

**FACTOR THAT INFLUENCING THAI CONSUMERS'
INTENTION TO USE AIRBNB SERVICES WHEN
BOOKING THEIR ACCOMMODATIONS**



SIRICHIT CHIT-OPHATSRIPHET

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
STAMFORD INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
ACADEMIC YEAR 2017**

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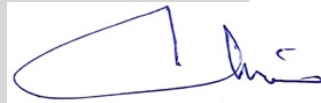
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Title: Factors that influencing Thai consumers' intention to use Airbnb services when booking their accommodations

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Abstract

This research was conducted to examine trends in online accommodation booking among Thai consumers, to determine which variables contribute to Airbnb usage intentions for this consumer group, and to develop a series of recommendations for online accommodation service providers targeting the Thai market. Data was collected using a custom survey that was designed to gather information about online accommodation booking preferences and behaviors, as well as the degree to which attitude toward online booking, reference groups, perceived behavioral control, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), and trust contribute to the likelihood of using Airbnb services. A convenience sample (n = 400) of Thai consumers was recruited to complete a self-administered questionnaire, and descriptive and regression analyses were conducted. eWOM was found to have the greatest influence on Airbnb usage intentions, followed by (in descending order of significance), attitude, perceived behavioral control, trust, and reference groups. Of the two reference groups featured in the study, celebrities had a slightly stronger influence than friends and family. However, the influence of reference groups was weak compared to the other variables. The descriptive findings indicate that attitudes toward Airbnb are largely positive, though there is room for improvement; that trust is very important to Thai consumers; and that potential Airbnb customers typically consult online reviews before deciding whether to use an online accommodation booking service. This study adds to the academic literature on consumer influences and preferences within a rapidly growing industry and provides further evidence for the usefulness of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a predictor of consumer intentions. Limitations of the study included the use of a convenience sample that was skewed toward particular demographic groups, a

focus on intentions rather than observed behaviors, and the inclusion of only five independent variables.



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Sirichit Chit-ophatsriphet

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction of the Research

In recent years, there has been a global trend toward online accommodation booking. The global worldwide online accommodation booking industry was worth \$164 billion USD in 2013, and online travel sales to Asia-Pacific customers are expected to reach \$155 billion USD in 2017 (Euromonitor International, 2014). Although there are no statistics available for Thailand's online accommodation booking industry, there is evidence that the proportion of Thai consumers who purchase accommodations using online channels has been increasing significantly in recent years (Euromonitor International, 2015; Visansakon & Prougestaporn, 2015). This rise in online accommodation booking has been driven by increasing Internet penetration and the establishment of 3G and 4G infrastructure in Thailand, along with heavily discounted accommodation options (Euromonitor International, 2015), online booking's ease of use and efficiency, and the preferences of a new tech-savvy generation of consumers (Visansakon&Prougestaporn, 2015).

Popular online accommodation websites serving Thai consumers include Booking.com, Agoda.com, HotelsThailand.com, and Hotelscombined.co.th (Euromonitor International, 2015). However, in recent years, a relatively new company called Airbnb has been gaining market share within the industry. Airbnb facilitates online bookings of residential accommodations, allowing regular people to rent out their homes to tourists. Although it was only established in 2007, the company has enjoyed rapid growth, and now books millions of accommodations each year on a global basis (Guttentag, 2013). The company's success is attributable to the fact that it provides less expensive options for travelers while allowing individuals to make extra money by renting out spaces in their homes (Wang, 2014). However, Airbnb is more than just an online booking company. It also acts as a social network where users can exchange information regarding their travel interests and experiences (Zekanović-Korona&Grzunov, 2014). This is important, because travelers are increasingly turning

to social media for the information they require to choose destinations and accommodations (Raungpaka&Ritbumroong, 2014).

1.2 Research Objectives

There are three objectives develop under this research. These objectives are:

1. To explore the online accommodation business.
2. To investigate factors that influence the intention of Thai consumers to book accommodations online via Airbnb
 - 2.1 The influence of attitude toward online booking on the intention of Thai consumers to book accommodations online via Airbnb
 - 2.2 The influence of reference groups on the intention on Thai consumers to book accommodations online via Airbnb
 - 2.3 The influence of perceived behavioral control on the intention of Thai consumers to book accommodations online via Airbnb
 - 2.4 The influence of electronic word of mouth on the intention of Thai consumers to book accommodations online via Airbnb
 - 2.5 The influence of trust on the intention of Thai consumers to book accommodations online via Airbnb
3. To provide recommendations for online accommodation businesses

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the current situations of booking accommodation online business?
2. What are factors that can influence the intention of Thai consumers to book accommodations online using Airbnb?
 - 2.1 Can attitude toward online booking significantly influence on the intention of Thai consumers to book accommodations online using Airbnb?

2.2 Can reference groups significantly influence the intention of Thai consumers to book accommodations online using Airbnb?

2.3 Can perceived behavioral control significantly influence on the intention of Thai consumers to book accommodations online using Airbnb?

2.4 Can electronic word of mouth significantly influence on the intention of Thai consumers to book accommodations online using Airbnb?

2.5 Can trust significantly influence on the intention of Thai consumers to book accommodations online using Airbnb?

3. What are recommendations that can help enhance booking accommodation online businesses?

1.4 Statement of Problem

The online accommodation industry has seen dramatic growth in recent years (Euromonitor International, 2014; Visansakon&Prougestaporn, 2015). However, the industry has become more competitive because increasing numbers of accommodation providers have adopted online booking technology. Rising competition is nullifying the advantages associated with lower prices, as major discounts are now a minimum requirement to compete rather than a differentiating factor (Visansakon&Prougestaporn, 2015). This means that online accommodation booking companies such as Airbnb, whose early success was largely driven by the initial advantage of lower pricing, must now seek new ways to attract and retain customers.

In addition to pricing, there are a number of ways that online accommodation booking companies can gain a competitive advantage. They can develop social media campaigns to encourage positive electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), which increases the likelihood that consumers will choose a particular accommodation provider (Mauri&Minazzi, 2013; Milovic, 2012; Ye, Law, &Gu, 2009); improve service quality to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty (Visansakon&Prougestaporn, 2015); promote trust (Kim, Chung, & Lee, 2011; Wen, 2009); and adopt marketing and service

delivery approaches based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which has proven effective for predicting buying intentions (Chen & Tung, 2014; GamalAboelmaged, 2010; George, 2004; Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010; Pavlou & Chai, 2002; Teng, 2011). The TPB is described in more detail in the section that follows.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework underpinning this research is the TPB, which is presented in Figure 1. The TPB, which was developed by Ajzen (1991), is based on the idea that behavioral intentions are influenced by attitudes toward a behavior, subjective norms related to the behavior, and perceived behavioral control (the degree to which consumers believe that engaging in the behavior will be easy or difficult), and that behavioral intentions, in turn, predict actual behaviors. The three independent variables also influence one another under this model, and perceived behavioral control can have a direct impact on behavior as well. The predictive value of the TPB for purchasing intentions and behaviors has been shown in a number of studies examining consumer willingness to make online purchases (GamalAboelmaged, 2010; George, 2004; Pavlou & Chai, 2002) and selection of travel accommodations (Chen & Tung, 2014; Han et al., 2010; Teng, 2011).

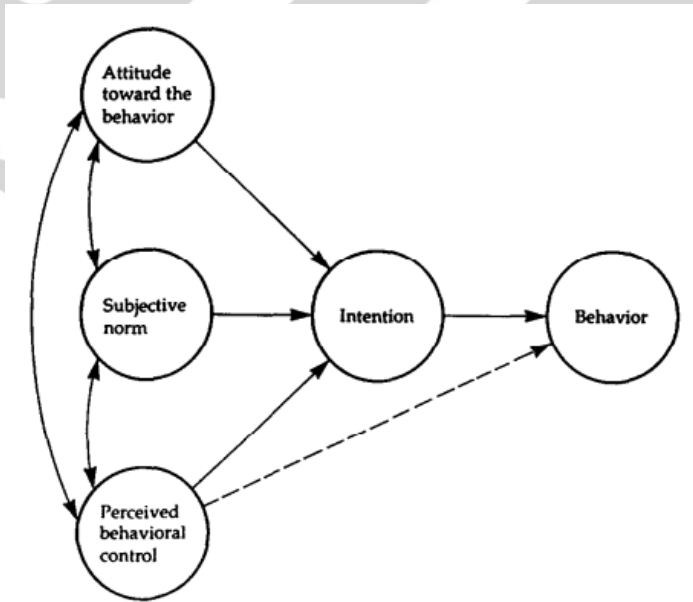


Figure 1: The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991)

1.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research, which is presented in Figure 2, is based on the TPB, but also includes additional variables relevant to the online accommodation booking industry. As with the TPB, attitudes, reference groups (adapted from subjective norms), and perceived behavioral control all influence intentions. However, additional influences include eWOM and trust.

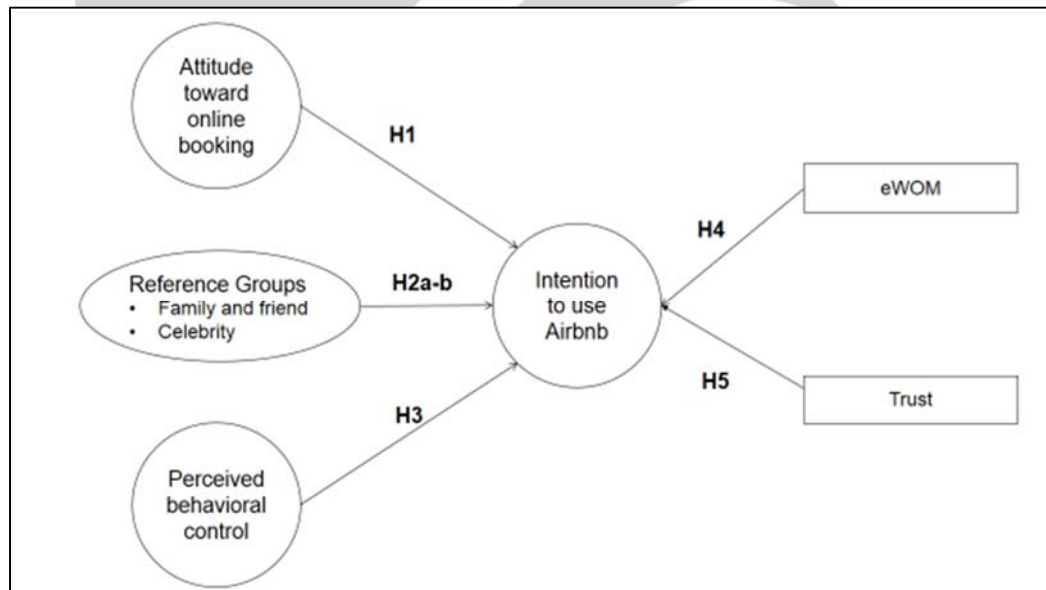


Figure 2: Conceptual model

Based on this conceptual model, seven hypotheses were developed. The first five, which suggest that perceived behavioral control and subjective norms influence attitudes toward online accommodation booking, and that intention to use Airbnb is influenced by attitudes, reference groups, and perceived behavioral control, are based on past research indicating that TPB variables influence tourist accommodation purchasing decisions (Chen & Tung, 2014; Han et al., 2010; Teng, 2011).

H1: Intention to use Airbnb is influenced by attitude toward online accommodation booking.

