Research Paper

Tourism destination marketing and information technology in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

A research model was developed to investigate the relationships between intention to visit and tourists' satisfaction as a source of mediation for travelers through information search and e-word of mouth. A judgmental sampling technique and a sample questionnaire survey of 350 respondents were involved in the research measurement. The finding of the analytical results indicates that the dimensions of tourists' satisfaction as a mediator affect the overall tourists' intention to visit. Simple websites no longer have an impact on destination marketing because of the advance in technology. Websites should provide different tools and marketing channels to facilitate the surfing and information needs of tourists. The research used the instruments of online word of mouth and information search by modifying the theory of planned behavior to consider the context of intention to visit. Valuable information for managers and researchers interested in the internet and online destination marketing is essential.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to use the internet to market tourism products and service to online destination markets (Morrison, 2013). Smartphones, laptops, iPads, tablets and desktop computers have become indispensable components of the daily lives' of people. The possession of computers among travelers has increased the consumption of the internet through marketing channels at various tourism destinations (Gröne, Friedrick, Holbling, & Peterson, 2009; Rogers & Davidson 2015). Communications and promotions through internet have increased the popularity of online technology (Shankar, Venkatesh, Hofacker, & Naik, 2010). The features in smartphones, laptops and desktop computers enable customers to purchase tourism products at different destinations, access and share information freely that impacts the pattern of communications in the tourism industry (Sultan & Rohm, 2009). With the help of the internet, customers can visit websites to interact, review and purchase tourism products. Attractive websites include graphical images, shapes, animations, fonts and complete layout of destinations to encourage customer retention (Li & Yeh, 2010). Quality websites (Vance, ELie-Dit-Cosqque, & Straub, 2008) impact customers experience while interacting and using the website (Chung, 2015; Wells, Valacich, & Hess, 2011).

Websites should be easy to navigate and user friendly (O'Brien & Toms, 2008). Previous empirical research revealed that the internet purchasing behavior of customers differs based on user friendliness of websites and the perceptions of online buying behavior of tourism products (Kim & Stoel, 2004). Recommendations from Leung, Lee, and Lawa (2011) propose that websites should have irresistible features appeal to customers. It was further suggested that properly designed characteristics of good websites add excitement, emotional satisfaction and signals positive engagement for customers to visit frequently to purchase tourism products. The most important things tourists look for on websites is the easier-to-use design hallmarks, logical navigations and logical dropdown menus. Internet purchasing behavior and transaction requires commitment and formal assurance Bigné, Hernández, Ruiz, and Andreu (2010). These include searching for special target tourism services and valuable tourism products that satisfy customers' selection needs, evaluation requirement, ordering focus, and payment and delivering among different available options. Due to severe competition among various destination markets around the globe, it will be proficient to maintain an attractive and efficient website with the guarantee to provide preventive measures of vulnerability security problems and risk free to attract and retain more customers.

2. Literature review

The research of Goodrich (2011) revealed that computers make it easy to for goods and services to be bought and sold on the internet. This was similarly supported by Xu and McGehee (2012) on the notion that businesses are transacted online by using computer networks. All types of business are supported by internet marketing and web

technologies. The studies of Zhang et al. (2011) propose that the use of internet to transact business reduces cost and increases sales considerably. It was further suggested that websites promotional posting and advertisement on the internet can be reached by tourists across the world and even to the smallest village in a remote area (Luo, Ba, & Zhang, 2012). Information on the internet about tourism destinations is searchable because of the availability of internet. Knowledge of the internet has an important impact on the buying of tourism products and services. The tourism industries around the globe have experienced the significant influence of information technology as a platform for search engines that impact the general performance of tourism activities online (Büttcher et al., 2016). Smartphones are used for the payment of bills through the internet that include mobile payment systems for e-service quality. The purchasing of tourism products and services through internet includes wireless handsets, personal digital assistants and smartphones. Smartphones are gaining popularity in the tourism industry because of the advantage of using them wirelessly anywhere (Dahlberg, Mallat, Ondrus & Zmijewska, 2006). Various tourism researchers designed conceptual research models and used theories related with intention to buy and visit behavior.

