

AN ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ONLINE TOURISM PORTAL FOR
UNTAPPED PLACES

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UNTAPPED PLACES

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father and brother who thought me that the best kind of knowledge to have is that which is learned for its own sake. It is also dedicated to my husband, who taught me that even the largest task can be accomplished if it is done one step at time.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the emergence of PEEPS, an independent tourism product, and brand with the primary purpose of promoting ‘UNEXPLORED PLACES.’ ‘PEEPS’ is a new social application platform in the tourism industry. Like most social applications, PEEPS also mainly focuses on photos and videos as their medium of marketing. Although PEEPS has started to make its name in the travel and tourism community, it still requires further development in a few areas such as its functionality, usability, and overall benefit of the application to be optimally experienced by the users. PEEPS, founded by Code of Origin Sdn Bhd (“CODE”) started the platform by allowing people to rent virtual space on their website or online portal to promote under-commercialised and unexplored places and venues. The idea of PEEPS came about through the observation of a disruptive innovation theory, which describes how products that lack traditionally favoured attributes but offer alternative benefits can, over time, transform a market and capture mainstream consumers. Hence, the purpose of this study is to deep dive into the further development of the application for all the important areas in making PEEPS “AN ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ONLINE TOURISM PORTAL PLATFORM FOR UNTAPPED PLACES”. There are two groups in the PEEPS’ target market, i.e. consumers and entrepreneurs. This portal is similar to the Airbnb application, however, it is broader in scope as it gives anyone the right to promote a place or venue, which does not matter whether they own the place or not (these people are the entrepreneurs and are referred to as the “host” and “intermediaries/middleman”). PEEPS enables and encourages people to suggest and promote under-commercialised or less known places as tourist attractions, contributing to the economic, social, and cultural benefits. PEEPS is very appropriate during times like these as the world is currently experiencing a pandemic that adversely affects the tourism industry. PEEPS can provide domestic tourism opportunities for these “Unexplored Places.” This study examined how to enhance, develop, and implement the PEEPS Online Portal system with usability that is in line with users’ input. Therefore, the adoption of an integrated PEEPS portal online system would enhance the services through improved systems functionality, usability, and enhanced benefits of experiences.

Keywords: tourism, e-commerce, branding, portal

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini meneroka kemunculan PEEPS, produk pelancongan bebas, dan jenama dengan tujuan utama mempromosikan 'TEMPAT YANG BELUM DITEROKAI.' 'PEEPS' adalah platform aplikasi sosial baru dalam industri pelancongan. Seperti kebanyakan aplikasi sosial, PEEPS juga terutamanya memberi tumpuan kepada gambar dan video sebagai medium pemasaran mereka. Namun begitu, PEEPS telah mula namanya dalam komuniti pelancongan dan pelancongan, ia masih memerlukan pembangunan lanjut dalam beberapa bidang seperti fungsinya, kebolegunaan, dan manfaat keseluruhan aplikasi untuk dialami secara optimum oleh pengguna. PEEPS, yang diasaskan oleh Code of Origin Sdn Bhd ("CODE") memulakan platform dengan membenarkan orang ramai menyewa ruang maya di laman web atau portal dalam talian mereka untuk mempromosikan tempat dan tempat yang kurang dikomersialkan dan belum diterokai. Idea PEEPS muncul melalui pemerhatian teori inovasi yang mengganggu, yang menerangkan bagaimana produk yang tidak mempunyai sifat-sifat yang disukai secara tradisional tetapi menawarkan faedah alternatif boleh, dari masa ke masa, mengubah pasaran dan menangkap pengguna arus perdana. Oleh itu, tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mendalami perkembangan selanjutnya permohonan untuk semua bidang penting dalam membuat PEEPS "PENUBUHAN PLATFORM PORTAL PELANCONGAN DALAM TALIAN UNTUK TEMPAT YANG BELUM DITEROKAI". Terdapat dua kumpulan dalam pasaran sasaran PEEPS iaitu pengguna dan usahawan. Portal ini serupa dengan aplikasi Airbnb, bagaimanapun, ia lebih luas dalam skop kerana ia memberi sesiapa sahaja hak untuk mempromosikan tempat atau tempat, yang tidak kira sama ada mereka memiliki tempat itu atau tidak (orang-orang ini adalah usahawan dan disebut sebagai "tuan rumah" dan "perantara / orang tengah"). PEEPS boleh menyediakan peluang pelancongan domestik untuk "Tempat Yang Belum Diterokai" ini. Kajian ini mengkaji bagaimana untuk meningkatkan, membangun dan melaksanakan sistem Portal Dalam Talian PEEPS dengan kebolegunaan yang selaras dengan input pengguna. Khususnya, sistem portal dalam talian PEEPS semestinya meningkatkan pengalaman pengguna melalui fungsi yang dipertingkatkan, kebolegunaan, dan faedah yang dialami oleh pengguna.