H2: Intention to use Airbnb is influenced by reference groups.

H2a: Intention to use Airbnb is influenced by family and friends.

H2b: Intention to use Airbnb is influenced by celebrity.

H3: Intention to use Airbnb is influenced by perceived behavioral control.

The fourth hypothesis, which suggests that eWOM influences the intention to use Airbnb, is based on prior research showing that accommodation decisions can be influenced by eWOM (Mauri&Minazzi, 2013; Milovic, 2012; Ye et al., 2009).

H4: Intention to use Airbnb is influenced by electronic word of mouth.

The fifth hypothesis, which proposes that trust influences the intention to use Airbnb, is based on prior research indicating that trust is an important factor in tourism consumer purchasing intentions (Kim et al., 2011; Wen, 2009).

H5: Intention to use Airbnb is influenced by trust.

1.7 Scope of the Research

This research is partially focused on consumer behavior study since there is limited of time and resources. The consumer behavior studies in this research will be intention of Thai consumer's behavior toward booking accommodation online, using a case of Airbnb. This research only focuses on behavioral intention because the information about actual customers or users of Airbnb is subjected to the company privacy and cannot be accessed by public.

Moreover, this research will take the form of a quantitative study. Data will be collected using a questionnaire that will be developed to support this research and tested for reliability prior to conducting the study. The sample population will be consumers who have previous experience using online accommodation booking services. Participants will be recruited using a convenience sampling approach, as this study will rely on volunteer participation. All participants will be at least 18 years of age and currently residing in Thailand. Therefore, the findings may not be representative of consumers who book their accommodations online in other nations.

The questionnaires will be self-administered online for efficiency and convenience. Using self-administered questionnaires rather than conducting the surveys in person will enable the researcher to include a sufficiently large number of subjects to yield meaningful results. Participants will remain anonymous, so their privacy will be maintained. Although the questionnaire will request some basic demographic information about the study participants, no personally identifying information such as names or addresses will be required.

Data will be analyzed using SPSS software. This analysis will include both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics will provide information about Thai consumer behaviors with regard to online accommodation booking in general and Airbnb in particular. The inferential analysis will enable the researcher to determine the degree to which perceived behavioral control and subjective norms influence attitudes, and attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, eWOM, and trust influence purchasing intentions toward Airbnb.

1.8 Limitations of the Research

This research suffers from several limitations. First, because a convenience sample will be used, there is a risk that selection bias may be introduced (Schonlau, 2004), in which case, the results would not be representative of the general population of Thai consumers who use online accommodation booking services. Second, this research is confined to the TPB variables (attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) plus eWOM and trust, and therefore will not include other variables that have been shown to influence purchasing intentions in other studies, such as customer satisfaction (Wen, 2009). Third, this research relies on self-report of purchasing intentions rather than observations of actual purchasing behaviors. Although there is a strong correlation between self-reported purchasing intentions and behaviors, it is not a perfect correlation (Chandon, Morwitz, & Reinartz, 2005), so it is possible that some consumers who state their intention to use Airbnb services in the future will not actually do so.

1.9 Significance of the Research

This research will have significance for both academic researchers and companies serving the online accommodation industry. For those conducting research in the academic fields of consumer psychology, tourism marketing, and general business studies, this research will address a gap in the literature by providing insights into the factors that influence Thai consumer decision-making with regard to online accommodation booking. However, this research will also yield information that can help Airbnb and other online accommodation booking companies develop better strategies for attracting and retaining customers. By determining the variables that exert the strongest influence on the selection of online accommodation booking service providers, this study will offer guidance that can help companies such as Airbnb adopt more effective service quality enhancement and marketing approaches. This is important, given that the online accommodation booking industry is becoming increasingly competitive, which means that companies offering these services must find new ways to differentiate themselves.

1.10 Definition of Terms

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Attitude toward online booking | "A person's positive or negative evaluation of a relevant behavior" and assert that it "is composed of a person's salient beliefs regarding the perceived outcomes of performing a behavior" (Shim, Eastlick, Lotz, & Warrington, 2001, p. 400). |
|--------------------------------|--|

Thus, attitude in this research refer to the positive and negative opinion of individual towards online booking.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Reference Groups | The degree to which an individual believes that significant others (for example, friends, family, and colleagues) would evaluate the behavior positively or negatively. |
|------------------|---|

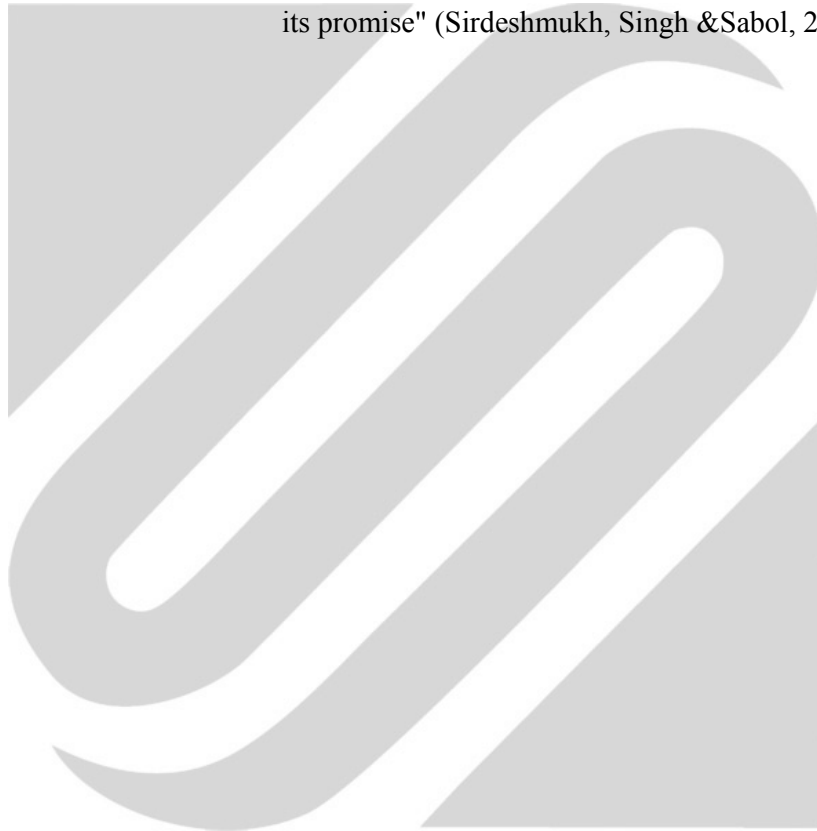
The reference groups focus under this research are family and friend and celebrity.

Perceived Behavioral Control

The degree to which an individual expects that performing the action will be easy or difficult.

Trust

"The expectations held by the consumer that the service provider is dependable and can be relied on to deliver on its promise" (Sirdeshmukh, Singh & Sabol, 2002, p. 17).



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEWS

This chapter presents the literature review that was conducted to develop a better understanding of the online booking industry, and to examine theoretical foundations and prior research relevant to this study. In particular, the review sought to identify past studies that have used either the TPB, eWOM, trust, or some combination of the three to examine online purchasing intentions and behaviors in the context of travel-related products and services. The literature search focused primarily on peer-reviewed journal articles, though industry reports were also used to gather current statistics.

The chapter begins with an overview of the current online accommodation booking industry, both globally and in Thailand, and the trends that will shape its future, in section 2.1. Section 2.2 provides a discussion of the theoretical foundations of this research, which include the TPB, as well as the significance of eWOM and trust to online purchasing. Section 2.3 summarizes past research related to the study variables: attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, eWOM, trust, and behavioral intentions. This section includes studies not only of online accommodation booking, but also related activities, such as seeking information about and purchasing travel products using online channels. The chapter closes with a summary of the literature review findings and research rationale in section 2.4.

2.1 Online Accommodation Booking Industry

The introduction of new technologies on a global scale has supported the development of a Web 2.0 marketing environment in which social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter are the primary promotional channels and eWOM plays a major role in consumer decision making (Goh, Ho, & Jiang, 2015). Consumers are increasingly using online channels to purchase travel products and services due to the accessibility, flexibility, convenience, and efficiency provided by e-commerce compared to traditional sales methods (Chen, 2014). Accommodations are now second

only to airline tickets as the travel products most frequently purchased online (Bilgihan&Bujisic, 2015; Pircher, 2012).

The rise of e-commerce has created new opportunities for intermediaries that sell products to consumers on behalf of hotels and other travel-related companies. Intermediaries have standardized formats that make them easy to use when seeking information and conducting transactions, and they allow buyers to compare options and prices (Pircher, 2012). In recent years, new peer-to-peer intermediaries such as Airbnb have been gaining in popularity. Peer-to-peer intermediaries enable consumers to rent accommodations from regular people who have houses, apartments, or single rooms available, helping those with homes make extra money renting their spaces out to tourists. The transactions are facilitated by websites and mobile applications, and these platforms often allow guests to review or leave comments regarding the accommodations as well, which creates an interactive element that encourages WOM (Goh et al., 2015).

2.1.1 Worldwide

The global online accommodation booking industry has been growing rapidly, and it accounts for an ever-increasing share of the global e-commerce market for travel products. According to a recent Euromonitor International (2014) report, it was worth \$164 billion USD in 2013, and the Asian market was expected to generate \$155 billion USD in sales by 2017. Statistics provided by Chen (2014) indicate that online accommodation booking and online sales of other types of travel products now comprise approximately one-third of all travel sales worldwide. Online accommodation sales increased by 50% in the Asia-Pacific market and 20% in Europe between 2010 and 2011 alone, and 83% of all leisure travelers in the U.S. use the Internet to arrange their travel plans.

Online accommodation booking websites, which act as intermediaries between accommodation providers and consumers, have been capturing an increasing share of the overall travel market in recent years. As of 2012, nearly one-third (32%) of hotel revenues were generated by online bookings, and booking through intermediaries increased by 14% in 2013 (Chen, 2014). Because the widespread adoption of online booking has enabled consumers to search for the best available discounts,

accommodation providers have been offering lower room prices and providing more up-to-date information in order to remain competitive (Wang & Wang, 2010).

2.1.2 Thailand

There are no statistics available regarding the volume and value of Thailand's online accommodation booking industry, but there is evidence that the industry has experienced dramatic growth in recent years (Euromonitor International, 2015; Visansakon & Prougestaporn, 2015). Factors driving this growth have included increasing Internet adoption, the development of 3G and 4G infrastructure in the nation, significant discounts on accommodations (Euromonitor International, 2015), the fact that consumers perceive online booking as easier and more efficient than traditional telephone booking, and the rise of a new tech-savvy consumer generation who like to make purchases online (Visansakon & Prougestaporn, 2015). The most popular online accommodation websites serving the Thai marketplace are Booking.com, Agoda.com, HotelsThailand.com, and Hotelscombined.co.th (Euromonitor International, 2015). Thai consumers have a generally favorable attitude toward online accommodation booking, and particularly appreciate the lower prices and efficiency it offers, but they do have concerns regarding security (Chatchotitham & Soponprapapon, 2010).

2.1.3 Trends

Customers have shown a preference for the choice, flexibility, efficiency, and lower prices available through online booking, and this preference will likely drive future trends in the industry. Travel consumers are increasingly consulting online accommodation booking websites and sites where travel product and service reviews are posted not only to gather information, but also to find the best discounts (Chen, 2014). This indicates that accommodation prices may continue to be driven downward by bargain-hunting consumers. There is also likely to be an increase in consumer-to-consumer businesses, given the broad trends toward collaborative and access-based consumption and a sharing economy (Liang, 2015; Satama, 2014).