The theories include the theory of reasoned action (TRA), the technology acceptance model and the theory of planned behavior (Shin, 2010). The theory of reasoned action was hypothesized to explore the relationship between point of views and behavior intentions (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). The influence of behavior intention is noticed in tourists when planning to purchase tourism products and service. Attitude toward tourism destination marketing can occur through social influence and online word of mouth. This can either impact the tourists' thinking capacity to purchase the products or decline based on their belief and evaluations (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). In the present world of internet and semiotic society, destination images impact tourists' intention to visit tourism destinations. Researchers in the hospitality industry propose that signs, images, and symbols present fetishistic qualities that inspire tourists' psychological response to destination marketing on the internet. Tourism academicians reveal that e-word of mouth is a communication channel that has influence in the online destination marketing (Blazevic et al., 2013). Online word of mouth has more credibility than word of mouth because it is perceived by tourists as unbiased. The broader use of internet has made it easier for e-word of mouth and circulation of information among potential customers. Tourists review websites, discussion forums, weblogs and social network websites as a platform for e-word of mouth to be experienced among millions of customers. It has been revealed that the relevant literature about e-word of mouth is focused on communication (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Davis & Khazanchi, 2008). This further suggests that the extent to which research studies have been published on e-word of mouth, is cross-disciplinary and has no any formal conclusion. The research on the e-word of mouth phenomenon is classified into two categories. Marketing analysis and individual analysis (Tan & Wu, 2016). The marketing systematic investigation is based on the sales of products and services while the individual examination is focused on e-word of mouth as an influence on personal level. The marketing procedure permits senders of messages as e-word of mouth to influence the receivers of the messages (Doh & Hwang, 2009; Gauri, Bhatnagar, & Rao, 2008; Vas, 2017) and impact their behavior towards visiting the destination marketing. The individual analysis through e-word of mouth is a communication between a sender and a receiver. The sender sends messages on the internet about products and services (Cheung, Lee, & Thadani, 2009; Gupta & Harris, 2010) based on his experience as a process of personal influence to change the mind of the receivers of the messages towards buying or visiting the tourism destinations.

3. The contribution

Internet based consumer discussion is the virtual environments

tourists use to share views and opinions. This has resulted to a new way of communication regarded as e-word of mouth. The difference between online word of mouth and word of mouth is that e-word of mouth is based on the internet while word of mouth is from person to person without internet involvement. Online word of mouth provides insights for academicians and practitioner to discuss online forums. Based on this, website designers and administrators can efficiently design and manage the forum discussions to evaluate and facilitate their credibility for readers. This study is designed to test a conceptual research model that investigates the relations between information searching, e-service qualities, e-word of mouth and tourist satisfaction with intention to visit behavior. The model tests tourist satisfaction as a full mediation of the effects of intention to visit, information searching, e-service quality and e-word of mouth. The result of the meta-analysis demonstrates that information searching and e-word of mouth appears to be strongly associated with the intention to visit than e-quality service. This study is therefore focused on tourists' satisfaction based on the theory of planned behavior (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Alén, Nicolau, Losada, & Domínguez, 2014). The examination of the aforementioned mentioned relations indicates that this study completes the various gaps in the tourism literature. Firstly, previous empirical research demonstrated that information searching and e-word of mouth are the influential variables of intention to visit (Hung & Patrick, 2012). Secondly, rsearch based on data collection from samples collected in developing countries in the tourism marketing literature is negligible (Getz, 2012). In the present study, the above-mentioned relationships were tested using data collected from hotels and guest houses in Ghana. Thirdly, the success of the empirical studies on tourists' satisfaction on intention to visit in the tourism literature depended on data collection at one point in time. This type of data collection is likely to common bias problems (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Temporal separation with two weeks' time apart between the measurements of both the independent and dependent variables was used in this study. Visitors from the 4-star hotels, 3-star hotels and the guest houses via intention to visit, tourists' satisfaction, information searching, e-service quality and e-word of mouth were estimated through data collection from relevant visitors.

3.1. Conceptual research model

As shown in Fig. 1 the conceptual research model is made up of many relationships. Tourist satisfaction impacts information searching, e-service quality and e-word of mouth positively. Tourist satisfaction has full mediation with the above mentioned variables through the intention to visit. Age, gender, marital status, education and job tenure are regarded as control variables in this research work. They may have significant influence on the study variables and the relationships.

3.2. Direct effects

Destination selection among tourists is very important to governments, tour operators and tourism organizations. The environments that receive a large number of tourists during tourism periods influence the creation of temporal jobs and economic impact of the destination. Various researches with intention to visit among tourists focuses on economic factors of temporal jobs creation, paying taxes to governments for the development of the environments and the attraction of more visitors to settings (Lee, Morrison, & O'leary, 2006). This research therefore seems worthwhile to explore the impact of the void in the social variable of which tourists' satisfaction with intention to visit depend on discussion forums. When customers are satisfied with destinations online interactive variables, their intentions to visit becomes easier to select and targeting luxury tourism products and environments to vacate becomes encouraging. However, when customer satisfaction towards interactive variables diminishes, their intention to visit is directed towards the other destinations of interest causing the intention to visit a particular destination to disappear
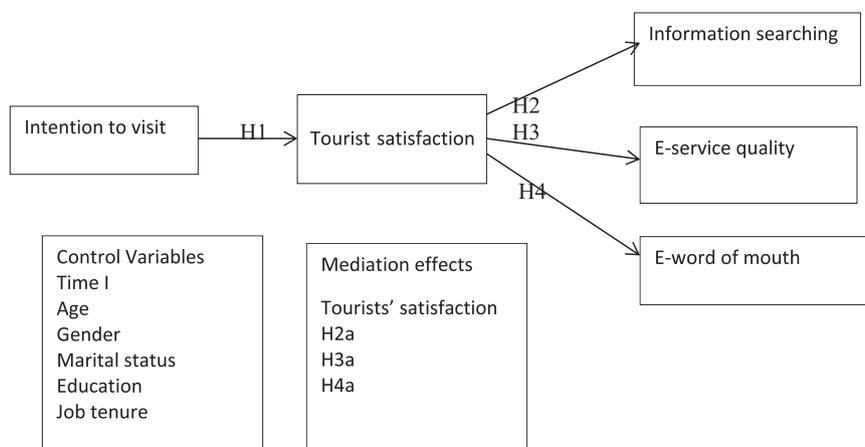
Fig. 1. Conceptual research model.

