

# GENERATION C'S INTERNET SEARCHING BEHAVIOR AND THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE INTENTION TO FOLLOW ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH IN ONLINE HOTEL RESERVATIONS

Kobkrit Rakjit<sup>1,\*</sup> and Sarunya Lertputtarak<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

With growing competitiveness in the hotel industry, related businesses should take full advantage of the internet. It is important to understand attitudes towards eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth), which is related to trust in eWOM and customers' intentions to follow eWOM. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to study a model of hedonic features, utilitarian features, trust in eWOM, and attitudes towards eWOM. The concept of Generation C addresses the lifestyle of people living in the digital age, and was used to guide the selection of 400 samples from Generation C in Thailand.

The results showed that hedonic and utilitarian features do have an effect on trust in eWOM; trust in eWOM has an effect on attitudes towards eWOM; and attitudes towards eWOM have an effect on the intention to follow eWOM among individuals of Generation-C in Thailand. Therefore, the hotel reservation businesses should provide hedonic website features by creating a unique website, also with enough information to fulfil consumer needs; this can influence the trust and attitudes of consumers when making purchasing decisions.

**Keywords:** Electronic Word-of-Mouth, Hotel reservations, Internet searching behavior, Generation C

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

As the globalization of modern business has taken place, the marketing field has changed and evolved. Due to the drastic changes in human behavior, the internet has become a part of human life, as it helps to connect people around the world. Moreover, it can be viewed from many devices such as smartphones, smart TVs, and tablets. Thus, there are many forms of online content such as social media (Facebook), blogs (Blogspot), video sharing (YouTube), online travel communities (TripAdvisor), and service providers (Airlines Agency). With these technologies, businesses could easily achieve their objectives of getting in touch with their customers. Several studies have identified people based on their behavior and intentions (Zainal, Harun, & Lily, 2017).

Since the internet has become important, many hotels have started using the internet as a booking tool. Such hotels provide hotel content with illustrations. In addition, there are several accommodation booking websites, which provide online reservations to travelers. Travelers can do online booking anytime they want, wherever they have an internet connection. Moreover, with online booking websites, customers are able to share their hotel experiences by giving reviews. As a result, they play a role in helping other consumers to make a booking decision based on previous feedback, which is up to date (Agag & El-Masry, 2016).

Word of mouth is a way of sharing ideas, beliefs and experiences among

each other. Marketers believe that it is the most effective way to share news, contents, or reviews, and that it is widely trusted (Ahmad, Vveinhardt, & Ahmed, 2014). In addition, among Thai people, it can affect the decision to book a hotel. Some people say that when they make a decision to purchase something, they always ask for comments or recommendations (positive and negative) as evidence from those who have tried it before (Park & Lee, 2009). With today's technology, there are many ways to connect with each other online such as through social networks or communication sites. Currently, online booking agencies allow customers to give feedback on previous trips, as well as share their experience or level of satisfaction (Chintaguta, Gopinach, & Venkataraman, 2010) by posting comments on the booking agency website.

Online review is one of the strategies in marketing communication; it relies on word-of-mouth and is very successful (Law & Wong, 2010). In other words, online reviews are the electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) written based on customer perception towards a product or service available on the internet, such as the service quality of a hotel, or worthiness of a product. It is essential for helping people to make decisions when buying products or services (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Duan, Gu, & Whinston, 2008).

A new generational concept based around the extensive use of social media, has emerged, and is referred to as Generation C. Generation C consumers

are important in the current market as their behaviors and motivations are aroused by the new technologies of the web in the digital age (Morin, 2017). The concept of Generation C was initiated in 2004 by the Dutch magazine "TrendWatching.com," which studied the behavioral traits linking individuals within different generations of consumers; this is connected with the first article of the series: "Generation C - An Emerging Consumer Trend and Related New Business Ideas" (Morin, 2017). TrendWatching.com defined Generation C based on four words beginning with the letter C, which are Content, Connectivity, Community, and Creativity (Morin, 2017). In Thailand, marketers also realize the importance of Generation C and define the characteristics of Generation C as Connection, Convenience, Creation, Curation, and Community (Marketeer, 2015), or Cash smart, Convenience, Creative, Casual, Control, and Connect (Marketing Opps, 2014).