Another important trend is the shift to m-commerce. E-commerce will make up an ever-increasing share of the overall travel market (Chen, 2014), and a rising

proportion of these transactions will take place on mobile devices. While accommodation providers have been taking advantage of the new opportunities provided by e-commerce, in order to stay competitive, they will also need to offer user-friendly mobile accommodation booking systems to take advantage of the fact that increasing numbers of consumers are doing their travel-related purchasing using mobile devices (Wang & Wang, 2010). According to a 2013 China Internet Network Information Center report, approximately 20.3% of the 133 consumers who have booked accommodations online conducted their transactions using mobile devices, and many online travel agencies are now investing in mobile technology (Zhong, Luo, & Zhang, 2015).

2.2 Related Theories

2.2.1 Theory of Planned Behavior

Ajzen's (1991) TPB evolved as an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which sought to predict social behaviors based on the personal influence of attitude and the social influence of subjective norms (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The TPB expanded on the TRA by adding an additional component: perceived behavioral control. According to Ajzen's (1991) TPB, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control all directly influence the intention to engage in a particular behavior, which in turn influences the likelihood of actually doing so. Shim, Eastlick, Lotz, and Warrington (2001) define attitude as "a person's positive or negative evaluation of a relevant behavior" and assert that it "is composed of a person's salient beliefs regarding the perceived outcomes of performing a behavior" (p. 400). They define subjective norms as the degree to which an individual believes that significant others (for example, friends, family, and colleagues) would evaluate the behavior positively or negatively, and perceived behavioral control as whether an individual expects that performing the action will be easy or difficult. Intentions are defined as the individual's motivation to engage in a behavior, along with the amount of effort he or she will exert to do so.

Each of the independent variables in Ajzen's (1991) TPB model is based on an antecedent set of beliefs. In the context of online accommodation booking, attitudes toward an action would depend on whether the individual believed that booking

accommodations online would be likely to have positive or negative consequences. Subjective norms would arise in response to beliefs regarding the opinions and preferences of important individuals with regard to online accommodation booking. Perceived behavioral control would be based on whether the individual believed that he or she possessed the skills and resources required to book accommodations online, along with expectations regarding barriers to performing this action.

Attitude, in the general context of consumption behaviors, is the anticipated outcome of consuming a product or service, and this evaluation has two components, instrumental and experiential. Instrumental attitudes manifest as judgments (for example, whether something is valuable or worthless), and experiential attitudes arise due to perceptions of something as enjoyable or unenjoyable, or pleasant or unpleasant (Knabe, 2012). Consumer attitudes are formed in response to perceptions regarding the potential benefits, risks, and costs associated with purchasing a product or service (Chen, 2014). Attitude has been shown to predict behavioral intentions in a variety of contexts related to product and service consumption and technology use (Adzjen & Fishbein, 1980; Bhattacharjee, 2000; Knabe, 2012; Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006).

The attitudes, values, personal norms, and behaviors of individuals arise at least partially in response to social pressures from reference groups (Hsu, Kang, & Lam, 2006). According to Goh et al. (2015), subjective norms can be considered a form of social pressure whereby individuals are influenced by the opinions of reference group members, and this social pressure affects consumer behavior. Consumers usually adopt the ideas and beliefs of significant others, including family members, romantic partners, and close friends, and these groups influence not only purchasing decisions, but also technology adoption, both of which are relevant to online accommodation booking. Although subjective norms are often considered in the context of interpersonal communications among friends, relatives, and colleagues, reference groups influencing consumption may also include industry experts (Kim, Kim, & Shin, 2009) and members of aspirational groups (groups the individual would like to join), such as celebrities (White & Dahl, 2006).

Subjective norms have been shown to influence behavioral intentions in a number of contexts related to technology use (Bhattacharjee, 2000; Morris & Venkatesh, 2000) and travel (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalú, 2010; Quintal, Lee, &

Soutar, 2010). While there is plenty of evidence that the desire for social conformity contributes to consumer decision making (Chen, 2014), the degree to which subjective norms influence consumer behavior varies based on product or service type and sociocultural factors (Hsu et al., 2006). Also, measures of subjective norms vary from one study to the next. However, a review of the literature indicates that researchers tend to focus on the degree to which significant others would approve of a particular action or decision, and would be likely to do or choose the same. In the context of online accommodation booking, subjective norms might include the degree to which significant others approve of the travel destination, the type of accommodation chosen, or the decision to book accommodations through a website rather than by phone. The influence of subjective norms overlaps with that of eWOM, as the recommendations posted by others online can have a normative influence (Chen, 2014).

Perceived behavioral control often manifests as confidence or a sense of self-efficacy in one's ability to perform an action, and it takes into account anticipated obstacles, opportunities, and skills required to complete the action (Goh et al., 2015). In the context of travel, perceived behavioral control may be affected by a number of different obstacles, such as cost, language barriers, currency exchange rates, government regulations, distance, time, climate, safety concerns, and family demands (Sparks & Pan, 2009). From this list, it can be determined that the opportunities and skills that influence perceived behavioral control include having sufficient money for a trip, speaking the language associated with the travel destination, a favorable currency exchange rate, lack of problematic government regulations, choosing a travel destination that is relatively close or having the means to reach a far destination, getting time off to take a vacation, the perception that the destination climate is favorable, believing that the destination and the means to travel there are relatively safe, and lack of restrictive family demands (either family can accompany the traveler or there are no family members who require continuous care). There are also a number of personal factors that may influence perceived behavioral control. In a study of online accommodation booking, Chen (2014) evaluated perceived behavioral control based on the degree to which respondents trusted their own judgment in product selections, felt that they had sufficient information search skills, and were confident that they would be able to find the best discounts online.

Intentions are used to predict behavior under the TPB. However, although intentions are correlated with behaviors, they do not predict behavior in every case. Reasons why intentions may not match behaviors in some cases include consumers adapting their plans to changing circumstances or requirements in the time between stating intentions and conducting transactions, or buyers abandoning the purchasing process partway through a transaction (Mzoughi & Negra, 2012).

Research has shown that the TPB can predict behavior in a variety of contexts (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Knabe, 2012; Pavlou & Fygenon, 2006; Sparks & Pan, 2009). In addition to the substantial empirical support for its efficacy, the theory has a number of strengths, including its applicability to a wide variety of contexts and the fact that it is easy to understand and use (Knabe, 2012). The primary criticism of the TPB (and the TRA from which it evolved) is its failure to take emotional variables into account due to a presumption of rational behavior in all cases, despite the fact that human behavior can be affected by mood, anxiety, fear, and other affective states (Knabe, 2012). However, it can be argued that emotional factors are included within the attitude component of the theory (Knabe, 2012).

2.2.2 eWOM

Goh et al. (2015) define eWOM as online exchanges that allow people "to communicate in an unbiased manner regarding products or services in a platform believed to be non-related with an organization" (p. 1). It can be distinguished from traditional WOM in a number of ways. It is global rather than confined to geographically base social networks, it is available to anyone who takes the time to read online reviews, and it originates from many different consumers and therefore provides more comprehensive insights (Sparks & Browning, 2011). Potential customers view eWOM posted by other consumers as more trustworthy than marketing communications put out by companies (Goh et al., 2015; Li & Bernoff, 2008; Sparks, Perkins, & Buckley, 2013), and eWOM tends to have a greater impact on purchasing intentions than reviews written by experts (Chen, 2008).

eWOM can enhance or damage a company's reputation (Sparks & Browning, 2011), and trust arises, in part, from the reputation of a company and its website (Riegelsberger, Sasse, & McCarthy, 2005). Given that trust contributes to purchasing

decisions (Comegys, Hannula, & Väisänen, 2009; Sichtmann, 2007), companies selling accommodations online must engage in marketing strategies designed to encourage positive eWOM or risk losing business to their competitors.

2.2.3 Trust

Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol (2002) define trust as "the expectations held by the consumer that the service provider is dependable and can be relied on to deliver on its promise" (p. 17). Trust is particularly critical for exchanges in which consumers take risks and experience uncertainty (Riegelsberger et al., 2005). Johnson and Grayson (2005) divide trust into two categories, defining cognitive trust as "a customer's confidence or willingness to rely on a service provider's competence and reliability" and affective trust as "the confidence one places in a partner on the basis of feelings generated by the level of care and concern the partner demonstrates" (p. 501). Although trust has been defined in various ways, key components of these definitions include confidence in the seller and belief that the seller is reliable, predictable, and both willing and able to fulfill its obligations (Fam, Foscht, & Collins, 2004). However, trust in the broader context of a particular marketplace exchange is also important (Grayson et al., 2008), and this is especially relevant to the online accommodation industry, as booking accommodations online carries both privacy and safety risks (Fam et al., 2004). Factors that influence trust include the behavior of the company and its employees who interact directly with consumers (Grayson, Johnson & Chen, 2008), customer satisfaction with prior transactions (Johnson & Grayson, 2005), and exposure to positive or negative eWOM (Sparks & Browning, 2011).

2.3 Previous Studies

2.3.1 Impact of Perceived Behavioral Control on Attitude

Although the effects of perceived behavioral control and attitudes on purchasing intentions have been the subject of many studies, few researchers have examined the degree to which perceived behavioral control directly affects attitudes. Only three studies examining this relationship within the context of online accommodation

booking and one study of online plane ticket purchasing were identified during the literature search.

Morosan and Jeong (2008), using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), found that perceived ease of use (which can be considered an aspect of perceived behavioral control) was positively related to attitudes toward the use of online hotel reservation systems. The researchers also found that attitudes toward using intermediary websites were more positive than those for hotel-owned websites, and that intentions to use intermediary sites were higher as well. Chen (2014) also found a significant, positive relationship between self-efficacy, another aspect of perceived behavioral control, and attitudes among consumers who book accommodations online. In addition, a study of Thai consumer attitudes toward online hotel booking websites as places to conduct travel research found that the majority considered these sites to be good sources of information (Chatchotitham & Soponprapapon, 2010). Consumers had positive attitudes toward these sites because their booking systems were easy to use, which suggests that perceived behavioral control plays a role in attitudes because user friendliness is likely to increase perceived behavioral control. However, like many other e-commerce-related studies, this research applied the TAM rather than the TPB. The study also found that Thai consumers had significant security concerns with regard to conducting transactions online, which could affect attitudes toward Web-based accommodation booking.

Additional insights come from Kim et al.'s (2009) study of online plane ticket purchasing. The researchers found that perceived behavioral control was positively related to attitudes toward buying airline tickets online, providing further evidence for a relationship between these variables when contemplating the purchase of travel-related products and services.