(Kim, 2013; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004). The identification of tourists' satisfaction has been one of the major problems confronting businesses. If the tourism organizational administrators are able to recognize the elements of tourism products or services that influence tourist satisfaction, experiences may be altered to impact maximum satisfaction. If experience has positive impact on tourists, they are likely to re-visit based on previous experience to enjoy the activities. However, not all satisfied tourists on an environment are likely to repeat visitation. Most unsatisfied tourists never go back to the destination. The majority of tourism researchers are of the view that destination satisfaction relies on expectations and experience. The feeling of satisfactions emerges when performance and expectations of products are satisfactory. Expectation is generally accepted as a variable that affects satisfaction but there is no any conclusive evidence that expectation really causes satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

3.3. Intention to visit

The success of destination markets depends on tourists and their inspirations to visit. The most dominant influence of customer behavior towards tourism goods and services rely on the information search process (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Chen, Hsu, & Lin, 2010; Chevalier, Dommes, & Marquié, 2015). The application of planned theory was similarly outlined to define tourism products at various destinations. The model was designed to include the buying behavior of tourism products, services, beliefs and the selection of destinations to visit. Many tourism decision making models originated from the planned behavior theory proposed by Artigas et al. (2017). In recent times, there have been many studies on tourism decision-making process, most especially concerning the purchasing of tourism products and services through the internet. It has been acknowledged that low prices of destinations and alternative prices of other destinations together with exchange rates affects the tourist decision-making process to visit specific tourism destinations (Artigas et al., 2017; Sirakaya and Woodside, 2005). However the empirical studies failed to examine the gap on high or low resources of tourists with potential tourism background wishing to visit destinations of their choice. The studies failed to measure how these differences between tourists can be affected. This research therefore intends to investigate the tourists'satisfaction level based on resources and intention to visit as a mediator for potential tourism (Song, Kang, & Boo, 2012). A conceptual research model is design based on the application of planned behavior theory (Han & Hsu, 2010; Tan & Wu, 2016) to determine tourists' intention to visit. The research model demonstrates how destinations are selected to visit through the power of tourist satisfaction and intention to visit (Lam et al., 2006; Belanche et al., 2012). The use of information search engines, e-services quality and e-word of mouth with the intention to

visit encourages tourists to vacate at destinations of their choice. First-hand information about the destination avoids risk. Based on the above stated theory, this hypothesis was postulated.

H1. Intention to visit has positive relations with tourists' satisfaction.

3.4. Information searching

Information search relates to the ability of tourists to search and find relevant information on websites about desire destinations to visit (Cao & Yang, 2016; Lyu & Noh, 2016). Customers perceive information as useful when it serves the purpose for which it is required. Purchasing of tourism products demands accurate information about the products (Falk, Hammerschmidt, & Schepers, 2011; Humborstad, Humborstad, & Whitfield, 2007; Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2013). When websites contain reliable information about tourism products, customers feel free to transact on such web environment without fear of any risk of loss of personal data. A reliable website has influences on potential customers. It creates trust between the customers and the tourism organization. A well-grounded website should have features that reinforce customers' decision making process towards products (Fesenmaier & Xiang, 2014; Sparrow, Liu, & Wegner, 2011; Wang, Park & Fesenmaier, 2012). However, when tourists discover that information provided about tourism products on a website is not authentic, there will be a great concern about the genuineness of the website. This can lead to disappointment and development of suspicion and negative impact on transactions. Current research on search engines reveals that there is incorporation between social media and search engines (Zehrer, Crotts, & Magnini, 2011). In the hospitality industry, many customers depend on various search engines to find accurate information on the internet about tourism. Searching for hotel accommodation is always the number one priority of tourists when they intend to travel to destinations of their choice (Gretzel, 2011; Kammerer & Gerjets, 2014; Magnini, Crotts, & Zehrer, 2011; Purcell, 2012). The attraction of the environment becomes a second target that includes transportation and other information needs. Based on these empirical studies, this hypothesis were suggested.

H2. Tourists' satisfaction has positive relation with information searching

3.5. E-service quality

With the fast growth of the online destination marketing, large numbers of business organizations are gaining competitive advantages by using the internet to interact with tourists. Websites and low prices on the internet attract tourists to online marketing destinations.