Many previous research studies have investigated eWOM's effect on hotel booking intentions, mentioning that the growing competitiveness in the hotel industry could lead to hotels taking full advantage of the internet (Cao & Yang, 2016). Some studies show that the reviews of hotel users on websites impact consumer purchasing intentions (Mauri & Minazzi, 2013). Also, Bilgihan & Bujisic, (2015) found that website features affect trust and customer commitment, both of which are important for online marketing. Furthermore, one study mentioned that

an eWOM source, impacts consumers' attitudes towards trust and their intention to follow the eWOM (Zainal et al., 2017). However, there are few studies of electronic word-of-mouth in Thailand. For this reason, it is important to understand attitudes towards eWOM, related to trust in eWOM and intentions to follow eWOM, as it serves as an online marketing tool, and helps e-commerce including travel businesses, to develop their services and maintain relationships with their customers. The main purposes of this study were to improve a model of the hedonic features, utilitarian features, trust in eWOM, and attitudes towards eWOM in relation to consumers in Generation C. The benefits of this study, through Thailand's adoption of tourism e-commerce, are that travel businesses and hotel managers could use this study as a guideline to increase customer trust and their intention to book hotels, such as improving their services based on online comments. This may help travel businesses to run their work with high efficiency.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Internet Searching Behavior**

Internet searching behavior is related to information behavior as it refers to the overall individual behavior connected to the internet, specifically when sharing or seeking information (Wilson, 2000). According to Wilson's theory, there are four types of searching behavior, which are passive attention,

passive search, active search, and ongoing search. Firstly, passive attention refers to the receiving of information without intention such as hearing news on the radio. Secondly, passive search refers to occasions where a person gains information coincidentally when searching for other information. Thirdly, active search refers to situations whereby the searcher has the intention to search for information on the internet. Lastly, ongoing search refers to seeking for a unique information source when the searcher already knows some information. Based on this, one study concluded that information behavior affects searching behavior because it starts with a person who seeks information to fulfill his or her own need (Janekit, 2009).

### **Generation C and Internet Searching Behavior**

Some researchers like to define Generation C by the time they were born. CEFRIO, a public-private technology transfer group in Quebec, Canada, identifies Generation C as the group of individuals born between 1982 and 1996 (Pickett, 2019). However, others prefer to define Generation C as a “psychographic” group (Pickett, 2019). The concept of Generation C addresses the lifestyle of people living in the digital era. It refers to the behavioral traits identifying different generations of consumers. In Thailand, marketers define the characteristics of Generation C as Connection, Convenience, Creation, Curation, and Community (Marketeer,

2015), or Cash smart, Convenience, Creative, Casual, Control, and Connect (Marketing Opps, 2014). Technology has given people in Generation C control over every part of their lives. Generation C is a powerful new group of consumers. They spend a significant amount of time on internet searching activities. Individuals in Generation C are 2.4 times more likely to lean toward ads that give them a choice to skip. Moreover, they see creation as a way of life, they like to shoot videos, write blog posts or post reviews. They are active consumers who have the potential to become the best customers (google.com/think, 2014).

The research team of Google.com/think found that 90% of Generation C create online content at least once a month. They are passionate brand advocates; if they like a brand, they tend to tell everyone about it. In addition, they are also active consumers, 56% have taken action after watching ads for a product or service on YouTube. They are regular YouTube users, 76% of Generation C visit YouTube weekly, and 36% visit daily (Google.com/think, 2014).

### **2.3 Website Features**

Due to the previous studies, Shen & Khalife (2008) divided the features of e-commerce into two types, namely utilitarian features and hedonic features. Hedonic features relate to fantasy seekers, fun, and shopping (Childers, Carr, Peck, & Carson, 2001; Suki, 2010), and in the context of internet e-commerce websites (Chiu, Wang, Fang

& Huang, 2014; Ha & Stoel, 2009). Moreover, users of hedonic features look for a website that provides interactive functions in order to get a greater experience from the website. Websites with hedonic features have positive effects and influences on commitment (Pura, 2005). They also add value, generating high customer commitment (Paguio, Ali, & Breen, 2011). Regarding the online environment, websites depend on creative and unique features to develop calculative commitment (Bridges & Florsheim, 2008). Meanwhile, utilitarian features are important for e-commerce (Bilgiham & Bujistic, 2015). Some studies highlighted the importance of physical presence and utilitarian aspects (Rafaeli & Noy, 2005; Ha & Stole, 2009). There are many characteristics of utilitarian features, such as accessibility and effective ability in finding information. Previous research suggests that it is important to focus on design, functionality, and user-friendliness (Fan & Poole, 2006). The utilitarian value of the service could increase positive consumer emotions (Babin, et al., 2005). There are several research papers which examined the positive effects of high perceived website utility (Nusair & Parsa, 2011) and results from previous research on utilitarian website features shows that customers are likely to stay in the relationship if they could gain benefits from the websites, and that the customers' perception of the utilitarian value of the service affects their commitment (Bilgiham & Bujistic, 2015).