2.3.2 Impact of Subjective Norms on Attitude

Subjective norms provide socially shared, informal guidance regarding how to behave and what attitude to adopt in order to fit in with one's social group (Melnyk, van Herpen, & Trijp, 2010). In the context of travel product consumption, subjective norms can be conceptualized as the degree to which friends, family, and additional significant others communicate the belief that using an online accommodation booking service is

a good idea. Although research has been conducted to examine the effects of subjective norms on attitudes in a variety of fields, few studies have been undertaken in the context of the travel industry. The literature search identified no prior studies examining the impact of subjective norms on attitude with regard to online accommodation booking. However, in related research, Kim et al. (2009) found that for consumers purchasing airline tickets online, subjective norms predicted attitudes, and according to Melnyk et al. (2010), there is substantial empirical evidence for a positive relationship between subjective norms and attitudes in various fields, with subjective norms having a stronger influence on attitudes than attitudes have on subjective norms. The authors' own meta-analysis provided further support for this relationship, and these researchers found that the relationship between subjective norms and attitudes was particularly strong for everyday consumption decisions (for example, food products and leisure activities). They also found that injunctive norms (the expectations of others) had a greater influence on attitudes, whereas descriptive norms (which specify particular behaviors) had a greater impact on actual behaviors. This meta-analysis spanned a broad range of product categories, and therefore has relevance for a wide variety of goods and services. Individual findings regarding normative influences on attitudes have varied, likely because the strength of the relationship differs from one product or service and sociocultural context to the next (Hsu et al., 2006).

Hsu et al. (2006) found evidence that travel-related attitudes, motivations, values, perceptions, and other psychological traits were influenced by reference groups, whereas socio demographic influences and prior travel experience had no effect on travel intentions. When the researchers compared groups of travel consumers who were more likely to be influenced by friends with those who were more susceptible to family influences, they found no differences in attitudes, so these two types of reference groups appear to have similar normative effects on travel intentions. Overall, the findings of this research suggest that subjective norms may influence attitudes toward online accommodation booking, as online accommodation booking services are also travel-related.

Other related research provides further support for the relationship between subjective norms and attitudes. Li (2014) found that subjective norms influenced destination-related attitudes directly and destination revisit intentions indirectly through

their effects on attitudes. In another tourism consumer study, Kaushik, Agrawal, and Rahman (2015) found that subjective norms contributed to the adoption of self-service hotel technologies. However, the findings of this study indicated that trust was actually a more important factor in hospitality-related technology adoption than subjective norms.

2.3.3 Impact of Perceived Behavioral Control on Intention to Use

Perceived behavioral control arises in response to both prior experience and anticipated future difficulties (Ajzen, 1991). Factors related to perceived behavioral control that have been found to predict online accommodation booking include convenience, self-efficacy, technological inclination, and prior Internet experience (Xu, Peng, & Chen, 2012). There is substantial empirical evidence attesting to the fact that perceived behavioral control influences consumer intentions, both with regard to online accommodation booking and other travel-related consumption.

Chatchotithamand and Soponrapapon (2010), who examined Thai consumer intentions to use online accommodation booking services, found that perceived ease of use (a TAM variable related to perceived behavioral control) predicted intentions to book accommodations online. Herrero and San Martin (2012) also found that perceived ease of use influenced intention to use accommodation booking websites. In addition, Chen (2014) found that perceived behavioral control predicted intentions to book accommodations online, as did Goh et al. (2015), who also found that perceived behavioral control was influenced by eWOM.

There have also been a number of studies conducted to examine the influence of perceived behavioral control on consumer intentions with regard to other travel products, services, destinations, and e-commerce adoption. Pavlou and Fygenson (2006) found that perceived behavioral control predicted consumer intentions with regard to e-commerce, and Han et al. (2010) found that perceived behavioral control influenced consumer intentions to book rooms at an environmentally friendly hotel. Studies have also shown that perceived behavioral control influences intention to participate in an interactive online travel community (Casaló et al., 2010, Goh et al., 2015), to visit a particular tourism destination (Goh et al., 2015; Lam & Hsu, 2006;

Quintal et al., 2010; Sparks & Pan, 2009), and to adopt information and communication technology (ICT) (Bhattacharjee, 2000; Goh et al., 2015).

2.3.4 Impact of Reference Groups on Intention to Use

A number of researchers have examined the relationship between reference groups and the intention to use online accommodation booking services. Chen (2014) found that reference groups predicted online accommodation booking intentions, and Satama (2014) found that social influences (such as the degree to which consumers felt that their social status would be enhanced by using Airbnb and that significant others would approve of their choice to use it) were factors in the likelihood of purchasing accommodations with Airbnb. Also, Zhong et al. (2015) found that subjective norms were important factors in the intention to continue using mobile online travel booking services. In addition, Goh et al. (2015) found that eWOM influenced reference groups, and that subjective norms influenced consumer intentions to book accommodations online using websites or mobile applications.

The literature review also identified a number of related studies that explored the influence of reference groups on travel-related consumer decision making, and these studies provide some further insights regarding possible effects of subjective norms on the likelihood of booking accommodations online. Hsu et al. (2006) found that reference groups, particularly the influence of family, friends, and travel agents, had a strong effect on Chinese consumers' travel intentions. However, the influence of primary reference groups (friends and family) was far stronger than that of the secondary reference group (travel agents). Also, the researchers found no difference in perceived behavioral control between the group of travel consumers most influenced by friends and the group who were more likely to be influenced by family.

Sparks and Pan (2009) also found that reference groups influenced the travel intentions of Chinese consumers. Normative influences examined in this study included the degree to which a particular travel destination was popular with friends and family, whether or not significant others thought it would be a good idea to travel to the destination, travel recommendations made by friends and family, and information about the destination provided by significant others.

Casaló et al. (2010) found that reference groups predicted the intention to participate in an Internet-based travel community established by a travel company for marketing purposes. The researchers also found that intention to participate in the travel community was positively related to the likelihood of buying the company's travel products and recommending them to others. In addition, Han et al. (2010) found that subjective norms influenced intentions to book rooms at an environmentally friendly hotel, and Quintal et al. (2010) and Hsu and Huang (2012) found that reference groups predicted travelers' intentions to choose a particular destination.

Research has shown that normative influence tends to be stronger for products and services that are consumed publically than for private consumption choices (Hsu et al., 2006). Given that travel products and services are consumed publically, consumer choices are more likely to be affected by strong normative influences. However, normative influences also vary from one type of product or service to the next for other reasons, and research on the degree to which social influences affect the purchasing of various travel-related products has yielded mixed results thus far (Satama, 2014).

2.3.5 Impact of Attitude on Intention to Use

The degree to which online accommodation booking websites meet consumers' hedonic (fun, fantasy fulfillment, and social interaction) and utilitarian (functionality, accessibility, and information) requirements contribute to attitudes toward using these services (Bilgihan & Bujisic, 2015). Just two studies were identified that examined the influence of attitudes on intentions to book accommodations online. Chen (2014) found that attitudes influenced intentions via motivation, and Goh et al. (2015) found that attitudes had a significant, positive relationship with intentions to use online accommodation booking websites or applications, and that attitudes were influenced by eWOM (Goh et al., 2015).

Factors related to attitude that have been found to influence online accommodation booking include perceived risk, convenience, usefulness, information quality, and time saving (Xu et al., 2012). A couple of studies have examined the influence of perceived risk on intentions with regard to online accommodation booking. Indiani, Rahyuda, Yasa, and Sukaatmadja (2015) found that perceived risk was the most

influential factor in the decision to purchase accommodations online, and Liang (2015) found that perceived risk predicted repurchasing intentions with regard to Airbnb.

Related research provides some additional insights. Han et al. (2010) found that attitude predicted intention to select an environmentally friendly hotel, and Casaló et al. (2010) found that attitude predicted intention to participate in an online travel community, and that intention to participate in this community predicted the likelihood of buying the hosting company's products and providing positive eWOM. Flavián and Guinalfú (2011), in a TPB study of consumer responses to travel-related eWOM, found that attitude toward a travel-related service predicted intention to follow the advice provided by those participating in an online travel community. Additional research has shown that the likelihood of selecting a particular travel destination is influenced by attitude as well (Hsu et al., 2006; Hsu & Huang, 2012; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Sparks & Pan, 2009).

2.3.6 Impact of eWOM on Intention to Use

Travelers are increasingly consulting online reviews to guide their accommodation selections (Filiéri & McLeay, 2014), and many studies have shown that eWOM can have a significant influence on purchasing decisions (Goh et al., 2015; Sparks & Browning, 2011; Ye, Law, Gu, & Chen, 2011). A number of studies have examined the impact of eWOM on the intention to use online accommodation booking services. Chatchochithamand and Soponprapapon (2010), in a study of Thai consumers, found that eWOM was an important factor in consumer decisions to book accommodations online. Sparks and Browning (2011), in another study of eWOM's effects on accommodation booking, found that both booking intentions and trust were increased by positive eWOM, but consumers were more influenced by negative than positive eWOM overall. Ye et al. (2011), in an additional study of online accommodation booking, found that an increase of 10% in traveler review ratings increased bookings by over 5%. Also, Goh et al. (2015) found that eWOM influenced consumer attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in relation to online accommodation booking, and that these TPB variables influenced intentions to book accommodations online using a website or mobile application. In addition, Liang

(2015) found that eWOM influenced perceived risk, perceived value, and repurchase intentions with regard to Airbnb.

The degree to which eWOM will influence intention to use online accommodation booking services depends on a number of factors, including whether or not information is accurate and up to date, the ranking of a particular product or service, and how relevant the information is to the seeker (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). Other research has identified additional factors, which include trust in e-reviews (which varies based on the perceived expertise of the reviewer), credibility of the review site, and familiarity with the brand being reviewed (Sidali, Schlulze, & Spiller, 2009). Also, eWOM posted by other consumers is more influential than eWOM posted by a company (Li & Bernoff, 2008; Sparks et al., 2013).

2.3.7 Impact of Trust on Intention to Use

Chiang and Jang (2006) found that trust is a significant contributor to intentions with regard to online accommodation booking, and consumers in this study were more concerned with trustworthiness than price and perceived quality. Satama (2014) found that trust was related to perceived performance, which in turn predicted the likelihood of using Airbnb services. Indiana et al. (2015) also found trust to be very important, second only to perceived risk in online booking decisions. On the other hand, Lai, Huang, Lu, and Chang (2013) found that website trust did not influence online accommodation booking intentions.

Fam et al. (2003) identified a number of factors that are critical to consumer trust with online booking services. These factors include calculation (guarantees, refunds, time to confirmation or delivery), predictability (reputation, customer experience), intentionality (information regarding privacy protection), capability (information about how the company operates), transference (brand recognition, security labeling, testimonials from other consumers), tangibilization (up-to-date visual imagery about the product), and interactivity (opportunities to provide consumer feedback and join user groups). The researchers also found that consumers wanted online accommodation providers to offer formal service guarantees and refunds on their websites to encourage trust.

Past studies have found a relationship between trust and online purchasing decisions for other products and services. Kim et al. (2009) found that trust was a significant predictor of online purchasing intentions with regard to airline tickets, exerting both direct and indirect effects through its influence on attitudes. Also, Comegys et al. (2009), who conducted a study of online shopping in Finland and the United States, found that those in the U.S. who reported greater trust in online vendors had higher online purchasing rates, whereas those in Finland who reported low levels of trust toward e-vendors were inclined to reduce their online purchasing.

In short, there are some evidences show that many researchers have found the connection between trust and consumer behavior toward online shopping in both direct and indirect ways (Indiana et al., 2015; Satama, 2014; Lai et al., 2013; Comegys et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2009; Chiang and Jang, 2006; Fam et al., 2003). Therefore, this paper have included trust as a factor to investigate whether trust can significant influence intention to book an accommodation online via Airbnb or not.