Kata kunci: pelancongan, e-dagang, penjenamaan, portal

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PEEPS	-	Places Explore Peoples
CODE	-	Code of Origin Sdn. Bhd.
UTM KL	-	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Kuala Lumpur
MBA	-	Master Business Administrations

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Tourism is known as a global billion-dollar business. Since the pandemic hit, countries worldwide have seen a plunge in the tourism industry due to strict international travel. The tourism industry now must think of a way to promote and bounce back the industry, thus focussing on the hidden gems within the country. Similarly, Malaysia is experiencing the same situation. Malaysia is filled with unexplored or undiscovered places suitable as tourist attractions. However, the question arises on how do tourists discover these unknown hidden gems in Malaysia?

As such, this report aims at highlighting PEEPS, an independent tourism product and brand name with the primary purpose of promoting ‘UNEXPLORED PLACES.’ ‘PEEPS’ currently operates on social media application platform created by Code of Origin Sdn. Bhd.

This first chapter objective of the study comprises subtopics that seek to present the case under investigation and set the background of the entire research. These subchapters include information about the case company, statement of the problem, research objective and research questions, the researcher's role, research ethics, importance of the proposed study, the definition of terms, and a conclusion, which will provide a summary of the entire paper.

1.1 Information about the Case Company

CODE OF ORIGIN SDN BHD (“CODE”) is a fully Bumiputera SME company located at TTDI Damansara and established in 2013. CODE provides services such as Creative Agency of Advertising Brand Positioning, Photography, TV and Advertising Commercial, TV Programme, Post-production Motion Graphic Multimedia, Website Application, Architectural Design 3D Modelling and 2D Animation, Printing as well as Strategy and Intelligence, Marketing & Advertising, Service Design, and Commerce & Product development mobility.

At CODE, there is no client too big or too small. CODE is privileged to have worked with each one of the clients. CODE provided consultation that is within expertise and challenges to do something out of boundaries. Treat the client as part of the family, with great care and concern, and deliver what they want. CODE is about bringing creativity to another level. There is more than a creative agency through rapidly evolving to the digital world and multimedia entertainment industry.

“PEEPS,” a CODE product, is a tourism platform, which is to discover untapped, unexplored, and under-commercialised places to visit. Currently, “PEEPS” is established only on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Due to limitations in terms of social media platforms’ functionality, “PEEPS” needs to be upgraded as an online portal for the tourism community for unexplored, under-commercialised, and unknown places.

1.2 Problem Statement

1.2.1 Problem Formulation

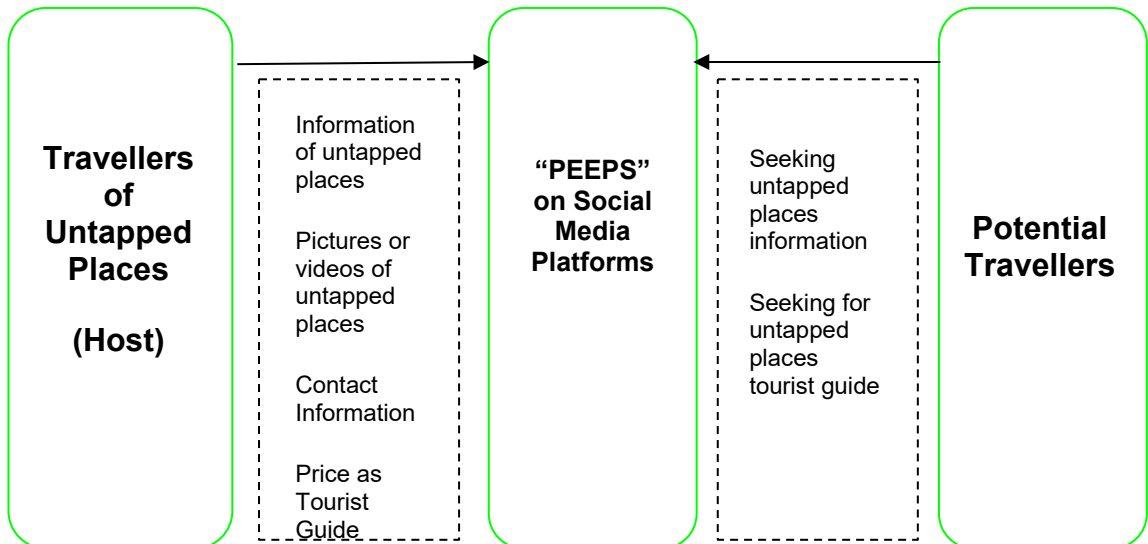


Figure 1: Current "PEEPS"