## **2.4 Trust in Electronic Word-of-Mouth**

Trust in eWOM relates to the confidence a consumer has in another's reviews. In addition, when a customer perceives that someone's review is believable information, it can benefit tourists, who seek reliable sources. Also, trust is assumed to influence consumers' willingness to engage in communication in online word-of-mouth (Kucukemiroglu, Kara, & Harcar, 2012). From online communication, customers trust their friends' reviews rather than expert content (Chu & Kim, 2011).

## **2.5 Attitudes Towards Electronic Word-of-Mouth**

Attitudes of customers towards electric word-of-mouth regarding services and products are based on the individual's trust in the source of the eWOM (Casalo, Flavian, Guinaliu, & Ekinci, 2015; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). There are two types of attitudes -- affective attitude and cognitive attitude. Based on previous studies, Yang & Yoo (2004) identified affective attitude as a person liking an object, and cognitive attitude as an individual belief. In other words, attitude is a personal opinion, either positive or negative, towards online purchasing (Andrews & Bianchi, 2013).

## **2.6 Intention to Follow Electronic Word-of-Mouth**

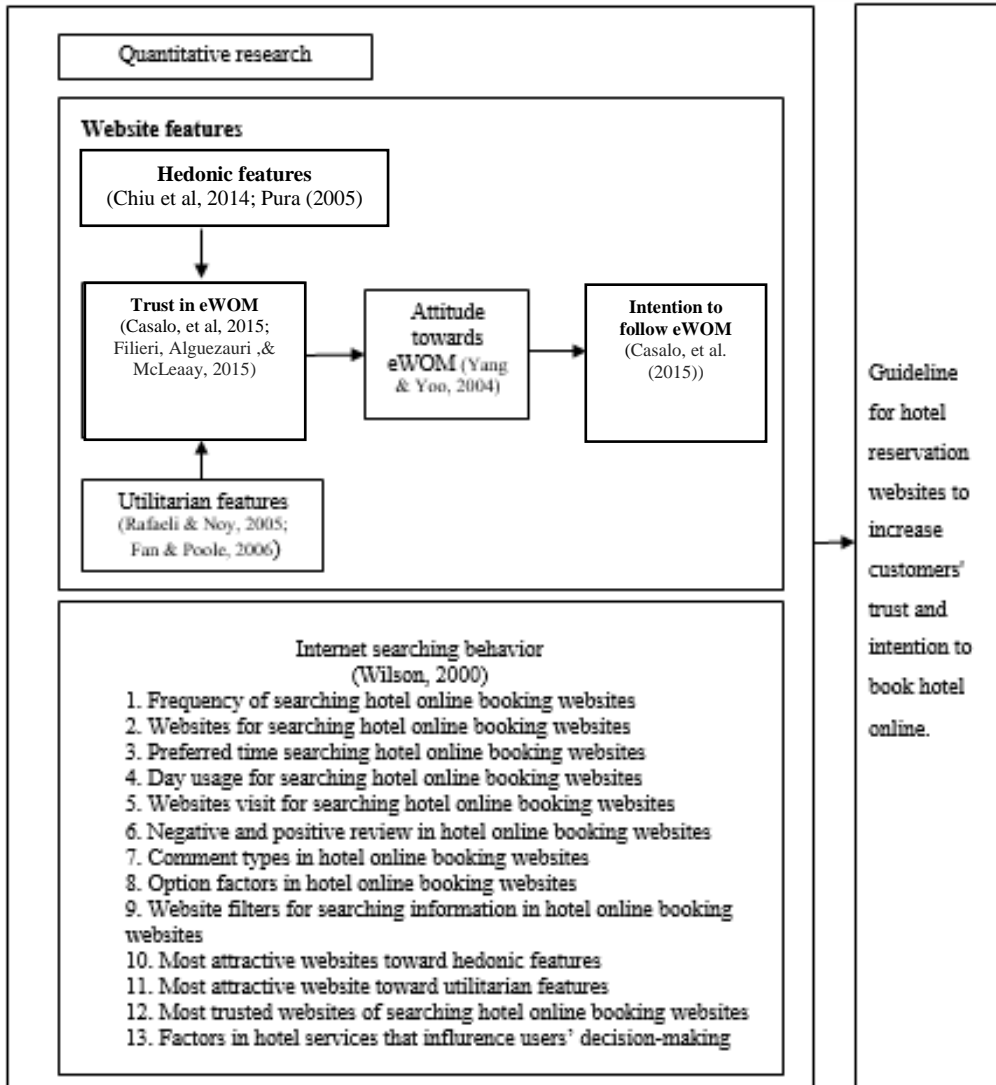
Intention to follow eWOM is a consumer behavior, whereby there is an intention to follow the online reviews of other people. It also represents the extent of favorable or unfavorable feelings that an individual has towards an object (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Moreover, intention to follow eWOM is similar to the “explanations of an individual” before making buying decisions in the previous study of Cheung and Thadani (2008). Consumer reviews influence the customer’s intention to purchase. There are several different places to find online reviews such as websites, blogs, or communities, all of which can affect consumer decision-making in purchasing products or services (Schindler & Bickart, 2005; Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006; Park, Lee, & Han, 2007; Buhalis & Law, 2008).