2.4 Summary

The literature review indicates that the TPB has been used in many studies of consumer behavior, but there have been few studies applying this theory in the context of online accommodation booking in general, and peer-to-peer intermediaries such as Airbnb in particular. Airbnb was established quite recently, but it has grown rapidly as part of an overall trend toward a sharing economy characterized by collaborative and access-based consumption. Because it is a relatively new phenomenon, only a few studies have examined the factors driving its increasing adoption by travel consumers, despite the fact that Airbnb now has a global customer base.

The TPB proposes that three variables, attitudes (beliefs regarding the potential consequences of an action), social norms (the influence of friends, family, and other significant reference groups), and perceived behavioral control (anticipated ease or difficulty in carrying out an action), all influence purchasing intentions, which in turn predict actual purchasing behaviors. Prior research provides substantial empirical support for the TPB as a predictor of purchasing intentions with regard to travel products and services. Attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control have been found to predict purchasing intentions directly, and both social norms and

perceived behavioral control have been found to correlate with attitudes as well. Past research also indicates that the two additional variables proposed for this research, eWOM and trust, predict behavioral intentions with regard to online accommodation booking. However, no prior researchers have incorporated all of these variables in a study of online accommodation booking.

Given that there have been so few consumer studies of peer-to-peer online accommodation booking, this research will make an important contribution to the academic literature. However, because it will provide information regarding the factors most important to consumers who book accommodations online, it will also be beneficial for companies offering these services, as they can use the insights gained from this research to guide their marketing approaches and the design of their websites.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Method

This research uses a quantitative approach. At times presented as antagonistic alternatives, qualitative and quantitative methods have been shown as particularly useful if used for complementary research purposes, an approach also known as the mixed methods approach (Bryman, 2006; Malhotra, 2003; Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002). Nevertheless, there are several criteria to take into consideration in selecting one or more of these research approaches. In this paper we refer specifically to those presented in the marketing research literature and relevant to this paper.

Qualitative research is generally recognized for its less structured design, utilization of descriptive data, often for exploratory purposes such as providing understanding of a specific phenomenon (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2005; Malhotra, 2003). The same authors advocate for the utilization of qualitative methods in contexts such as: the data being perceived as sensitive information, the researcher aiming to explore subconscious feelings, or the purpose of the research being to develop new theory. None of these apply to this research, which signposts that a quantitative research approach might be appropriate.

While one of the objectives of this research is to understand the online accommodation business, the other two objectives indicate that being able to generalize results to the Thai market could be particularly relevant in informing the decision of such businesses. Quantitative methods are better suited for statistical analyses and generalizations of findings from a sample to the relevant population and these are among the key benefits considered in selecting them (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2005).

In summary, given the purpose and objectives of this study, the state of the existing literature and the clear theoretical framework (TPB) that has been identified, adapted and would now benefit from statistical validation, a quantitative approach was preferred and chosen for this research.

3.2 Populations and Sampling Selection

The population being sampled for this study is represented by Thai residents with adult status (defined as age of or above 18), who are Internet users and self-select as having completed at least one online accommodation booking in the past. Even though this approach results in the exclusion of potential users who plan to make a booking but have not yet manifested their intent, it is consistent with the ‘lead users’ approach, and also help to avoid self-selection bias since it doesn’t target at any particular group of people. This is recommended when the product or service being considered is novel (Ozer, 2009; Von Hippel, 1986), as it is in the case of online accommodation booking in Thailand. Besides the novelty of the online accommodation booking services, the preference for this sampling method is also linked with the study’s aim to validate predictors of purchase intent that have already resulted in purchases in the past. Moreover, surveying existing users as opposed to potential users can increase the level of detail in the data being collected, data that might be irrelevant to non-users. Still, once validated, the practical applications of the modified TPB model can expand to include the potential, inactive users.

The sampling method being used is non-random, convenience sampling, characterized by the fact that those included in the sample were the easiest to recruit (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). Even though previous studies employing the TPB have considered users and non-users alike, the behaviors those studies aimed to predict were not purchased focused but instead included cyber loafing, fruit consumption, physical activity, and smoking (Askew et al., 2014; Emanuel, McCully, Gallagher, & Updegraff, 2012; Plotnikoff et al., 2011; Su et al., 2015).

In line with existing guidance on sample size calculation for very large populations (such as the one considered in this study), this research uses the standard values and formulas (Lwanga & Lemeshow, 1991). The formula being used is:

$n = d \times p \times 100(1 - \alpha)\%$), where n = sample size, d = absolute precision required on either side of the proportion, p = anticipated population proportion, and $100(1 - \alpha)\%$ = confidence level. Using the default values, this results in a sample size of 384.16. Therefore, the sample size of this study is expected to be around 400.

3.3 Research Instrument

As earlier noted in the section covering the scope of the research, the survey technique has been selected for this study. This technique was chosen given its advantages such as ease of administration, increased data consistency and decreased variability, decreased cost of data, and ease of coding and interpretation. These are particularly relevant when comparing surveys with qualitative techniques (Kelley et al., 2003; Malhotra, 2003). When comparing them with experiments, they present the disadvantage of not being able to show causality (Franses&Paap, 2001). Nevertheless, establishing causality was not in scope for the purpose of this study.

The research instrument used for this study is a questionnaire. The quality of measurement when using questionnaires can be adversely impacted by both random and systematic error (Kreuter, Presser, & Tourangeau, 2008). Such errors are caused by a variety of factors that are under the influence of the researcher (e.g. inadequate phrasing), the respondents (e.g. inaccurate answers as a result of social desirability), or not under their influence yet can appear in any stage of data processing (e.g. data duplication). Special measures were taken to reduce the systematic errors in this study, given that their origin is in the way measurement is being conducted. This is why the type of questionnaire being used is a structured one. For the same reason, validity and reliability were considered and are separately discussed in more detail later in this paper.

3.4 Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire was developed through adaption of items from the existing literature, in line with classical recommendations in the questionnaire design literature (Brace, 2013; Bradburn et al., 2004).

The questionnaire was structured into a screening section, followed by three sections that helped address the three research objectives earlier stated in this paper. The screening section included two items, which mirrored the sampling criteria: age and online accommodation user status. The first of the subsequent three sections covered personal information: gender, age, and education. From a practical standpoint, the resulting variables can be particularly relevant in identifying the users' profile. From

a theoretical standpoint, the same variables can prove particularly relevant to test as mediators or moderators, given that demographic variables often exhibit interaction effects (Field, 2007). The second section included items pertaining to accommodation booking experience. The items in this section included a standard item for frequency of a product/ service utilization and two items that were created for this study to reflect the characteristics of the accommodation online booking industry (providers and type of accommodation). The third section included items that were adapted from previous studies on online booking and/or the TPB that used the following variables: attitude toward online booking (Francis et al., 2004), family and friends (Francis et al., 2004), perceived behavioral control (Francis et al., 2004), eWOM (Labsomboonsiri, 2012), trust (Yamagishi, 1986), and intention to use Airbnb (Francis et al., 2004). The items in this last section were all measure using five-point Likert scales and were critical in testing the adapted TPB model, as they included all of the dependent and independent variables in this model.

Table 1: Source of question items

| Variables | Adapted from |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Attitude toward online booking | Francis, Eccles, Johnston and Walker (2004) |
| Family and friend | Francis et al. (2004) |
| Perceived behavioral control | Francis et al. (2004) |
| eWOM | Labsomboonsiri (2012) |
| Trust | Yamagishi (1986) |
| Intention to use Airbnb | Francis et al. (2004) |

Table 2: Questionnaire

| | |
|--|--|
| Screening Questions | |
| S1. Are you 18 years or older? | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please continue | <input type="checkbox"/> No, please end this survey |
| S2. Have you ever used online accommodation booking services? | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please continue | <input type="checkbox"/> No, please end this survey |
| Section 1: Personal Information | |
| 1.1 Gender | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male | <input type="checkbox"/> Female |
| 1.2 Age | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18 to 25 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 26 to 35 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 36 to 45 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 46 to 55 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 56 to 65 years | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 65 years |
| 1.3 Education | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lower than Bachelor's degree | <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree | <input type="checkbox"/> Higher than Master's degree |
| Section 2: Accommodation Booking Experience | |
| 2.1 How often do you used online accommodation booking services? | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than once per year | <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times per year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 times per year | <input type="checkbox"/> 5-6 times per year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More than 6 times per year | |
| 2.2 Which online accommodation booking site that you normally used? (Please selected only the most used) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agoda | <input type="checkbox"/> Booking.com |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel.com | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Asia |

- () Expedia () Airbnb
 () Other, please specify _____

2.3 What kind of accommodations that you normally book online?

- () Hotel () Hostel
 () Service Apartment () Bed and Breakfast
 () Residential Accommodations () Other, please
 specify _____

Section 3: Factors Impact on Online Accommodations Booking

Based on the following statement, please rate your level of agreement

| Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Moderate | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|----------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 3.1 My overall attitude towards Airbnb is good. | | | | | |
| 3.2 I think Airbnb is a good online accommodation booking site. | | | | | |
| 3.3 I would enjoy using Airbnb site. | | | | | |
| 3.4 My family and friends have recommended me to use Airbnb. | | | | | |
| 3.5 Most people who I know have used Airbnb. | | | | | |
| 3.6 There are many famous people that use Airbnb. | | | | | |
| 3.7 I think if most celebrity used Airbnb, I would like to use it to. | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 3.8 If I want to use Airbnb, I will do it without asking anyone opinion. | | | | | |
| 3.9 Booking accommodation online via Airbnb or not is up to my decision. | | | | | |
| 3.10 I will review posted and commented on social network site about Airbnb, before decided to use it. | | | | | |
| 3.11 If most online user recommends Airbnb, I don't mind to use it. | | | | | |
| 3.12 I only used online booking site that I trusted. | | | | | |
| 3.13 If Airbnb site is trusted, I would consider using it. | | | | | |
| 3.14 For my next accommodations booking, I would try Airbnb. | | | | | |
| 3.15 If I have to select any online booking, I would go to Airbnb site. | | | | | |

3.5 Questionnaire Testing

Prior to the survey launch, a pilot was implemented solely for the purposes of testing the questionnaire for its reliability and validity. The section of the questionnaire in focus for reliability and validity testing was the last section, pertaining to factors' impact on

online accommodation booking. In this pilot stage, 30 questionnaires were administered and the resulting data analyzed.

3.5.1 Reliability Testing

Given that the last section of the questionnaire was developed by integrating and adapting existing items with multiple Likert scales into one scale, the internal consistency of the questionnaire had to be tested (Bland & Altman, 1997; Connelly, 2011). The purpose of internal consistency testing is to understand to what extent the items in a proposed questionnaire that have the same underlying construct also have the same level of impact on that underlying construct. In the case of this paper, a questionnaire was employed to measure different, underlying construct from the adapted TPB model. All seven variables considered had a high level of internal consistency, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7 and further detailed in the table provided below.

Table 3: Reliability results

| Variables | Cronbach's Alpha Scores |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Attitude toward online booking | 0.963 |
| Family and friend | 0.903 |
| Celebrity | 0.832 |
| Perceived behavioral control | 0.773 |
| eWOM | 0.786 |
| Trust | 0.963 |
| Intention to use Airbnb | 0.877 |

3.5.2 Validity Testing

Following the reliability testing, validity testing was also conducted as part of that same pilot in order to assess to what extent the questionnaire measure what it was intended to measure. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Dziuban&Shirkey, 1974) are two of the indicators used for validity testing purposes. KMO compares the partial correlations (for each pair of

variables) with the original correlations. Small partial correlations and an overall KMO over 0.6 indicate that the variables being considered share common factors (Cerny& Kaiser, 1977). For this study, overall KMO was .675. In addition, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 (105) = 489.31, p < .05$) and communalities had values above 0.3, indicating that there were shared variances between variables in the proposed model (Cerny& Kaiser, 1977; Dziuban&Shirkey, 1974). Taken together, these results indicate that these questions are valid to used.