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However, research suggests that the main determinants of business success or failure are not only the availability of websites and low prices but also online quality of service. Online quality of service is defined as the universal assessment and judgement of online service quality distribution in the online destination market. Online service quality is difficult to measure and explain because of it elusive nature and abstract constructs. Service quality was first researched by Parasuraman et al. (1985) which has been widely accepted as a method to measure tourists view on service quality. Parasuraman et al. (1985) used a research model of five dimensions to measure service quality that include tangible, reliable, response, assurance, and empathy. However, during the past three decades the model has been used to measure online service quality (Kiran & Diljit, 2012). Online service quality considers tourists evaluation of the online services because the procedure used to measure quality is not the same as the one used to measure physical destination marketplace (Bastida & Huan, 2014).

The studies of Liao et al. (2007) suggest that service quality scale items will have to undergo some modifications before they can be used for relevant internet sales and purchase (Chenini & Cherif, 2016). Online service quality provides satisfaction to customers. Positive online word of mouth from previous visitors is inspirational and has an impact on potential customers wishing to visit (Chen, Shang, & Li, 2014). Tourists' satisfaction through the use of e-services brings about profits and market shares. It is important to measure and evaluate customer value accurately through the utilization of e-service quality. The studies of Law, Qu, and Buhalis (2010) and Zhang (2015) revealed that tourists and tourism organizations harbor the same idea that the internet is a platform for buying and selling of tourism products that stimulates promotion to target customers. The tourists' behavior is becoming more focus on tourism service providers around the world (Cao & Yang, 2016). In recent times, tourism organizations have become aware of the importance of creating value for tourists' experiences (Kim & Stepchenkova, 2016; Phau, Shanka, & Dhayan, 2010; Wang & Pizam, 2011). This has influenced tourism organizations to develop new strategies to manage online quality experience of tourists and as a result this hypothesis was formulated.

H3. Tourists' satisfaction has positive relations with e-service quality

3.6. E-word of mouth

Online word of mouth is a personal influence that affects customers' selection of destinations. Potential customers intending to travel to destinations can be affected by the information they perceive on the internet through online word of mouth. Online word of mouth is a message left on the internet by previous visitors to settings that can either be positive or negative. Positive messages from former visitors' experiences encourage potential customers to visit the destination while negative messages repel visitors. Online word of mouth also known as e-word of mouth or electronic word of mouth is a communication medium recognized in the tourism literature (Barreto, 2014; King, Racherla, & Bush, 2014). E-word of mouth has customer influence on tourists' choice of destinations on the internet which is recently hiking (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). Tourists who travel to destinations return to their countries of origin with experiences. Because of their past experience of the setting, they post their opinions on the internet. Comments and recommendations on weblogs, forums, online bulletin board systems and social media networks are examples of electronic word of mouth. Online word of mouth also known as eWOM is different from the traditional word of mouth in that it has a unique conveyance style that is fast and scalable. Online information presented on the internet is archived and can be available for a long time (Kozinets, De Valck, Wajnicki, & Wilner, 2010; Zhou, 2004). Online word of mouth is more perceptible than the traditional word of mouth (Bilgihan, Barreda, Okumus, & Nusair, 2016; Frías, Rodriguez, Alberto Castaneda, Sabiote, & Buhalis, 2012). Online

word of mouth data on the internet is extensive as compared to information from traditional word of mouth. Traditional word of mouth comes from someone who generates the information and send to another person. The sincerity of the message is only known to the person who received it. While on the other hand, the online word of mouth messages cannot be judged by the sender. Due to the above reasons, these hypotheses have been suggested.

H4. Tourists' satisfaction has positive relations with e-word of mouth

3.7. Hypothesis direct effects

The results of the multiple regression analysis with regards to the direct effect of intention to visit on tourists' satisfaction are shown in Table 4. Intention to visit ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$) is a significant predictive of tourist satisfaction. Hypothesis 1 is therefore supported based on the outcome of this analysis. Among the control variables shown in the study, only the job tenure has a significant relationship with tourists satisfaction indicating that tourists with long years of work might have saved enough resources to prepare for the vacation.

3.8. Mediating effects

Relevant literature in tourism revealed that the effects of intention to visit based on information searching and e-word of mouth has full or partial mediation with tourists' satisfaction. By such variables perceived value is one of the most important elements of purchase intention behavior. It has been defined as overall assessment use of products and services based on perception of what is obtained and what is offered. Zeithaml categorized value into four types: (1) value as low prices of products and service, (2), value as whatever tourists want in products and service, (3) value as the quality of service tourists receive for money they paid, and (4) value as what the tourists acquire for what they offered. When tourists perceive poor destination performance and expectation are not met they become emotional fatigue and have intentions to leave the destination (Hsu, Hung, & Tang, 2012; Jabreel, Moreno, & Huertas, 2016). They feel they lost the value of what they paid for. Perceived value of products and services impacts tourists' behavior and increase competitive successfulness. In this study we focus on tourist satisfaction for various reasons. Tourists are more likely to repeat visitations if they experience maximum satisfaction in the first visit. Previous literature proposes that reliable information search can be collected to analyze the satisfaction of hotel tourists. It has also been suggested that higher levels of perceived value can lead to higher levels of tourist satisfaction. This indicates that perceived value is an antecedent to the result of satisfaction and when tourists are satisfied they repeat visitations. Underpinning the planned behavior theory and deficient empirical studies about the destination related to this study the following hypothesis H2a, H3a, and H4a is proposed. Tourist satisfaction has full mediation with the intention to visit based on (1) information searching (2) e-service quality, and (3) E-word of mouth.