on the online rating lists. Wang, Law, Guillet, Hung, & Fong, (2015) studied the effect of hotel website quality on online booking intentions, using electronic trust as a mediator. The statistics of this paper suggested that the quality of hotel websites had three important dimensions, namely usability, functionality, and security/privacy. Bhatiasavi & Yoopetch (2015) studied the factors of intention towards electronic booking among young Thai users. The results showed that image had a positive effect on intention to use. Moreover, the study found that Thai users perceived that using online booking improved their status, gave them a greater feeling of prestige, and established a higher profile among their friends and peers. Also, the intention to use online booking was highly dependent on the level of perceived value by the customers.

## **2.7 Hotel Booking Through the Internet**

Casalo et al., (2015) studied the effects of online hotel ratings on tourists’ attitudes towards hotel booking intentions. The results showed that the most popular online travel communication was Tripadvisor. Also, it was found that a tourist’s attitudes and online booking intention both depended

### 3. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES



**Fig. 1.** Conceptual framework

The author sets the hypotheses as follows:

1. Hedonic features of websites can influence trust in sources of eWOM.
2. Utilitarian features of websites can influence trust in sources of eWOM.
3. Trust in the sources of eWOM can influence attitudes towards eWOM.
4. Attitudes towards eWOM can influence the intention to follow eWOM.

## **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Data Collection**

The selected samples were taken from 400 Thai nationals in Generation C in Chonburi by using the convenience sampling method. Generation C is defined by people's behaviors, motivations, and reactions to the new technologies of the web in the digital age. The criteria for selecting respondents were in the first section of the questionnaire. These questions asked about the respondents' Generation C characteristics. Six words, which could well point to the common features of Generation C, were Cash smart, Convenience, Creative, Casual, Control, and Connect (Marketing Opps, 2014). The target sample size was required for the Partial Least Squares (PLS) Regression approach, which is less than the covariance-based structural equation model (SEM) (Chin, 1998 & Kock, 2014). Goodhue, Liwis, & Thompson (2006) showed that the 10 times rule for sample size should not be used as a guideline when using PLS, except for when there is a strong effect size with high reliability. Furthermore, this research framework contains 6 variables, and it was determined that a sample size over 350 would be needed for effective data analysis (Chin, 1998). There are 385 samples, which were calculated based on the Goodhue et al., (2006) theory. However, the researchers distributed 550 questionnaires as some of the completed surveys could not be used for analyzing data. Finally, the comple-

ted questionnaires for this study totaled 400, which was sufficient for further analysis of the results.

### **4.2 Variables and Measurement**

All samples in this study were taken from Thai people. Before the researchers distributed the questionnaires to the respondents, the researchers translated the questionnaire from English to Thai as the local language is Thai. The questionnaire in the Thai version was translated and certified correct translation by Burapha University Language Institute.