The current "PEEPS" as in Figure 1, directly uses social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, as a platform. There is no specific platform for "PEEPS." The travellers of untapped places or hosts will upload all information related to untapped places on "PEEPS" social media. This is an improper and unsystematic way of handling information, as the host will be uploading the same information many times to more than one social media platform. Some information is also incomplete and inconsistent. This method is ineffective in marketing. Besides that, the manual communication process between the host and the potential travellers tends to be lengthy and inefficient.

The fishbone diagram is used in this study to analyse the problem of the current "PEEPS." Five leading causes (Process, Environment, People, Management, and Culture) and 11 secondary causes were identified in Figure 2 below.

CAUSES OF UNKNOWN PLACEMENT OF "PEEPS"

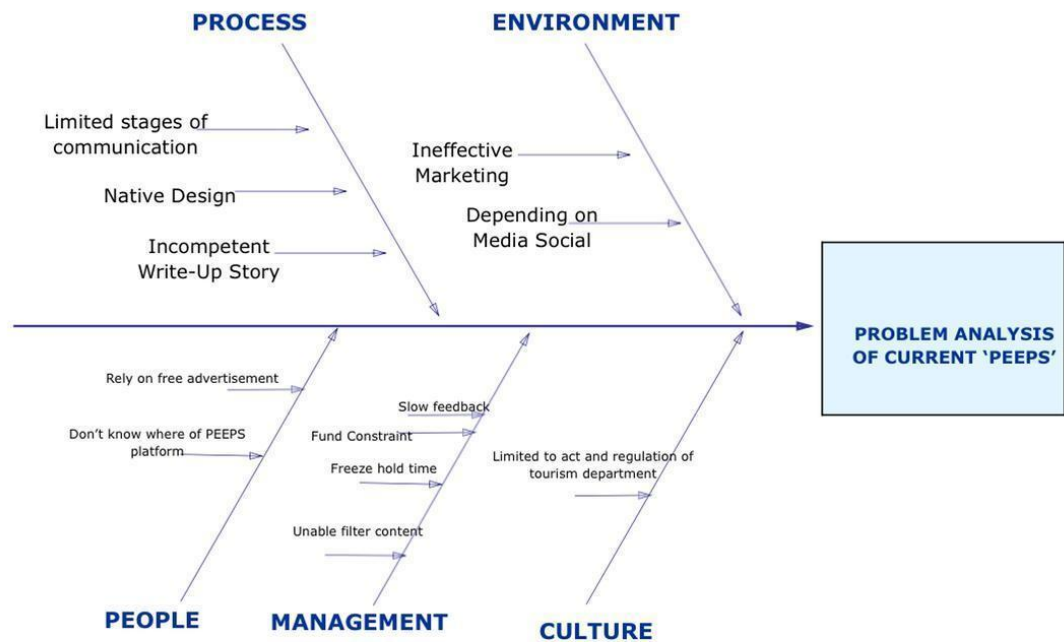


Figure 2: Fish Bone in Problem Analysis of Current “PEEPS”

SOURCE: Author

One of the factors contributing to PEEPS’ inefficiency in marketing these untapped places is the absence of an official platform such as having an established website, portal, or application. With an official platform, it protects the hosts’ rights to make an earning from their venues or properties. There are also a few internal factors and external factors that affect the current PEEPS.

One of the internal factors that affect PEEPS’ inefficiency to operate realizing platform or a go-to reference source is that most people only know social media as the best way to promote a place without realising promoting or marketing on social media alone can be ineffective. Secondly, the process is limited between people and social media. In other words, the process is just limited to posting videos and images for the marketing efforts.

