotel guests in Region 12 and the items of each indicator under this variable is interpreted and analyzed in appended Table 4. As shown in the table, the level of e-booking among hotel guests in Region 12 with means ranging from 4.46 to 4.48 with corresponding overall mean score of 4.48 described as *very high* with a standard deviation of 0.242. Based on the data, the indicator that obtained the lowest mean is *price* and *purchase intention* got the highest mean score of 4.48 which is in *very high level*.

Table 4. Level of E-Booking

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Value	0.32	4.53	Very High
Purchase Intention	0.32	4.48	Very High
Trust	0.35	4.47	Very High
Price	0.36	4.46	Very High
Overall	0.24	4.48	Very High

3.5 Correlation between Service Quality and E-booking

Reflected in Table 5 is the significant relationship between the level of service quality and e-booking of hotel guests in Region 12 with the overall computed r-value of 0.398 and a p-value of 0.000 which is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant association between service quality and e-booking intention of hotel guests. This further signifies that the higher the service quality, the higher the possibility that guests intends to book the hotel online. Moreover, when tangibles is correlated with price, it obtained an r-value of 0.208 and p-value of .000; as to the reliability, it garnered an r-value of 0.262 and p-value of .000; as to the reliability, it garnered an r-value of 0.262 and p-value of .000.

Table 5. Correlation between Levels of Service Quality and E-Booking

Service Quality	E-Booking				Overall
	Price	Trust	Value	Purchase Intention	
Tangibles	0.208* (0.000)	0.228* (0.000)	0.143* (0.003)	0.102* (0.037)	0.245* (0.000)
Reliability	0.262* (0.000)	0.193* (0.000)	0.101* (0.039)	0.137* (0.005)	0.245* (0.000)
Responsiveness	0.277* (0.000)	0.278* (0.000)	0.176* (0.000)	0.155* (0.001)	0.318* (0.000)
Assurance	0.242* (0.000)	0.306* (0.000)	0.210* (0.000)	0.208* (0.000)	0.344* (0.000)
Empathy (0.002)	0.147* (0.000)	0.214* (0.003)	0.143* (0.002)	0.149* (0.000)	0.232* (0.000)
Overall	0.323* (0.000)	0.349* (0.000)	0.222* (0.000)	0.218* (0.000)	0.398* (0.000)

3.6 Correlation between Customer Loyalty and E-booking

Shown in Table 6 is the significance on the relationship between the level of customer loyalty and e-booking of hotel guests in Region 12 with the overall computed r-value of 0.433 and a p-value of 0.000 which is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between customer loyalty and e-booking of hotel guests in Region 12. Further, it can be gleaned from the data that price, trust, value, and purchase intention when correlated with cognitive loyalty, the overall r-value is 0.285 with $p < 0.05$, thus significant. Moreover, when the indicators of e-booking when correlated with action loyalty, the overall r-value is 0.339 with $p < 0.05$, thus significant.

Table 6. Correlation between Levels of Customer Loyalty and E-Booking

Customer Loyalty	E-Booking				
	Price	Trust	Value	Purchase Intention	Overall
Cognitive Loyalty	0.258* (0.000)	0.240* (0.000)	0.145* (0.003)	0.149* (0.002)	0.285* (0.000)
Affective Loyalty	0.293* (0.000)	0.277* (0.000)	0.151* (0.002)	0.128* (0.008)	0.307* (0.000)
Conative Loyalty	0.383* (0.000)	0.237* (0.000)	0.108* (0.027)	0.158* (0.001)	0.322* (0.000)
Action Loyalty	0.322* (0.000)	0.263* (0.000)	0.170* (0.000)	0.187* (0.000)	0.339* (0.000)
Overall	0.437* (0.000)	0.352* (0.000)	0.197* (0.000)	0.215* (0.000)	0.433* (0.000)

3.7 Correlation Between Brand Equity and E-booking

Displayed in Table 7 is the correlation between the levels of brand equity and e-booking of hotel guests in Region 12 with the overall computed r- value of 0.527 and a p-value of 0.000 which is lower than 0.05 level of significance, hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between brand equity and e-booking of hotel guests in Region 12. Based on the data presented, when price, trust, value, and purchase intention is correlated to brand awareness, the overall r-value is 0.379 with $p < 0.05$, hence significant. In addition, when brand equity is correlated to the indicators of e-booking, the overall r-value is 0.527 with $p < 0.05$, thus significant.