Before distributing questionnaires to respondents, the researchers checked the validity of the questionnaire by asking 3 experts to measure the index of item-object concordance or IOC (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1976). The questions in this questionnaire passed the validity criteria stated by Rovinelli and Hambleton (1976) which mentioned that IOC should not be less than 0.5.

30 questionnaires were used for pre-testing in order to check reliability using Cronbach's Alpha Method (Cronbach & Shavelson, 2004). Coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ ) scales are as follows: 1) A scale with a coefficient  $\alpha$  between 0.80-0.95 is indicated to have very good reliability; 2) A scale with a coefficient  $\alpha$  between 0.70-0.79 is indicated to have good reliability; 3) A scale with a coefficient  $\alpha$  between 0.60-0.69 is indicated to have fair reliability; 4) A scale with a coefficient  $\alpha$  below 0.60 is indicated to have poor reliability. From the pre-test on reliability, only sections with  $\alpha$  values



above 0.7 were accepted as having internal consistency adequate for the questionnaire (Nunnally, 1978).

**Table 1:** Cronbach's Alpha reliability test

Questions	Cronbach's Alpha
Hedonic features (HED: Question 1-4)	0.878
Utilitarian features (UTIL: Question 1-3)	0.872
Trust in eWOM source (TRU: Question 1-3)	0.843
Attitudes towards eWOM (ATTI: Question 1-3)	0.810
Intention to follow eWOM (INTEN: Question 1-5)	0.848
Overall reliability	0.886

The survey questions regarding internet searching behavior were adapted from previous research on the effect of attitude towards eWOM by Zainal et al., (2017). Also, the questions related to factors affecting the intention to follow eWOM were adapted from research regarding online hotel booking by Bilgihan & Bujisic, (2015).

### 4.3 Data Analysis

After the data collection was complete, coding and analysis of the data was performed using a statistical analysis program. The statistics used for analysis were percentage, mean, and standard deviation. In terms of inferential statistics, the data were analyzed using factor analysis and path analysis through SPSS and the WarpPLS program (Trial version).

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1 Profile of the Respondents

The majority of the respondents (236) were female; 209 respondents were

single; most of them (184) had already completed a bachelor's degree; 223 respondents worked as company employees; and most of the respondents (126 persons) had a monthly income of around 10,001 – 20,000 Baht per person.

### 5.2 Internet Searching Behavior Analysis

Regarding the results of internet searching behavior, most of the respondents did online searching for 9-10 times before reserving hotels at 09:01-12:00 hrs.; most of them took more than a week in searching for information from about 9-10 hotels; most of the participants thought that negative reviews had higher effects on their opinions than positive reviews; they preferred revising both Thai and foreigner reviews; they thought that 24 hour room service could have an influence on them in terms of online hotel booking; they preferred the best deal or promotion factors to other factors when searching for information on hotel online booking websites; most

respondents preferred using Hotel.com more than other websites for all factors; and online reviews about hotel bedrooms could influence their decision-making more than other factors.

### 5.3 Factor Analysis

The researchers used exploratory factor analysis and Varimax rotated component analysis in order to explore the observed variables belonging to latent variables having eigenvalues greater than or equal to 1.00. Also, this study used a 2-stage rule (Nunnally, 1978), which is an analysis based on loading results. That is, if the loading results are not greater than or equal to 0.1, the researchers would remove a question in order to avoid cross-loading (Snell & Dean, 1992) and perform reanalysis. The reason behind this is to

avoid a question merge with other questions and to make the results of this study more effective.

A sample size of 400 respondents or more requires factor loading values greater than  $\pm 0.3$  for 0.05 significance (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). For measurement of the appropriateness of factor analysis, the author employed Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin statistics (KMO). The results are as follows.

Table 2 shows that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin statistics (KMO) produced a value of 0.87, which is greater than 0.5, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was calculated to be 2641.49 with a p-value  $\leq 0.05$ . This indicates that there is strength of the inter-relationship among the set of variables and appropriateness for factor analysis.