The External factor consists of People, Management, and Culture. People use social media as a platform because it is the only medium they know, and they rely

on it because it is considered free advertising, although ineffective. Unfortunately, promoting on social media alone leads to “PEEPS ” not appearing in search engines, and its existence is still unknown to many. As for the Management element, the admins of these social media pages sometimes do not promptly reply to customers’ feedback or inquiries. Other times they are just left with no response. The lack of funding also contributes to PEEPS’ established platform from being developed. Lastly, the Culture element refers to the tourism industry’s law and regulations strictly, depending on how local and global economics grow.

1.2.2 SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is done through the evaluation of internal and external analysis. The internal analysis consists of strength to analyse weaknesses. Concurrently, the external environment analysis consists of opportunities and threats. SWOT analysis aims to evaluate and analyse the internal and external environment and develop the best strategy for business development.

Figure 3: SWOT Analysis for PEEPS

Strength		Opportunities	
S1	Global Brand-Sharing Unexplored Places	OP1	Business Opportunity- Income Generation
S2	Travellers Social Platform	OP2	Make Unexplored Places More Popular - Market Opportunity
Weakness		Threats	
W1	Geographic location is a limitation for travellers to reach the place	T1	System duplication by competitors
W2	Low campaign	T2	More option on decision-making to other platforms

1.3 Research Questions

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	INSTRUMENT/DATA COLLECTION	DATA ANALYSIS	ARTICLES OR BOOK CHAPTERS
Q1. What are the implementation problems of current “PEEPS”?	Questionnaire/ Survey and Interview	Mixed method (multi-regression analysis for quantitative data and Framework analysis for qualitative data collected through interview)	(Elberhager & Holl, 2017) (Gerard. TFlaherty, MD)
Q2. How to propose “PEEPS”, an Online Tourism Portal for untapped places?	Questionnaire/ Survey and Interview	Mixed method (Multi-regression and Framework analysis)	(Lia, Mirosa & Bremer, 2020) (Nwoye & Ogbuokiri, 2015)
Q3. How to measure the improvement of “PEEPS” Online Tourism Portal for untapped places?	Questionnaire/ Survey and Interview	Mixed method (Multi-regression and Framework analysis)	(Nwoye & Ogbuokiri, 2015) (Gerard. TFlaherty, MD)

1.4 Researcher's Role

A researcher plays a pivotal role in organizing, implementing, and concluding a study. According to Creswell 2007, a researcher's role in qualitative or quantitative research is critical because they facilitate the collection of data and implement the analysis. The researcher's role in this study was to both an observer and participant because he served as an instrument of data collection and analysis. Additionally, Sutton and Austin (2015) posit that a researcher's role in a qualitative study is to attempt and access the feeling and thoughts of research participants and safeguard all the participants and their data despite collecting and analysing the data. Although the researcher's roles in this study might have encouraged some form of bias, they facilitated data collection and understanding the topic under study since the researcher was always in contact with the study participants. The researcher has:

- To identify the implementation problems of current “PEEPS”.
- To propose “PEEPS”, an Online Tourism Portal for untapped places.
- To measure the improvement of “PEEPS” Online Tourism Portal for untapped places.

1.5 Research Question and Objective

1.5.1 Research Question

- What is the functionality should an integrated online system contain to influence tourism using for make a booking of PEEPS online portal positively?
- What is the usability should have to the get real-time respond on quotation in a fingertip?
- Which are the user's experiences benefits should an integrated online system contain to influence order and fast respond services positively?
- How is the PEEPS online portal can be eliminating barrier communication between PEEPS Host, PEEPS Admin and users of PEEPS?

1.5.2 Research Objectives

The main aim of this study is to develop and implement a PEEPS tourism online portal system that will increase the efficiency of booking transaction, quotation documentation, existing and new PEEPS user's benefit experiences and communication barrier between host, admin and users of PEEPS. To achieve this objective, the researcher will pursue of the following objectives:

- To enhance booking transaction services by developing and implementing an integrated online system which functionality is in line with user's input.
- To evaluate the intervention of using PEEPS tourism online portal systems for real-time quotation requests that is focused on providing the positive benefits its users seek.
- To enhance a potential intervention of using PEEPS tourism online portal systems on user benefit of experiences of review referral so that can attract more new customers. To improve on communication barrier effectiveness between PEEPS host, admin and user's while using an online integration system.

1.6 Research Ethics

In order to complete the research with appropriate research guidelines, research ethics is very important. Enough time is given to the respondents of the study in order for them to provide their accurate views and response to the research questions. Only data from respondents that have given their consent and permission will be used for this research. Confidentiality of the responses will be strictly maintained to uphold data privacy. The disclosure of the respondent's identity will be based on their permission. If they do not provide permission, their identity will not be exhibited. Usage of any secondary data for traveling will be acknowledged with appropriate reference.