Table 4: KMO result

| | | |
|--|--------------------|---------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .675 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 489.305 |
| | df | 105 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

Table 5: Communalities

| Communalities | | |
|---|---------|------------|
| | Initial | Extraction |
| My overall attitude towards Airbnb is good. | 1.000 | .768 |
| I think Airbnb is a good online accommodation booking site. | 1.000 | .851 |
| I would enjoy using Airbnb site. | 1.000 | .738 |
| My family and friends have recommended me to use Airbnb. | 1.000 | .874 |
| Most people who I know have used Airbnb. | 1.000 | .877 |
| There are many famous people that use Airbnb. | 1.000 | .760 |
| I think if most celebrities used Airbnb, I would like to use it to. | 1.000 | .721 |
| If I want to use Airbnb, I will do it without asking anyone's opinion. | 1.000 | .495 |
| Booking accommodation online via Airbnb or not is up to my decision. | 1.000 | .634 |
| I will review posted and commented on social network site about Airbnb, before decided to use it. | 1.000 | .724 |
| If most online user recommends Airbnb, I don't mind to use it. | 1.000 | .691 |
| I only used online booking site that I trusted. | 1.000 | .831 |
| If Airbnb site is trusted, I would consider using it. | 1.000 | .872 |
| For my next accommodations booking, I would try Airbnb. | 1.000 | .780 |
| If I have to select any online booking, I would go to Airbnb site. | 1.000 | .917 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | |

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The research literature acknowledges the online, self-administration of questionnaires (also known as web administration) as one that has shown higher levels of reporting accuracy, even for sensitive information, when compared to more traditional questionnaire administration techniques. The traditional techniques that were considered as reference were computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) and interactive voice recognition (IVR) (Kreuter et al., 2008). Along with the benefit of increased accuracy, online, self-administered questionnaires are also preferred due to lower costs and faster administration (Kreuter et al., 2008; Malhotra, 2003). Furthermore, the service being studied being an online service makes it even more relevant to collect the data online, without any concern that current users could be excluded from the sample because of online data collection. These are the main arguments that have led to the decision to use this collection method in this study.

Another reason why self-administration was preferred is that the measures collected through these questionnaires are indirect, self-reported measures. The utilization of such measures typically enable the collection of a large amount of data in a short period of time, faster than in the case of having to compile direct measures from multiple sources that are difficult to access and/or reconcile (Malhotra, 2003). Nevertheless, self-report measures, including those used in this study, also pose specific methodological challenges. These challenges come from respondents' biases in interpreting the questionnaires' items, which are more likely to manifest themselves than in the case of interacting with an interviewer that can provide a higher level of guidance than the questionnaire (Field, 2007).

3.7 Data Analysis

Data collected in this study was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. On one hand, descriptive statistics are analyses that summarize and present data that had previously been collected in a meaningful manner (Healey, 2014; Malhotra, 2003). Examples of descriptive statistics include but are not limited to central tendency measures, frequencies, distributions, trends, tables, and graphs. While easier to obtain through analyses than inferential statistics, the utilization of descriptive results

can be very informative and is often a mandatory step that also needs to be completed in the initial stages of inferential statistics. As they related to this study, descriptive statistics such age, gender, and education level distributions provided valuable insights when investigating users' profiles and could even be used as starting point for marketing segmentations and targeted promotional campaign. Frequency of booking and accommodation type are other example of descriptive statistics that further illustrate booking behaviors.

Inferential statistics, on the other hand, allow for generalizations to be made from findings in one sample to the general population. Therefore, inferential statistics are needed in testing the hypotheses of this study, as well as in validating or invalidating the adapted TPB model, and then generalizing it to the larger population. Validity and reliability testing of the questionnaire also relied on inferential statistics.

Notably, given the goal of testing the adapted TPB model, the inferential method of regression analysis was most relevant to this research. Regression analysis provides information regarding the ways in which changes in dependent variables are associated with changes in the intention to use Airbnb (the dependent variable). Just like other methods such as factor analysis or experiments (which are often considered more robust in identifying causal relationships), the regression analysis method is also employed in forecasts (Healey, 2014). Therefore, its utilization proves to be very important in making the booking behavior of Airbnb users more easily predictable.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Questionnaire data included information regarding consumer demographics and online accommodation booking behaviors and preferences, as well as scores for statements regarding the five independent variables and Airbnb usage intentions. Demographic information (gender, age, and education level) was included to characterize the sample and determine whether it was skewed toward particular demographic groups. Behavioral information, including frequency of use, online booking channels, and preferred accommodation types, provided insights into Thai consumer trends. The third section of the questionnaire yielded scores indicating the degree to which attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, eWOM, and trust influence Thai consumer intentions to use Airbnb services. The chapter that follows begins with a summary of the descriptive results in section 4.1, followed by an analysis of the hypotheses test results in section 4.2. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings along with related research in section 4.3.

4.1 Descriptive Results

The sample was skewed toward women, who made up 71.3% of the respondents. This may indicate self-selection bias or reflect a tendency for female consumers to take responsibility for online accommodation research and booking.

Table 6: Gender of respondents

| Gender | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------|------------------|----------------|
| Male | 115 | 28.7 |
| Female | 285 | 71.3 |
| Total | 400 | 100.0 |

Respondents ranged from 18 to 55 years of age. Those aged 26 to 35 made up the largest proportion of the sample at 81.8%, followed by those aged 36 to 45 at 12.3%. The other age groups contributed very small percentages, collectively accounting for

only 6.1% of the sample. This may reflect either self-selection bias or age-related trends in online accommodation booking.

Table 7: Age of respondents

| Age | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|
| 18 to 25 years | 9 | 2.3 |
| 26 to 35 years | 327 | 81.8 |
| 36 to 45 years | 49 | 12.3 |
| 46 to 55 years | 15 | 3.8 |
| Total | 400 | 100.0 |

Participants were well-educated, with the majority having completed a master's degree or higher (60.3%) and all of the respondents reporting postsecondary qualifications. As with the other demographic characteristics, it is unknown whether this is a self-selection effect or represents a tendency for well-educated individuals to book accommodations online.

Table 8: Education level of respondents

| Education | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Bachelor's degree | 163 | 40.8 |
| Master's degree | 234 | 58.5 |
| Higher than Master's degree | 3 | .8 |
| Total | 400 | 100.0 |

Participants were asked about the frequency of their online accommodation booking, and the largest proportion indicated that they use these services once or twice a year (44.5%), followed by three to four times per year (27.0%), more than six times per year (14.0%), less than once a year (9.8%), and five to six times per year (4.8%). Overall, the responses to this question indicate that the majority of respondents (90.2%) use online accommodation booking services more than once per year.

Table 9: Frequency of online accommodation booking

| How often do you use online accommodation booking services? | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|
| Less than once per year | 39 | 9.8 |
| 1-2 times per year | 178 | 44.5 |
| 3-4 times per year | 108 | 27.0 |
| 5-6 times per year | 19 | 4.8 |
| More than 6 times per year | 56 | 14.0 |
| Total | 400 | 100.0 |

Respondents reported using a variety of online accommodation booking services. Booking.com was the most popular (35.8%), followed by Agoda (23.0%), Airbnb (20.5%), Expedia (17.5%), and Air Asia (3.3%).

Table 10: Preferred accommodation booking sites

| Which online accommodation booking site do you normally use? | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|
| Agoda | 92 | 23.0 |
| Booking.com | 143 | 35.8 |
| Air Asia | 13 | 3.3 |
| Expedia | 70 | 17.5 |
| Airbnb | 82 | 20.5 |
| Total | 400 | 100.0 |

Just over half of the respondents (55.0%) typically booked hotels online, and around one-fourth (24.8%) sought residential accommodations. Less popular options included service apartments (11.5%), hostels (7.0%), bed and breakfast accommodations (1.0%), and other types of accommodations (0.8%).

Table 11: Preferred accommodation type

| What kind of accommodations do you normally book online? | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|
| Hotel | 220 | 55.0 |
| Hostel | 28 | 7.0 |
| Service Apartment | 46 | 11.5 |
| Bed and Breakfast | 4 | 1.0 |
| Residential Accommodations | 99 | 24.8 |
| Other | 3 | .8 |
| Total | 400 | 100.0 |

The survey respondents were asked to rate a number of statements indicating their attitudes toward Airbnb; the degree to which reference groups influence their choice to book Airbnb accommodations; and the roles played by perceived behavioral control, eWOM, and trust in their decision making with regard to Airbnb services (see Table 12 below). Responses were scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”.

One of the trust-related statements received the highest score (4.53), with the majority of respondents strongly agreeing that they would only use an online accommodation booking site they trusted. The other trust statement, which indicated willingness to use the Airbnb site if it was perceived as trustworthy by others, yielded a score in the agreement range (4.16).

Statements regarding attitudes toward Airbnb in general (3.58), perceptions of Airbnb as an online accommodation booking site (3.63), and whether using the site is enjoyable (3.45) all yielded scores in the agreement range, with the highest rating for Airbnb as an online accommodation booking site and the lowest for enjoyment in using the site. Responses to questions regarding reference groups yielded lower scores in the neutral range. The statement regarding Airbnb recommendations from family and friends generated an average score of only 3.45, and scores for knowing others personally who have used Airbnb or famous people who have used the service were only 2.96 and 2.36, respectively. Thus, the site is not considered very popular with

influential reference groups. However, respondents were not that strongly influenced by reference groups overall, as the question regarding whether they would use Airbnb if celebrities used it yielded a neutral score of only 2.83, and participants agreed, on average, that if they wanted to use Airbnb, they would not ask anyone's opinion beforehand (3.42). Moreover, they agreed, on average, that the choice to use Airbnb services was their own decision to make (3.93), indicating a high level of perceived behavioral control and a low level of influence from others.

Despite the relatively weak effects of reference groups on decision making with regard to Airbnb services, responses indicated that participants were strongly influenced by eWOM. They agreed, on average, that they would review posts and comments about Airbnb on social network sites before making a final decision regarding whether or not to use it (3.99), and that they would be willing to use the service if the majority of online users recommended it (3.68).

As for purchasing intentions with regard to Airbnb, respondents agreed, on average, that they would be willing to try Airbnb for their next online accommodation booking (3.45). However, responses averaged in the neutral range for the statement indicating that they would choose Airbnb over other online booking sites (3.34). Thus, while they are open to trying Airbnb, they would not necessarily select it if other options were available.