**Table 2:** KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy) and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		0.87
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. Chi-square	2641.49
	df	153
	Sig.	0.000***

\*\*\*Sig  $\leq 0.05$

Remark: Hedonic features (HED), Trust in eWOM (TRU), Attitude towards eWOM (ATTI), Intention to follow eWOM (INTEN), and Utilitarian features (UTIL)

**Table 3:** Factor analysis

Items	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
INTEN4: I would feel comfortable behaving according to the advice/information I obtain on social media.	0.82	0.07	0.05	0.18	0.11
INTEN5: I would not hesitate to take into account the comments and suggestions made by other travelers.	0.78	0.11	0.24	0.09	0.01
INTEN3: I will closely follow the suggestions from positive comments made by travelers on social media as they are favorable.	0.77	0.09	0.02	0.15	0.17
INTEN2: I would rely on the recommendations made by other travelers.	0.72	0.10	0.09	0.19	0.19
INTEN1: I would feel secure following the suggestions made by travelers.	0.60	0.17	0.13	0.17	0.21
HED3: Online booking truly has unique features when compared with other methods.	0.18	0.77	0.10	0.13	0.05
HED1: The online booking experience was truly creative.	-0.20	0.71	0.19	0.31	0.05
HED2: Compared to other things I could have done, the time spent booking was truly enjoyable.	0.17	0.71	0.16	0.01	0.07
HED4: I felt really smart when using online booking.	0.31	0.63	0.15	0.18	0.09
TRU3: Websites have high integrity.	0.12	0.18	0.84	0.02	-0.01
TRU1: Websites can be trusted at all times.	0.02	0.15	0.83	0.14	0.03
TRU2: Websites can be counted on to do what is right.	0.23	0.17	0.68	0.04	0.17
UTIL1: I use online booking websites for finding the room I want.	0.17	0.29	0.06	0.75	0.17
UTIL3: I want email alerts of special offers from online booking websites.	0.21	0.15	0.12	0.70	-0.07
UTIL4: I read online reviews written by other travelers.	0.44	0.07	0.00	0.69	0.15
ATTI4: Advice/information obtained on online booking websites would be good for me.	0.13	0.06	0.10	-0.01	0.79
ATTI2: I think following the advice/information obtained on online booking websites would be beneficial for me.	0.25	0.07	-0.06	0.04	0.62
ATTI3: I have favorable attitudes towards the advice/information obtained on online booking websites.	0.82	0.07	0.05	0.18	0.61

Table 3 (continued)

<b>Eigenvalues</b>	5.78	2.11	1.42	1.07	1.00
<b>Percentage of variances</b>	32.15	11.71	7.88	5.95	5.42

Remark: The eigenvalue is a measure of how much of the variance of the observed variables a factor explains. Any factor with an eigenvalue  $\geq 1$  explains more variance than a single observed variable.

According to Table 3, it can be clearly seen that for component 1, there are 5 factors of **intention to follow eWOM**, including INTEN4 (0.82), INTEN5 (0.78), INTEN3 (0.77), INTEN2 (0.72), and INTEN1 (0.60); for component 2, there are 4 factors of **hedonic features**, which are HED3 (0.77), HED1 (0.71), HED2 (0.713), and HED4 (0.630); for component 3, there

are 3 factors of **trust in eWOM sources**, which are TRU3 (0.84), TRU1 (0.83), and TRU2 (0.68); for component 4, there are 3 factors of **utilitarian features**, which are UTIL1 (0.75), UTIL3 (0.70), and UTIL4 (0.69); for component 5, there are 3 factors of **attitudes towards eWOM**, which are ATTI4 (0.794), ATTI2 (0.62), and ATTI3 (0.61).

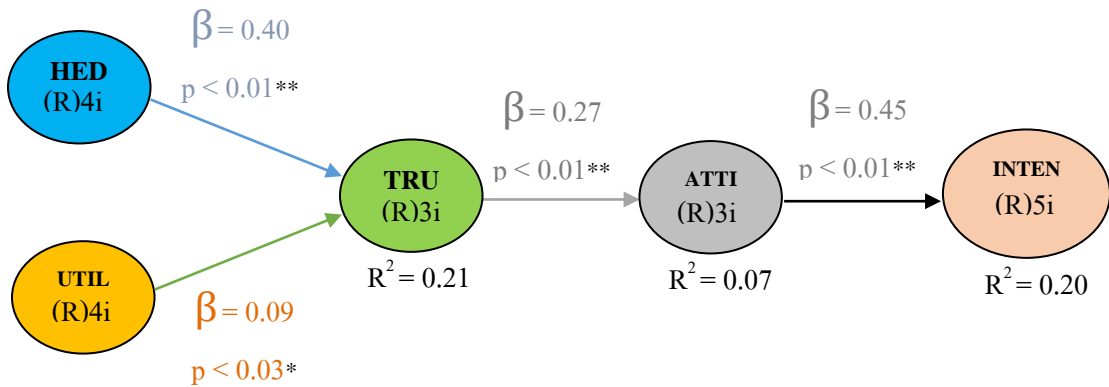
## 5.4 Hypothesis testing

Model fit and quality indices:

**Table 4** The fit indices of WarpPLS

<b>Indices</b>	<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>Pass/not pass</b>
Average block VIF (AVIF)	$\leq 5$	Kock (2012)	1.238	Pass
Average full collinearity	$\leq 5$	Kock (2012)	1.453	Pass
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	small $\geq 0.1$ , medium $\geq 0.25$ , large $\geq 0.36$	Kock (2012)	0.312	Pass
Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)	$\geq 0.70$	Kock (2012)	1.000	Pass
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	$\geq 0.90$	Kock (2012)	1.000	Pass
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	$\geq 0.70$	Kock (2012)	1.000	Pass
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	$\geq 0.70$	Kock (2012)	0.750	Pass

## Structural model



\* at significance level of 0.05 \*\* at significance level of 0.01

**Fig. 2.** Structural model

Fig. 2 shows the structural results of path coefficients from analysis of the 400 samples (Chin, 1998; Fornell & Lacker, 1981). The results show that all average path coefficients (APC) are significant as follows: HED/TRU = 0.40 ( $p < 0.01$ ); UTIL/TRU = 0.09 ( $p = 0.03$ ); TRU/ATTI = 0.27 ( $p < 0.01$ ); ATTI/INTEN = 0.45 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Hedonic and utilitarian features do have an effect on trust in eWOM; trust in eWOM has an effect on attitudes towards eWOM; and attitudes towards eWOM have an effect on the intention to follow eWOM in respect of Thais in Generation-C. This model found a good level of predictive power ( $R^2$ ) as it showed 20 percent of intention to follow eWOM.

## 6. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Conclusion and Discussion

From the results, it was found that **hedonic features** which relate to consumers' feelings while using online booking, affect the Thai Generation C to have greater positive trust in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) because hedonic website features can give an experience, which is truly creative, unique, enjoyable, and smart; these findings are in line with previous studies (Childers et al., 2001; Suki, 2010). The studies by Childers et al. (2001) and Suki (2010) found that the perceived usefulness of online shopping affected consumers' buying intentions. Moreover,

the results showed that hedonic website features could make customers perceive positive emotions while making an online booking. The study, based on the research of Pura (2005) found that perceived value and loyalty were caused by location-based mobile services. Furthermore, hedonic website features could persuade more people to interact with the website, as supported by Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien, (2010) who found that hedonic and utilitarian features affected motivations on consumer engagement.

The results indicated that **utilitarian features**, which are beneficial features, could have a positive effect on trust in electronic word-of-mouth among the Thai Generation C. This is supported by the research of Nusair, Bilgihan, and Okumus (2013), which found that utilitarian features were positively related to eWOM. Also, utilitarian website features can fulfill consumer needs from travelers' experience reviews and destination reviews. This corresponds to the previous study of Fan & Poole (2006), which found that website elements were important for customers. Also, the consumers were likely to get high benefits from website usage and thought that functionalities of websites were important for them (Fan & Poole, 2006). Therefore, utilitarian website features could influence trust in eWOM sources. However, this study also found that utilitarian features have a lesser effect on trust than hedonic features, as mentioned in Lim & Ang (2008), whereby utilitarian behaviors have less arousal than hedonistic

counterparts due to the capacity to satisfy and provide cognitively oriented benefits. Hedonistic qualities in an interaction tend to generate emotional arousal. In some situations, hedonism is the primary driver because some consumers give more priority to aesthetics than functions (Cal & Adams, 2014).