Table 7. Correlation between Levels of Brand Equity and E-Booking

Brand Equity	E-Booking				
	Price	Trust	Value	Purchase Intention	Overall
Brand Awareness	0.441* (0.000)	0.324* (0.000)	0.095* (0.052)	0.179* (0.000)	0.379* (0.000)
Brand Association	0.466* (0.000)	0.313* (0.000)	0.210* (0.000)	0.181* (0.000)	0.423* (0.000)
Perceived Quality	0.504* (0.000)	0.323* (0.000)	0.216* (0.000)	0.141* (0.000)	0.430* (0.000)
Brand Image	0.442* (0.000)	0.312* (0.000)	0.248* (0.000)	0.188* (0.000)	0.428* (0.000)
Overall	0.588* (0.000)	0.402* (0.000)	0.250* (0.000)	0.218* (0.000)	0.527* (0.000)

3.8 Best Fit Model that Predicts E-Booking of Hotel Guests

Presented hereunder is the thorough analysis of the interrelationships between variables of this study. There were four alternative models tested and each of these models were carefully analyzed. The four generated models were shown in appended Table 1. In determining the best fit model of this study, all indices must meet and fall within the acceptable values. Chi-square/degrees of freedom value should be less than 0 with its corresponding p-value less than

to 0.02. Root Mean Square of Error Approximation value must be less than 0.05 and its corresponding p-close value must be greater or equal to 0.05. The other indices such a Normed Fit Index, Tucker Lewis Index, Comparative Fit Index and Goodness of Fit must be all greater than 0.95.

The first generated model displayed a direct causal relationship of the exogenous variables: service quality, customer loyalty, and brand image to e-booking intention of hotel guests. Some of the computed indices under this model do not meet with the minimum acceptable ranges, hence the model is poor fit. The model is appended in this study as Figure –A1.

Table 8.Summary of Goodness of Fit Measures of the Five Structural Models

Model	CMIN/DF	P-Value	NFI	TLI	CFI	GFI	RMSEA	P-close
0<value>2	> .05	> .95	> .95	> .95	> .95	< .05	< .05	
1	2.6720.000	.834	.865	.888	.858	.087	0.000	
2	2.867	0.000	.851	.867	.896	.881	.092	0.000
3	1.643	0.007	.932	.959	.972	.948	.054	0.364
4	1.372	0.119	.952	.976	.986	.970	.041	0.624

The second generated structural model demonstrates the interrelationship between the exogenous variables, service quality, customer loyalty, and brand image to e-booking intention of hotel guests. Based on the on indices, the p-value is 0.00, RMSEA has the value of .092 and p-close is 0.000, all did not pass the minimum required values. The model is appended in this study as Figure 1-B.

For the third structural model, it highlighted the direct relationship of service quality, customer loyalty, and brand image to e-booking intention of hotel guests. As shown, the results revealed that the model is a non-fit as indicated by the p-value of 0.007, RMSEA is 0.054 with p-close of 0.364. The model is appended in this study as Figure 1-C.

The last model is a modified model showing a direct causal relationship of the exogenous service quality, customer loyalty, and brand image to e-booking intention of hotel guests as shown in Figure 6. Based on the data, all indices found to have a good fit as shown by CMIN/DF= 1.372, p-value = 0.119, RMSEA = 0.041, p-close= 0.624 and indices such as NFI (0.952), TLI (0.976), CFI (0.986) and GFI (0.970). All indices appeared to have their corresponding values greater than 0.90 and satisfied the goodness of fit measures.

As shown, the model clearly displayed the association of service quality, customer loyalty, and brand image to e-booking intention of hotel guests. Additionally, service quality, customer loyalty, and brand equity are significant drivers for hotel guests to book their accommodation online among hotels in Region 12. Thus, tangibles and reliability are considered to be the foundations of service quality, the same with cognitive loyalty and action loyalty for customer loyalty and brand awareness, brand image, and brand equity.