4. Methodology

A judgmental sampling technique was used in this study. The target respondents were local and international tourists from hotels in Accra. The judgmental sampling procedure was used in the study because of the information that was obtained from Ghana Tourist Board in Accra at the period of this research. It was disclosed that Accra has four 5-star hotels, three 4-star hotel, six 3-star hotels, nine 2-star hotels and 38 guests' houses. The authorities of the above mentioned hotels were approached through emails to inform them about the purpose of the study and to obtain their endorsement for data collection. Only the management of the 4-star hotels, 3-star hotels and the guest houses permitted the data collection for the research. The total number of the hotels was nine and guest houses was 38, making a total of 47 involved

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Table 1
Direct effect: Multiple regression analysis result.

Independent variables	Dependent and Standardized coefficients Tourists' personal income	
	Step 1	Step 2
(i) Control variables		
Age	0.03	0.04
Gender	0.01	0.06
Marital status	0.05	0.08
Education	0.09	0.07
Job tenure	0.16[*]	0.21[**]
(i) Intention to visit	–	0.42[**]
F	4.61[**]	4.92[**]
R^2 at every step	0.15	0.25
ΔR^2	–	0.10

Note: Gender was coded as a dichotomous variable where male = 1 and female = 2. The job tenure was measured through six point scale and there was no any indication of variance inflation factors in the results and no problems of multicollinearity.

[*] $p < 00.05$.
[**] $p < 0\ 0.01$.

in the research. The hotel management did not allow the researchers to directly contact the tourists. These types of restrictions are recognized in similar studies at central African region of Cameroon (Karatepe & Agbaim, 2012; Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009). The hotels and the guest houses selected senior supervisors to share the questionnaire to the respondents and collect the outcome. The questionnaires were distributed with a time lag of three weeks to diminish the risk of potential method of common bias problems based on the studies of Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) and the research of Karatepe (2013). Each respondent that completed the questionnaire was given an envelope to seal them and put in a special allocated box to assure confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents involved in the study.

A total of 143 questionnaires were distributed to the local tourists and 118 were retrieved, indicating 83% successes in the first sample. One hundred and thirty five questionnaires were distributed to the international tourists and 110 questionnaires were collected back specifying 81% successes in the second sample. In Table 1, the same sample indicates that 32 respondents, representing 27%, had ages ranging from 18 to 25. Twenty-seven respondents out of 23% had ages ranging from 28 to 35. Twenty-eightl respondents, with ages ranging from 38 to 45, made up 24%. Fifteen respondents, with ages ranging from 48 to 55, made up 14%, while the rest were older than 55. With particular reference to the educational background of the respondents, it is noted that 32 respondents, representing 27%, were junior secondary school graduates. Meanwhile,14 respondents with secondary school certificates represent 12%. Sixteen respondents graduated from training college represented 14% of the sample and 20 respondents, making up 17% of the sample, had associate degrees from a university. Respondents with University degrees were just 28, representing 24%. Tourists with master degrees were only eight in number, indicating 7% of the sample, and were all international tourists. Male respondents (52) represented 53% of the sample. Female respondents (45) made up 47%. Fifty-seven respondents were single, divorce or widows, representing 43% of the total. Sixty-one respondents were married, representing 42%. The majority of the respondents (38) had job tenure of 7–10 years representing 32%. Respondents with job tenure of 15–16 years were 33 which represented (28%. Twenty-six respondents had job tenure of 1to 6 years that were 22% while 21 respondents have job tenure of 1–14 years, making up 18% of the sample.

4.1. Measurement

Multiple-item scales obtained from suitable tourism literature were used to measure information searching, e-service quality, e-word of

