

E-Commerce and Small Tourism Businesses in Developing Countries: Drivers versus Boundaries of Adoption

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ABSTRACT *The uptake and adoption of e-commerce by small and medium-sized enterprises is still relatively low and slow. Whilst travel agents are typically classified as small and medium tourism enterprises, there has been a persistent threat of disintermediation in the global travel and tourism market particularly in developing countries. Approximately 59% of travel agents in Egypt were found to be operating without even a website. This study aims to identify the drivers motivating travel agents to adopt e-commerce and to discover the boundaries inhibiting agents in adopting technology. Drivers and boundaries perceived by adopters of high level e-commerce are examined. A stratified sample of category A travel agents in Egypt has been surveyed and results show that drivers strongly influencing adoption decision are suppliers' pressures and competitors' pressures. Aspects of boundaries factors found include resources limitations, internal and external business environments, and adopted-technology attributes are affecting the adoption of e-commerce amongst travel agents.*

Introduction

Many past studies have suggested that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are laggards in technology adoption. Despite the growth of e-commerce in general, the rate of e-commerce adoption in the SME sector has remained relatively low (Beekhuyzen *et al.*, 2005). This slow growth has been attributed to various adoption factors facing small businesses (Kartiwi and MacGregor, 2007; MacGregor and Kartiwi, 2010). Examples of such variables include environmental factors (Kuan and Chau, 2001; Wiertz, 2001) referring to the pressures from the business environment (Kuan and Chau, 2001). Environmental factors were also often expressed as external pressures (Premkumar and Roberts, 1999), industry pressures (Grandon and Pearson, 2004), pressures from trading partners (Lacovou *et al.*, 1995), employees' pressures (Mehrtens *et al.*,

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