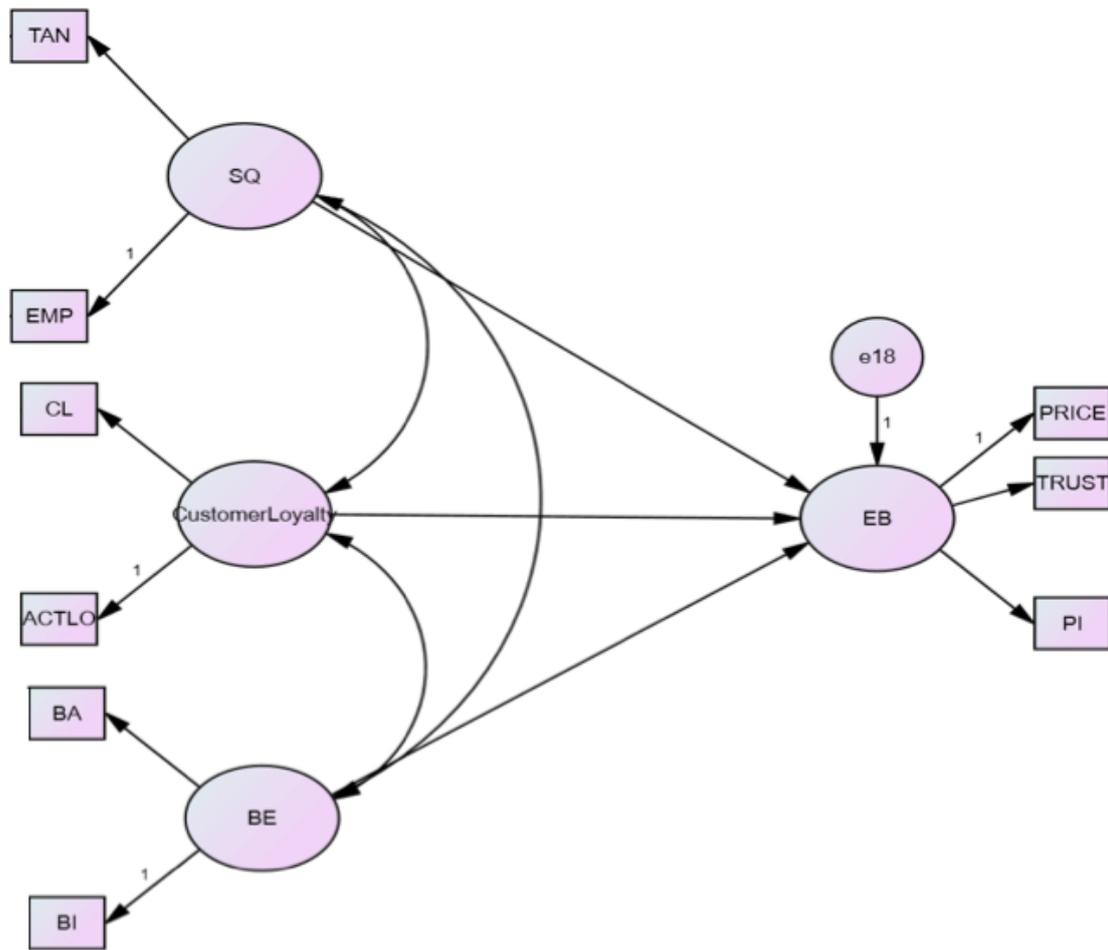


Figure 1. Structural Model 4 in Standardized Solution

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Legend: TAN -Tangibles | BA -Brand Awareness |
| REL -Reliability | BRANASS -Brand Association |
| RES-Responsiveness | PQ -Perceived Quality |
| ASS -Assurance | BI - Brand Image |
| EMP -Empathy | BE- Brand Equity |
| SQ -Service Quality | PRICE -Price |
| CL - Cognitive Loyalty | TRUST -Trust |
| AL Affective Loyalty | VALUE -Value |
| CONLO -Conative Loyalty | PI -Purchase Intention |
| ACTLO -Action Loyalty | EB - E-Booking |
| CUSTLO -Customer Loyalty | |

Conclusion

Based on the empirical findings, the following conclusions were drawn. First, service quality, customer loyalty, brand image, and e-booking intentions obtained a very high level as indicated by their overall mean scores. This means that the intentions of the guests to book the hotel using the web is determined by the level of service, loyalty status and image of the hotel brand. As to the observed variables of the study, all of it obtained very high levels as indicated by their individual mean scores. In addition, the null hypothesis that stated that there is no best fit model that predicts e-booking intentions of guests in Region 12 was rejected.

The test of association between service quality, customer loyalty, and brand images towards e-booking intentions reveals that the null hypothesis is rejected, thus there is a significant relationship between and among the abovementioned variables. The result is therefore congruent with Buhalis & Law, (2008); Law, Qi, & Buhalis, (2010); and Rong, Li, and Law (2009); Sigala (2011) on the relationship of service quality and e-booking, the studies of Carev (2008);

Hyun (2010); Tu et al. (2012) also established the link and association concerning customer loyalty and e-booking and the association between brand equity is confirmed by the study of Lien et al. (2015).

The relationship between service quality and e-booking is confirmed by the studies of Parasuraman et al. (1988) who posited that the growing rivalry in hotel industry has led hotel booking services reconsider the quality of services that they offer as this will affect their survival. Thus, service quality has become one of the indicators of customer intentions. Also, the connection between customer loyalty and e-booking was confirmed by the studies of Hsu et al. (2012) who posited that hotels are exploring an operational means to keep clientele make a direct reservation through the webpage of the hotel and they provide the lowest possible rates which lead to the promotion of loyalty among consumers.

Finally, results of this research undertaking confirmed the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing (KMT) by Morgan and Hunt (1994) where they pointed out the role of trust and commitment which are seemed important in the e-commerce framework. They further argue that clients are not willing to shop or book online if they do not trust the web and the level of service quality of these websites. Also, the technology acceptance model theory by Davis (1985) contemplates that the most efficient tactic on the intention of the consumer to book is the level of service and acceptance.

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