mouth, tourist satisfaction and intention to visit. Information searching was defined through the use of four items from the studies of Bragazzi (2014), Do, Kim, Lineman, Kim, and Joa (2015). The empirical research of Andreassen and Streukens (2009), Albayrak, Caber, and Aksoy (2010), Evans (2015) was used to evaluate e-service quality. The same scale was also used to measure e-word of mouth information searching, intention to visit and the control variables (Chu, 2011a, 2011b). Tourists' satisfaction was measured through the use of four scales items and the scale was adapted from the studies of Moore (2012). Gender was coded as a dichotomous variable where male = 0 and female was = 1 while age and education were not measured as they appeared insignificant in the analysis. The overall measurement quality was evaluated by applying succession and a series of exploratory and confirmatory factor detailed examinations through the study of Marsh et al. The internal reliability estimations were analyzed through the accepted cutoff level of 0.70. The hierarchical multiple regression analysis was utilized to evaluate the hypothesis. The recommendation of Baron and Kenny (1986) was used as a guide to test the mediating effects of the hypothesis. This type of approach is vastly applied in the tourism literature (Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009; Kim, 2008). The control variables (age, gender, marital status, education and job tenure) were entered in the first step, and information searching, Eservice quality and e-word of mouth entered in the second stage to predict tourist satisfaction. The control variables (age, gender, marital status, education and job tenure) were entered into the first stage. The independent variables (information searching e-service quality and e-word of mouth) were entered into the second stage. The mediator variable (tourist satisfaction) in the third stage to predict the dependent variable (intention to visit). The process was repeated for the entire mediator hypothesis. The Sobel test was conducted to investigate the important effects of the mediating.

4.2. Results of measures

The measurements were subjected to various exploratory factor analyses by using principle component analysis with varimax rotation. Few of the items had loading problems below the accepted cut level of 0.50 and were not logically identified with any of the factors (Heene, Hilbert, Draxler, Ziegler, & Bunner, 2011). Due to these reasons, one item from e-service quality, one item from tourist satisfaction and one item from intention to visit were dropped. The final results suggested a five-factor solution with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 that accounted for 69.2% of the total variance. In order to obtain more detailed estimations, confirmatory factor analysis used the SPSS/AMOS software to analyze the data. As indicated in the Table 1, the fit statistics result were computerized as the following: (X^2/df = 1.32; GFI = 0.72; A-GFI = 0.81; NFI (Goodness of fit index) = 0.82; NNFI (Non Normed Fit Index) = 0.89; CFI = 0.90; IFI (Incremental Fit Index) = 0.91; RMSEA (Root mean square error of approximation) = 0.051; SRMR (Standardized root mean square residual = 0.056). The result indicates a good fit of the five-factor model to the data based on the number of fit statistics (Perry, Nichals, Clough, & Crust, 2015). It is noticed in Table 1 that all observed indicators loaded on their latent variables and the sizes of the loadings ranged from 0.81 to 0.96. Overall, the results indicate evidence of convergence validity based on the studies of (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006) (Tables 2 and 3).

Note: Every item is measured on a five-point scale. The majority of the loadings are significant at 0.01 except the loading from Information searching, e-word of mouth that were measured lower than 99% indicating that all the reliability variables are more than the accepted cutoff level of 0.70. The variables of information searching are 0.81; e-service quality 0.91; e-word of mouth 0.89; tourist satisfaction 0.92 and intention to visit 0.96. Table 4. The collective scores for each construct were estimated by finding the average of the items. The results of information searching, e-service quality e-word of mouth and intention

Table 2
Items scale, reliability and confirmatory factor analysis.

Scale items	Factor loading	Eigenvalues	%variance	α value
Information searching		32.06	0.81	0.81
Destination information on the internet is useful	0.72			
The influence of the viewed information online	0.81			
Security information about destinations helps tourists	0.79			
Prices of tourism products online attractive visitors	0.88			
E- Service quality		2.36	28,08	0.91
Expected quality of service online pleases tourists	0.86			
Online quality service meets tourists' needs and expectations	0.83			
View of online clean environment attracts tourism	–			
Reasonable cost of tourism product attract tourists	0.84			
Friendliness, politeness and respect for tourists	0.91			
E-word of mouth		1.86	36.15	0.89
Online messages to travelers about destination awareness	0.90			
Online messages from previous visitors to destination impact	0.87			
The positive experience from previous travelers encourages other tourists to travel to the same destination	0.82			
Negative messages about destinations affect psychology impact of potential tourists	0.92			
Tourist satisfaction		1.46	42.10	0.92
I think most tourists have a positive view about this destination	0.94			
The employees at the destination are very friendly towards tourists	0.85			
The tourists destination has a unique image	–			
I think this destination is very popular among tourists	0.95			
Employees at the tourism destination always put visitors firsts	0.86			
Intention to visit		2.48	38/12	0.96
Visit to rest and relax	0.80			
Visit friends and relatives	0.83			
Visit for business reasons	0.79			
Attending conference, seminar and congress	0.93			
Visiting for religious purpose	–			

to visit ranged from 1 to 5 while the results of tourists' satisfaction and the control variables range from 0 to 6. The gender was coded as binary variables. Male = 0 and Female = 1 and job tenure was estimated through a six-point scale. Correlations are significant at 0.01 levels and 0.05 levels respectively. The collective result for each construct was estimated by finding the average of the items as indicated in Table 4. The scores for information searching, e-service quality e-word of mouth and intention to visit ranged from 1 to 5 while the scores for tourists' satisfaction and the control variables range from 0 to 6 as shown in the above. The gender was coded as two variables. Male = 1 and Female = 2. Job tenure was estimated through a six-point scale. Correlations are significant at 0.01 (*) levels and 0.05 (**) levels respectively.