Table 12: Descriptive results

| Statement | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean vale interpretation |
|---|------|----------------|--------------------------|
| My overall attitude towards Airbnb is good. | 3.58 | .92548 | Agree |
| I think Airbnb is a good online accommodation booking site. | 3.63 | .89764 | Agree |
| I would enjoy using Airbnb site. | 3.45 | .96400 | Agree |
| My family and friends have recommended me to use Airbnb. | 3.08 | 1.06269 | Neutral |
| Most people who I know have used Airbnb. | 2.96 | 1.08334 | Neutral |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------------|
| There are many famous people that use Airbnb. | 2.36 | 1.12377 | Neutral |
| I think if most celebrity used Airbnb, I would like to use it to. | 2.83 | 1.17737 | Neutral |
| If I want to use Airbnb, I will do it without asking anyone opinion. | 3.42 | .97754 | Agree |
| Booking accommodation online via Airbnb or not is up to my decision. | 3.93 | 1.08504 | Agree |
| I will review posted and commented on social network site about Airbnb, before decided to use it. | 3.99 | .84658 | Agree |
| If most online user recommends Airbnb, I don't mind to use it. | 3.68 | .87538 | Agree |
| I only used online booking site that I trusted. | 4.53 | .95481 | Strongly Agree |
| If Airbnb site is trusted, I would consider using it. | 4.16 | .88581 | Agree |
| For my next accommodations booking, I would try Airbnb. | 3.45 | .83590 | Agree |
| If I have to select any online booking, I would go to Airbnb site. | 3.34 | .84580 | Neutral |

4.2 Hypothesis Results

Regression analysis was conducted to test five hypotheses regarding the degree to which attitude, reference groups, perceived behavioral control, eWOM, and trust influence Thai consumers' intentions to use Airbnb services (see Table 13 below). Intentions to use Airbnb services were assessed based on willingness to try the service and likelihood of choosing it over other online accommodation booking sites. Statistically significant effects were found for all of the independent variables, with a confidence interval of 95%. Therefore, all five hypotheses were supported ($p < .05$). However, some of the variables were more influential than others.

The first hypothesis, which specified a relationship between attitude toward online accommodation booking and intention to use Airbnb, was confirmed ($p = .000$). Thus, the hypothesis had a 100% likelihood of being correct and the relationship between the variables was definitely not due to chance. Attitude was assessed based on general self-reported attitude toward Airbnb, the perception of Airbnb as a good online accommodation booking site, and anticipated enjoyment in using the Airbnb site. The R^2 (4.67) and adjusted R^2 (0.465) values indicate that the model explained 46.7% and 46.5% of the variance in outcome (intention to use Airbnb services), respectively. Moreover, the unstandardized and standardized coefficients ($B = .601$, $\beta = .683$) indicate that attitude has a relatively strong effect on behavioral intention.

H1: Intention to use Airbnb is influenced by attitude toward online accommodation booking. (Accepted)

Attitude was the second-most influential factor overall, second only to eWOM in its influence on Airbnb usage intentions. This is unsurprising, given that positive attitudes indicate favorable impressions of online accommodations booking in general and the Airbnb brand in particular.

The second hypothesis, which suggested that reference groups would have a statistically significant effect on intention to use Airbnb services, was also confirmed ($p = .000$), as were the two sub-hypotheses indicating that intention to use Airbnb services would be influenced by family and friends ($p = .000$) and celebrities ($p = .000$). Reference group effects were assessed based on whether respondents' families and friends had recommended Airbnb, and if they had close personal associates or knew of famous people who had used the service, as well as the likelihood that study participants would use Airbnb if they knew that celebrities used it.

H2: Intention to use Airbnb is influenced by reference groups. (Accepted)

H2a: Intention to use Airbnb is influenced by family and friends. (Accepted)

H2b: Intention to use Airbnb is influenced by celebrities. (Accepted)

The R^2 (.146) and adjusted R^2 (0.142) values indicate that the model for this variable explained only 14.6% and 14.2% of variance in outcome, respectively. Moreover, the unstandardized and standardized coefficients coefficients for family and friends ($B = .130$, $\beta = .171$) and celebrities ($B = .189$, $\beta = .253$) indicate that reference groups are a relatively weak predictor of intentions to use Airbnb services, though of the two

reference group types, celebrities had more influence than family and friends. Thus, aspirational groups have a greater influence than close personal associates on Thai consumers' decision making with regard to online accommodations booking. However, reference groups were the weakest predictor of intention to use Airbnb services overall.

The third hypothesis, which suggested that perceived behavioral control would have a statistically significant effect on intention to use Airbnb services, was confirmed as well ($p = .000$), indicating that all of the TPB variables had statistically significant effects on Thai consumers' behavioral intentions. Perceived behavioral control was assessed based on willingness to use Airbnb services without asking the opinions of others beforehand and the degree to which booking accommodations online with Airbnb was perceived as a personal decision that was completely within the control of the individual respondent.

H3: Intention to use Airbnb is influenced by perceived behavioral control.

(Accepted)

The R^2 (.255) and adjusted R^2 (0.253) values for this variable indicate that the model explained 25.5% and 25.3% of the variance in outcome, respectively. Also, the unstandardized and standardized coefficients ($B = .415$, $\beta = .505$) indicate that the effect of perceived behavioral control on intention to use Airbnb was moderate, and that this variable was more influential than reference groups but less influential than attitudes, trust, and eWOM. The relatively strong effect for perceived behavioral control combined with the weak effect of reference groups suggests that potential Airbnb users feel empowered to decide whether or not to try these services on their own rather than responding to socially normative influences.

The fourth hypothesis, which specified a relationship between exposure to Airbnb-related eWOM and intention to use Airbnb services was also confirmed ($p = .000$). eWOM effects were assessed by determining if consumers were inclined to read Airbnb-related posts and comments on social media before deciding whether or not to use the service, as well as the degree to which respondents would be influenced by a large number of online user recommendations.

H4: Intention to use Airbnb is influenced by electronic word of mouth.

(Accepted)

The R^2 (.520) and adjusted R^2 (0.519) values for this variable indicate that the model explained 52.0% and 51.9% of the variance in outcome, respectively, and the unstandardized and standardized coefficients ($B = .718$, $\beta = .721$) indicate that eWOM has a very strong effect on Airbnb usage intentions, and that it is more influential than any of the other variables included in this study. This finding highlights the importance of internet-based reviews for influencing consumer behavioral intentions, and suggests that the collective influence of eWOM from strangers has surpassed the influence of close personal associates for online booking services.

The fifth hypothesis, which suggested that trust would also influence intentions to use Airbnb services, was confirmed as well ($p = .000$). Trust was assessed based on whether respondents would only use trusted online booking sites, and whether they would consider using the Airbnb site if it was perceived as generally trustworthy,

H5: Intention to use Airbnb is influenced by trust. (Accepted)

The R^2 (.244) and adjusted R^2 (0.242) values for this variable indicate that the model explained 24.4% and 24.2% of the variance in outcome, respectively. Also, for trust, the unstandardized and standardized coefficients ($B = .428$, $\beta = .494$) suggest a moderate influence on Airbnb usage intentions. Therefore, trust is somewhat important to potential Airbnb customers, but they take other factors into consideration when making their choices, particularly eWOM.

Table 13: Regression results

| Regression results | Attitude toward online booking | Reference Groups | | Perceived Behavioral Control | eWOM | Trust |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|------------------------------|---------|---------|
| | | Family and friend | Celebrity | | | |
| R^2 | .467 | .146 | | .255 | .520 | .244 |
| Adjusted R^2 | .465 | .142 | | .253 | .519 | .242 |
| F | 348.365 | 33.950 | | 136.311 | 431.375 | 128.205 |
| P value | .000 | .000 | | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| B | .601 | .130 | .189 | .415 | .718 | .428 |

| | | | | | | |
|------|--------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| Beta | .683 | .171 | .253 | .505 | .721 | .494 |
| t | 18.665 | 2.937 | 4.347 | 11.675 | 20.770 | 11.328 |
| Sig. | .000 | .004 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |

Overall, the regression results indicate that the TPB variables, eWOM, and trust all contribute to Airbnb usage intentions, and that the relationship with each of these variables is positive. In other words, as attitudes become more favorable, reference group influences increase, perceived behavioral control grows stronger, positive eWOM exposure rises, and trust increases, intention to use Airbnb services rises as well. eWOM was found to be the most influential variable, followed by attitudes, perceived behavioral control, trust, and reference groups. Of the reference groups, celebrities had a stronger influence than friends and family. Overall, the TPB model was supported, with reference groups representing social normative influences and the TPB variables collectively having a significant impact on Airbnb usage intentions among Thai consumers. However, the predictive values for each variable suggest that there are other factors not included in this study that also contribute to Airbnb usage intentions. The study results are discussed, along with the findings of prior research, in the section that follows.

4.3 Discussion

This research examined the influence of a number of variables on consumer intentions to use Airbnb online accommodation booking services. Other researchers have also examined the effects of these variables on internet-based accommodation booking and related services, and the findings of the current study are largely in accordance with those of prior research.

The first three variables examined in this study were attitude, reference groups, and perceived behavioral control, all elements of Azjen's (1991) TPB model (though the original model uses subjective or social norms to indicate general social influences, whereas this research focused specifically on reference groups). The findings of this study provide evidence that the TPB model is effective for predicting Airbnb usage

intentions among Thai consumers, which is in line with the findings of prior studies indicating that the TPB has predictive value for consumer behavior in many different contexts (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Knabe, 2012; Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006; Sparks & Pan, 2009).

Of the three TPB variables, attitudes were found to be a relatively strong predictor of behavioral intentions. While there has been little research conducted to investigate the relationship between attitudes and online accommodation booking intentions, two studies that were identified during the literature search found that attitudes influenced intentions (Chen, 2014; Goh et al., 2015), though in the case of Chen's (2014) study, this influence was exerted indirectly through attitude's effects on motivation. The findings of the current study are also in line with those of researchers who have examined the relationship between attitudes and consumer intentions or behaviors for other travel-related products, services, or destination choices (Casaló et al., 2010; Han et al., 2010; Hsu et al., 2006; Hsu & Huang, 2012; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Sparks & Pan, 2009). Thus, the current study adds to the existing evidence that attitude is a predictor of intentions for prospective travelers seeking products and services. Also, the descriptive statistics indicate that attitudes toward Airbnb are largely positive among Thai consumers.

While attitudes were a relatively strong predictor of Airbnb usage intentions, reference groups were a weak predictor of intentions, though they did have a statistically significant effect, in line with the findings of Chen (2014), who studied the influence of reference groups on internet-based accommodation booking. Other researchers have also found that social normative influences play a role in the likelihood of using Airbnb (Satama, 2014) and other online travel booking services (Goh et al., 2015; Zhong et al., 2015). The current study found that celebrities were a more influential reference group than friends and family, in contrast to the findings of Hsu et al. (2006) that family and friends were more influential than those from a more socially distant reference group: travel agents. However, travel agents represent travel expertise, whereas celebrities represent an aspirational lifestyle, so the effects of these reference groups are likely to differ. The divergent findings of the two studies suggest that admiration for members of a particular group has a stronger influence on travel-related

decision making than perceptions of expertise. However, travel agents may have been less influential in the Hsu et al.'s (2006) study because they were trying to sell products, and therefore were perceived as biased and less credible. Other research has found that friends and family tend to be particularly influential with regard to travel decisions (Sparks & Pan, 2009), and that subjective norms influence decision making with regard to travel-related products and services (Han et al. 2010; Hsu & Huang, 2012; Quintal et al., 2010). Past research has also found that social normative influences are typically stronger with public consumption than private consumption (Hsu et al., 2006), and the use of Airbnb online booking services is a private consumption act. Therefore, it is unsurprising that social influences are weaker for Airbnb usage intentions than they would likely be for products or services bought in public places where others could witness the purchases.

