Abstract

SMEs are often described as slow adopters of technology. However, adopting e-commerce is one of many strategies taken by travel agents to re-intermediate themselves in the global travel market against the threat of disintermediation. Exploratory studies have revealed that Egyptian travel agents are laggards when it comes to technology adoption, although they perceive e-commerce as a beneficial tool that can increase their chances of survival. As many as 59.2% of Egyptian travel agents were found not to have websites (Egyptian Travel Agents Association, 2008), this study investigates the factors affecting e-commerce adoption by travel agents.

Past literature has shown that there are three main factors affecting the adoption of e-commerce by SMEs. Environmental pressures push SMEs to adopt in order to bolster their survival chances. The benefits of adoption are critical factors considered by managers when making the adoption decision. Finally, there are barriers to e-commerce adoption. By modifying the technology acceptance model, this research conceptualizes the causal relationships amongst these three types of factors. The benefits and barriers to e-commerce adoption are found to mediate the relationship between environmental pressures and e-commerce adoption.

This study employs mixed methods starting with a quantitative survey and following it up with qualitative interviews. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 411 adopter and non-adopter e-commerce travel agents. Later, 22 interviews were conducted with the managers of travel agents. Structural equation modelling produced findings reveal that environmental pressures significantly affect the perceived benefits of and barriers to adoption, in addition to having an indirect effect on adoption behaviour.