4.3. The hypothesis test

The hierarchical multiple regression analysis regarding the mediation effects on Table 4 indicates that the relationship between

information searching with tourists' satisfaction ($\beta = 0.55$, P < 0.001), the relationship between e-service quality and tourists' satisfaction ($\beta = 0.38$, p < 0.01) and the relationship between e-word of mouth and tourists' satisfaction ($\beta = 0.29$, p < 0.01) are all significant predictors of tourists' satisfaction. Therefore the hypothesis H1a, H2a, and H3a are all supported. The results in Table 4 also revealed that information searching has positive effects on intention to visit ($\beta = 0.39$,p < 0.05) but when the tourists' satisfaction as a mediator was included in the model, the size of the information searching on the effects of intention to visit reduced and the effect was no more significant. However, there was an increase in the ($\Delta R^2 = 21$, p < 0.001).

Similarly, e-service quality has positive effects on intention to visit ($\beta = 0.24$, p < 0.01) but adding the mediator tourists satisfaction between e-service quality and intention to visit, there was a reduction and the effect of the model was not significant anymore. There was rather an increase in the ($\Delta R^2 = 26$, p < 0.001) Lastly, e-word of mouth has positive effects on intention to visit a tourism destination market

Table 3
Mean standard deviation and correlations variables.

	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Age	–									
2	Gender	0.03	–								
3	Marital status	0.09	0.11	–							
4	Education	0.15	0.01	0.03	–						
5	Job tenure	0.18	0.10	0.05	0.06	–					
6	Intention to visit	0.10	0.19	0.13	0.15	0.21*	–				
7	Tourist satisfaction	0.08	0.05	0.10	0.08	0.17	0.22*	–			
8	Information searching	0.14	0.10	0.03	0.17	0.13	0.28**	0.34**	–		
9	E-service quality	0.12	0.16	0.09	0.15	0.18	0.29**	0.35**	0.36**	–	
10	E-word of mouth	0.16	0.13	0.16	0.12	0.15	0.24*	0.28**	0.26**	0.20*	–
11	Mean	1.21	1.16	1.28	1.19	1.22	1.25	1.29	1.31	1.27	1.32
12	Standard deviation	2.27	4.30	2.13	1.21	3.14	2.23	2.25	3.22	4.25	3.29

Notice: The composite results for each construct were computed by their averages. The results for intention to visit, tourists' satisfaction, information searching, E-service quality and E-word of mouth were arranged from one to five. The results for tourists' satisfaction were ranged from 0 to 6. Gender was coded as 0 for male and 1 for female.

* Correlation significant at 0.05.

** Correlation significant at 0.01.

Table 4
Mediation effects and the multiple regression coefficients results.

	Dependent variable and standardized regression analysis								
	Information searching			E-service quality			E- word of mouth		
	Step1	Step2	Step3	Step1	Step2	Step3	Step1	Step2	Step3
Independent variables									
Age	0.11	0.02	0.05	0.00	0.08	0.10	0.13	0.06	0.08
Gender	0.13	0.06	0.16	0.06	0.11	0.09	0.14	0.15	0.10
Marital status	0.15	0.01	0.18	0.17	0.11	0.07	0.17	0.13	0.14
Education	0.12	0.14	0.06	0.13	0.13	0.11	0.08	0.19	0.17
Job tenure	0.09	0.15	0.10	0.19	0.18	0.12	0.06	0.09	0.14
Intention to visit	–	0.39[**]	0.11	–	0.24[**]	0.16	–	0.26[*]	0.14
Tourist satisfaction	–	–	0.55[**]	–	–	0.38[*]	–	–	0.29[*]
F	7.62[**]	12.06[***]	10.52[***]	9.35[**]	11.09[***]	8.49[**]	4.24[**]	3.69[**]	3.38[**]
R^2 at every step	0.18	0.21	0.28	0.19	0.27	0.32	0.10	0.22	0.35
ΔR	–	0.03	0.07	–	0.08	0.05	–	0.8	0.13
Sobel test outcome:									

Intentionvisit→toursat→inforser = 3.72[***]
Intentionvisit→toursat→e-serqua = 2.36[**]
Intentionvisit→toursat→e-word = 2. 21[*]

Note: Gender was coded as dichotomous variable where 1 = male and 2 = female. Organizational tenure was measure through a six point scale. Intention to visit = intentionvisit, tourists' satisfaction = toursat, information searching = inforser and e-word of mouth = eword and e-service quality = e-serqua. The results did not show any problems of variance inflation factors and no multicollinearity.

  * $p < 0.05$.
  ** $p < 0\ 0.01$.
  *** $P < 0.001$.

($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.01$) but when the tourist satisfaction as a mediator was included in the model the size of the e-word of mouth on the effects of intention to visit was minimized and the effect was no longer significant. However, the ($\Delta R = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$) was noticed to be increased. The overall results propose that tourists' satisfaction fully mediates information searching, e-service quality and e-word of mouth indicating that hypothesis H1a, H2a and H4a are also supported.