As a result, it was found that people's trust can influence consumer's trust in eWOM sources, which is supported by the study of Kucukemiroglu et al., (2012). The study found that social capital and trust were important for word-of-mouth online behavior. Also, it showed that trust affected website credibility because several people thought that websites could be trusted at all times. Moreover, believable information online, influenced beliefs, attitudes, and intentions based on a study of the relationship of attitudes and behavior by Fishbein & Ajzen, (1975). The data of this study shows that individuals in Thai Generation C think that websites have high integrity for online booking, which is supported by the eTrust study of on online booking by Wang et al., (2015). Thus, positive trust in eWOM sources of individuals in Thai Generation C can affect their actions as consumers due to content from consumer reviews. This is consistent with the study of Chu & Kim, (2011), which confirmed that strength, trust, normative, and informational effect were important to electronic word-of-mouth behavior.

Positive attitudes towards eWOM can affect consumer intention to follow eWOM because the results show that

individuals in Thai Generation C think that online booking websites would be good for them to reserve rooms. It is supported by a study on customers' attitudes towards electronic word-of-mouth on services and products (Casalo et al., 2015; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012), which confirmed that reviews on destination accommodations from former service users had an effect on the intention to follow. Also, online users think that they would feel comfortable and secure to follow electronic word-of-mouth, which is supported by a study on how consumer reviews influence purchasing intentions (Schindler & Bickart, 2005; Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006), confirming that trends and social media affect tourism decision making. Moreover, the results show that advice or information from other people would be beneficial for consumers and create positive attitudes towards eWOM, which could affect their intention to follow electronic word-of-mouth (Hernandez, Jimenez, & Martin, 2010). Last but not least, the results of the indirect effect analysis show that hedonic website features have an indirect effect on attitudes towards electronic word-of-mouth without relying on trust in eWOM. It also shows that trust in eWOM sources has an indirect effect on the intention to follow eWOM.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Hedonic website features are known as features that affect consumer feelings when using websites. Hedonic features serve the needs of people who are

seeking creative, enjoyable, unique, and smart feelings. For this reason, the author suggests that hotel reservation businesses should focus on hedonic website features by creating a creative and unique website, which could give consumers enjoyable and smart feelings because it could make customers perceive positive emotions during online booking, and it might lead to greater trust in eWOM sources.

Hotel reservation businesses should also place importance on utilitarian website features because consumers seek an easy way to find the room that they need. Moreover, websites should have enough information in order to fulfill consumer needs, and the hotel reservation businesses should allow travelers to share their experiences on their websites as it would help people to make a decision to use online booking. Last but not least, the website should have email alerts for special offers in order to give benefits to customers. This might help increase consumer trust in electronic word-of-mouth sources.

Hotel reservation businesses should be aware of eWOM source credibility. From the results, consumers normally would seek a believable source because it influences consumers' willingness to engage in online word-of-mouth. Consequently, hotel reservation businesses should improve their credibility and maintain relationships with their customers as websites can be counted on to do what is right. Also, it would help hotel reservation businesses to understand consumers' insights and affect customer decisions to book a hotel

as consumers think that websites have high integrity.

Hotel reservation businesses should focus on consumer attitudes towards eWOM. Consumers usually have positive attitudes towards online reviews because they think that information would be beneficial for them. It might help hotel reservation businesses to improve their marketing strategies in order to influence intentions to follow eWOM.

Hotel reservation businesses should focus on consumer intention among eWOM as it could help improve tactics by providing the information that would make consumers feel secure and comfortable and thus increase online booking agency performance. Also, hotel reservation businesses should closely monitor eWOM as the results show that consumers rely on travelers' reviews. Therefore, consumer intention affects their decision making when doing online hotel booking and their intention to follow the electronic word-of-mouth.

### **6.3 Limitations and Future Research**

The samples in this study were taken from the Thai Generation C, so the author suggests that future research should analyze other groups of people, such as foreigners because it might help researchers to gain unique results from future studies. Furthermore, the author would like to suggest that future research should study people in other geographical areas such as Bangkok, which is the capital of Thailand or famous provinces such as Phuket,

Chiang Mai, and Khon Kean. By doing so, future studies might be able to analyze characteristics of different people in order to make the studies highly efficient.

However, future research should do both quantitative and qualitative analysis in order to improve effectiveness. Moreover, future studies should test different variables, such as website engagement, website brand equity, consumer perception, and consumer lifestyle, which lead to the intention to follow eWOM in order to help researchers to find new efficient results.

Moreover, future studies should compare different groups of people such as those from different age ranges in order to investigate which target would highly benefit hotel managers. As a result, future studies might be able to find internet searching behavior and factors influencing the intention to follow eWOM more effectively.

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