Perceived behavioral control had a moderate impact on intentions in this study, in line with the findings of prior research indicating that perceived behavioral control influences online accommodations booking (Chen, 2014; Goh et al., 2015). This finding is also in accordance with the findings of researchers who have examined the influence that perceived ease of use (a variable related to perceived behavioral control) has on Web-based accommodation booking intentions (Chatchotithamand & Soponprapapon, 2010; Herrero & San Martin, 2012). Past studies have shown that perceived behavioral control also has a significant influence on intentions and behaviors for a variety of other travel-related products and services (Casaló et al., 2010, Goh et al., 2015; Han et al., 2010; Paylou & Fygenson, 2006), as well as the likelihood of choosing particular travel destinations (Goh et al., 2015; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Quintal et al., 2010; Sparks & Pan, 2009) and adopting ICT (Bhattacharjee, 2000; Goh et al., 2015). Thus, the findings of this study provide further evidence for a relationship that has been identified by many prior studies. Also, the descriptive statistics indicate that perceived behavioral control for Airbnb service use is quite high among the group surveyed.

In addition to the TPB variables, this study examined the relative influences of eWOM and trust on intention to use Airbnb services, finding that both variables had statistically significant effects, and that eWOM exposure was a particularly strong

predictor of intentions. Other researchers have also found that eWOM contributes to purchasing decisions in general (Goh et al., 2015; Sparks & Browning, 2011; Ye et al., 2011) and online accommodation purchasing decisions in particular (Chatchochithamand & Soponprapapon, 2010; Sparks & Browning, 2011; Ye et al., 2011). While the findings of past research suggest that negative eWOM is more influential than positive eWOM (Chatchochithamand & Soponprapapon, 2010), this study focused on positive eWOM, so the relative effects of exposure to positive and negative eWOM on intentions to use Airbnb services cannot be determined from the findings. Also, although this study found that eWOM had a strong influence on intentions, other factors may moderate the relationship between eWOM and intentions. Possible moderators include the TPB variables (Goh et al., 2015), perceived risk, and perceived value (Liang, 2015). eWOM's influence may also vary based on whether eWOM posts are recent or old, and whether posters share information that readers consider relevant (Filieri & McLeay, 2014), as well as the degree to which information seekers trust online reviews or particular review sites (Sidali et al., 2009) and whether the information is posted by other consumers or the company selling a particular product or service (Li & Bernoff, 2008; Sparks et al., 2013). However, the current study focused on eWOM reviews posted by other consumers, so reactions to different eWOM sources were unlikely to have contributed to the findings. The descriptive statistics indicate that those surveyed like to check social media reviews before selecting an online accommodation booking service, and that volume of eWOM (in particular, a preponderance of online recommendations) would have a significant influence on their decision making.

The final variable examined in this research, trust, was also found to influence Airbnb usage intentions, in keeping with the findings of Chiang and Jang (2006) and Indiana et al. (2015), but in contrast to those of Lai et al. (2013). Similar to Fam et al. (2003) who also found that consumer would consider at refund and guarantee policies as a part of trustworthiness when making purchase decision. They believe that by offering refund and product guarantee, the website can be more trusted. The results are also in line with those of prior researchers who have found a positive relationship between trust and consumer decision making regarding Web-based airline ticket purchasing (Kim et al., 2009) and online shopping in general (Comegys et al., 2009).

The latter study found cross-national differences in the relationship between trust and purchasing rates, so it is possible that the current study, which focused on Thai consumers, might have yielded different results than a study conducted in another nation. The descriptive statistics indicate that respondents would only use online booking sites they trust, and that general perceptions of trustworthiness would be a factor in their decision to use these services. The descriptive findings also indicate that while many of the respondents would be willing to try Airbnb services, they would not necessarily choose them over other available options. Thus, trust may not be sufficiently high to make Airbnb the first choice of Thai consumers, though other variables also play a role in the choice of online booking services, such as the greater popularity of hotels compared to the sorts of residential accommodations typically offered by Airbnb.

It should be noted that some aspects of the sample may have affected the results of this study. The sample was heavily weighted toward women and also skewed toward well-educated young adults, so it is possible that research conducted with a predominantly male sample, different age cohorts, or those without postsecondary education would have produced different findings. The participants in this study were also frequent users of online booking services, inclined to use Booking.com or Agoda, and showed a preference for hotels and (to a lesser extent) residential accommodations. It is unknown whether these findings reflect general consumer trends or are specific to the types of consumers willing to participate in this research, thus indicating self-selection bias that may have influenced the results.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusions

The objectives of this research were to examine trends in online accommodation booking, investigate the factors that influence Airbnb online booking intentions among Thai consumers, and make recommendations for the online accommodations booking industry. Independent variables that could potentially influence consumer intentions were identified during a review of the literature, and their relative influence on Airbnb usage intentions (specifically, willingness to try Airbnb online accommodation booking services and choose Airbnb over other available options) was assessed. A consumer survey was administered to a convenience sample of Thai consumers who book accommodations online, and descriptive and regression analyses were conducted to identify customer attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors with regard to online accommodation booking, and to determine the degree to which attitudes, reference groups, perceived behavioral control, eWOM, and trust contribute to Airbnb usage intentions.

This study provided some insights into online accommodation booking trends in Thailand. First, the majority of Thai consumers surveyed use these services multiple times per year. Second, Airbnb is not the most popular service for online accommodation booking. Thai consumers are more likely to use Booking.com or Agoda, though Airbnb is more popular than Expedia and Air Asia. Hotels are the most popular type of accommodation to book online followed by residential accommodations (such as those provided by Airbnb), service apartments, hostels, and bed and breakfast accommodations. The popularity of hotels in relation to residential accommodations may be the reason why Airbnb is used less frequently than some of the other booking services. However, the findings of this study indicate that Thai consumers have generally positive attitudes toward Airbnb, feel confident about using the service, and are open to trying it, though they would not necessarily select it over other services. They are also inclined to be cautious about online booking, and are only willing to use sites they trust completely.

The second objective of this research was to determine the relative influence of attitudes, reference groups (family and friends and celebrities), perceived behavioral control, eWOM, and trust on Airbnb usage intentions. All of these factors were found to influence intentions. However, the impact of eWOM is the strongest, followed by (in descending order of influence) attitude, perceived behavioral control, trust, and reference groups. Of the reference groups included in this study, celebrities are more influential than family and friends, which suggests that aspirational groups have a greater impact on consumer decision making with regard to online accommodation booking than close personal associates. However, the overall effect of reference groups is quite weak, possibly because online accommodation booking is done in private rather than being an act of public consumption, and therefore may be less susceptible to social normative influences. eWOM has the most significant influence on Airbnb usage intentions, as consumers are inclined to check social media reviews before trying a new Web-based accommodation booking site, and they are more likely to use a site if it is featured in many positive online reviews. These findings suggest that in the era of social media, the recommendations of a large number of strangers carry more weight than recommendations from friends and family. Thai consumers do not feel that they need to consult anyone else when making the decision to book accommodations online. Instead, they prefer to make the choice on their own. Thus, perceived behavioral control is high in this consumer group. Overall, the findings regarding the five independent variables are in line with those of the majority of other researchers who have investigated factors that contribute to consumer choices regarding travel-related products and services.

Given that attitudes, reference groups (socially normative influences), and perceived behavioral control were all found to be predictors of intentions in this study, the results of this research provide further support for the TPB as a model of consumer decision making. However, it should be noted that the sample was skewed toward well-educated young women, so it is possible that similar research conducted with a different demographic group would yield different results. Also, the TPB is not sufficient on its own to explain consumer choices, given that eWOM and trust also play a major role in consumer decision making, and that the variables included in this study did not fully

account for behavioral intentions. Thus, there are other factors not included in this research that also contribute to Airbnb usage intentions.

The third objective of this research was to develop a series of recommendations based on the study findings. These recommendations are presented in the section that follows.

5.2 Recommendations

Several recommendations can be made based on the findings of this study. First, eWOM, has a greater influence over Web-based booking intentions than any other factor, likely because modern consumers typically do their preliminary research and make product and service selections online rather than in person. Therefore, online accommodation service providers and marketers should develop strategies to encourage eWOM on social media channels. Users could be encouraged to post reviews by offering discounts or contest entries with prizes for those who contribute eWOM. In addition, online accommodation booking services such as Airbnb could develop social media content designed to encourage user-generated content sharing beyond the boundaries of the company's own websites and social media channels in order to increase awareness of Airbnb and the perception that many people are using the service. This could also be achieved with contests, special limited-time discounts, and other strategies. Encouraging the sharing of consumer-generated destination reviews, travel photos, and other appealing content on personal social media pages would help to spread the content beyond the company's own online channels to independent channels where recommendations may be perceived as more credible, and therefore would be more influential.

Second, online accommodation booking companies should focus on improving consumer attitudes toward their services. This research found that attitudes were a strong contributor to Airbnb usage intentions, and while attitudes were somewhat positive, the average scores for attitudinal measures fell within the "Agree" range rather than the "Strongly Agree" range, indicating that there is room for improvement. Attitudes could potentially be improved in a number of ways. For example, providing superior customer service, addressing issues quickly and effectively, and offering

something extra to attract new customers and encourage loyalty among existing customers are all strategies that could improve attitudes toward the service provider. Airbnb could also potentially improve attitudes by increasing and providing information about the company's charitable activities. Ideally, this information would be communicated on social media channels to become part of the overall eWOM related to Airbnb services. While the company has begun to engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and marketing, an online search indicates that its current CSR strategies are not well communicated.

Third, given the relatively weak influence of reference groups in this study, using celebrities to advertise Airbnb or similar services is unlikely to be very effective. Instead, marketing efforts should focus on issues important to customers, such as trustworthiness. Those promoting online accommodation booking services should emphasize data security, safety, and reliability in their marketing messages, and share online reviews and recommendations that emphasize these factors. The focus should be on positioning the service provider as a trustworthy option, recommended by a large number of satisfied consumers who have experienced no problems in using the service. Trustworthiness could be enhanced with the provision of accurate and up-to-date information on the company website and other communication channels, and by being responsive to consumer questions, concerns, and complaints.

5.3 Recommendation for Future Research

The findings of this research suggest a number of possibilities for future research. First, given that the sample in this study was skewed toward women, young adults, and those with postsecondary qualifications, it would be useful to conduct a larger study with a randomly selected sample of consumers. This would help to determine whether the weighting of the sample in this study occurred as a result of self-selection bias or reflected demographic trends in online accommodation booking (identifying consumer trends would be useful for characterizing the target market and developing more effective Airbnb promotional campaigns).

Second, a multinational study would indicate whether the findings of this study apply only to Thai customers or reflect the broader trends of international customers

who use online accommodation booking services. While the findings of this research provide insights into the attitudes of Thai customers and the factors that influence their decision making with regard to online accommodation booking, they are not generalizable to traveler markets in other nations. A multinational study would indicate whether Airbnb marketers should develop localized, targeted campaigns for particular regions or standardized international campaigns.

Third, given that eWOM and attitudes had the strongest effects on Airbnb usage intentions, conducting surveys to determine which types of eWOM are the most influential and focus groups to gather insights on how to improve attitudes toward Airbnb would be beneficial. Determining which types of eWOM have the greatest influence on intentions and behaviors would help Airbnb marketers create more powerful social media campaigns.

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