5. Discussions and conclusions

The study makes important contributions to the tourism and hospitality literature in several ways. Firstly, a test was conducted for the full mediation role of tourists' satisfaction on the relationship (1) between information searching and intention to visit (2) e-service quality and intention to visit, and (3) e-word of mouth and intention to visit. Secondly, contrary to the limited empirical research of the above mentioned mediation effects in Europe and other developed parts of the world this study was conducted in Ghana which is a developing country in West Africa. Thirdly, the data were collected from local and international tourists on vacation in Ghana. The data collection lasted for three weeks to prevent common bias method. Various important findings were discovered from the research. The findings related to the impact of information searching on the internet and tourists' satisfaction are in line with the studies of Mason, Junyent, and Tornatora (2014); Wu, Chuang, and Chen (2008). The findings regarding the impacts of tourists' satisfaction on e-service quality is in uniform with the current studies of Darley, Blankson, and Luethge (2010), Johnson (2011). The results indicate that the effect of tourist satisfaction on e-service quality is high because the two are positively attached to each other. Indicating that tourists may either have lower or higher satisfaction to purchase e-service quality and tourism products. The results also reveal that e-service quality has a full mediation with tourists' satisfaction. This further suggests that when customers have money they intend to visit destinations and expect a value for the payment they make. The findings associated with tourists' satisfaction on e-word of mouth are identical to the empirical research on Lee, Noh, and Kim (2013), Meuter, McCabe, and Curran (2013), Sweeney, Souta, and Mazzarol (2014). It is also noted that there was a full mediation between tourists' satisfaction and e-word of mouth.

The above mentioned results make important contributions to tourism relevant literature because of the paucity of the empirical studies related to tourists' satisfaction as a full mediation of the intention to visit. The relationship of the above mentioned study tested data collected from 4-star hotels, 3-star hotels and guests' houses in Ghana. Because data collected from a sample of the West African country is very limited (Svensson, Tonvol, & Siathen, 2008), the study covered the gap that exists in the tourism literature and added compilation of knowledge to the study in the setting. When this study was compared with other studies from European countries in terms of data collections, it was noticed that in the tourism literature data were used at one point in time or mostly self reported data are being used in the majority of the research work. In consistent with the studies of Podsakoff et al. (2003) this study obtained data from local and foreign visitors vacating in Ghana for a period of three weeks. This process of separation of data collection reduced the possible threat of common bias methods. Factors that affect customer expectation and need in a destination marketing environment should be address and high quality must be maintained to entice tourists to visit.

6. Practical implications for managers

The role of information searches through search engines represents an implication for online destination marketing. The growing significance of e-word of mouth and e-quality of service for tourism information search is a major concern for this study (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2014). Websites should provide different types of tools and marketing channels to facilitate communication and engagement of potential tourists and their information needs. Simple websites no longer have a place in the online destination marketing because of the advance in technology. Hotels websites should include business functions of distributed information, videos, relationship building, booking, transactions and the overall marketing of the hotel. For destination markets to understand the effective use of websites from the hotel context, it will be important for the managers to examine the latest use of websites in online marketing institutions to understand the future trends and developments.

The global competition among several destination markets has made it necessary for tourism organizations to improve their strategies

to attract more tourists. The provision of basic information on tourism products and services are not enough to withstand the severe competition among destination markets (Pike, 2015). The development of website qualities based on relationship orientation and information search can assist in directing tourist to destinations (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012). Internet communities like Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp and TripAdvisor are all new communication channels that can be adapted by tourism destination marketing organizations for online word of mouth messages. The online destination organizations in Spain used the Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr as a platform to communicate and influence tourist to visit (Escobar-Rodríguez and Carvajal-Trujillo, 2013). Similarly in Taiwan, though English is not a major language among the residents, hotels used Facebook and youtube to disseminate information to potential tourists.

7. Limitations and future research

This is research is not without limitations and recommendations for future research. Firstly, the study was based on duration of three weeks with the intention to reduce common bias methods. In the future this research can be used by other researchers as a model to investigate and predict online website destination marketing activities. Our sample data was smaller and future research should use larger sample size to validate their results. Secondly, it was also stated from the onset that the management of the hotels and the guests' houses did not allow the researchers to directly contact the respondents. The collection of the data was therefore depended on the relevant managers. They paid special attention to the problem of confidentiality when submitting the questionnaire to the local and the international tourists. It is generally accepted that data collection in this manner may have created potential selection bias problems (Schwepker & Hartline, 2005). Thirdly, In the near future, collecting questionnaires directly from respondents should be encouraged to eradicate potential issues of all biases related to data collection. Researchers should include different types of online destination marketing organizations and compare the difference in the internet marketing activities. In conclusion Ghana is a new online tourism destination marketing environment, and more online marketing should be considered by the tourism organizations to attract tourists (Bettman, Luce, & Payne, 1998).

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