1.7 Significance/Importance of the Proposed Research

The findings provided by these previous studies are significant, in that they provide insights that one can use while developing a PEEPS online tourism portal system for booking transaction, generated invoice and quotation online document, reveal with referral review rating and to avoid barrier communication while offline application to upgrade into online integrated systems. The generality of the findings is unquestionable. Nevertheless, each organisation is usually characterised by unique attributes. The uniqueness of the organisation can make it difficult for it to adopt and apply general knowledge. The general knowledge is, without a doubt, relevant. However, it must be customised to suit the specific needs of the organisation in question. It can also be used as a basis for conducting further inquiries.

Some specific needs for CODE Origin Sdn. Bhd. were identified using the Fishbone technique. Therefore, the proposed study is relevant because it is focused on establishing a framework that will assist in developing PEEPS online tourism portal system for booking transaction, generated invoice and quotation online document, reveal with referral review rating and to avoid barrier communication that will precisely address the challenges facing for CODE Origin Sdn Bhd. Past studies will provide foundational knowledge. The foundational knowledge will act as a starting base, but eventually, this study will provide knowledge and information that perfectly fits with the statistics figure below:

The statistics of the tourism industry shows:

- Billions of people are travelling all around the world daily.
- Millions travel by flight every day as tourists.
- The GDP contribution was approximately 2.9 trillion U.S. Dollars in 2019
- US\$340 billion is spent by people on online bookings to accommodate their needs during travelling

The mediums used to influence digitalization and go on holiday:

- Brochures
- Roadshows
- TV

- Radio
- Social Media (Facebook/Instagram/Twitter/YouTube)
- Internet or website / portal information

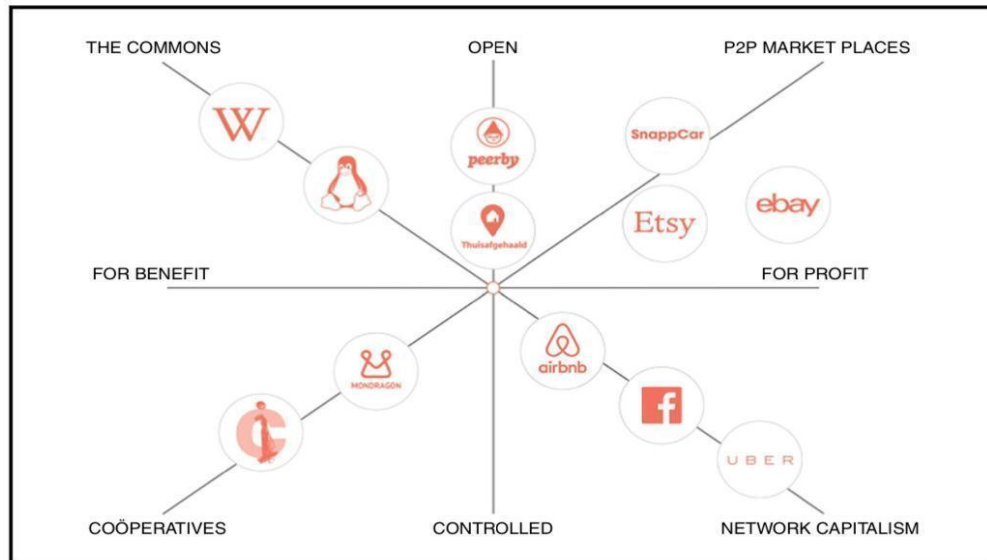


Figure 4: Network of Marketing Platforms

The digitalisation network of the current “PEEPS” marketing platform is in Open Market, at the vertical line dimensions, which is in a no-where platform. The future “PEEPS” will be at the horizontal dimension of the commercial value market, creating a profitable market. Source: network economy (Bauwens,2014)

1.8 Conceptual framework definition

1.8.1 Portal Online System

To understand the meaning of a PEEPS tourism portal online system, it is vital to define system integration or integrated system. According to Langford (2013), system integration combines or puts sub-component systems together to form one functional system. This process is crucial when dealing with multiple or complex systems because it enhances coherence by making these components to work together (Langford, 2013). Based on the definition of system integration, an integrated online system is a combination of sub-components into a single functional system that is

connected by or controlled by a computer and can be accessed anywhere through the internet.

1.8.2 Service Providers

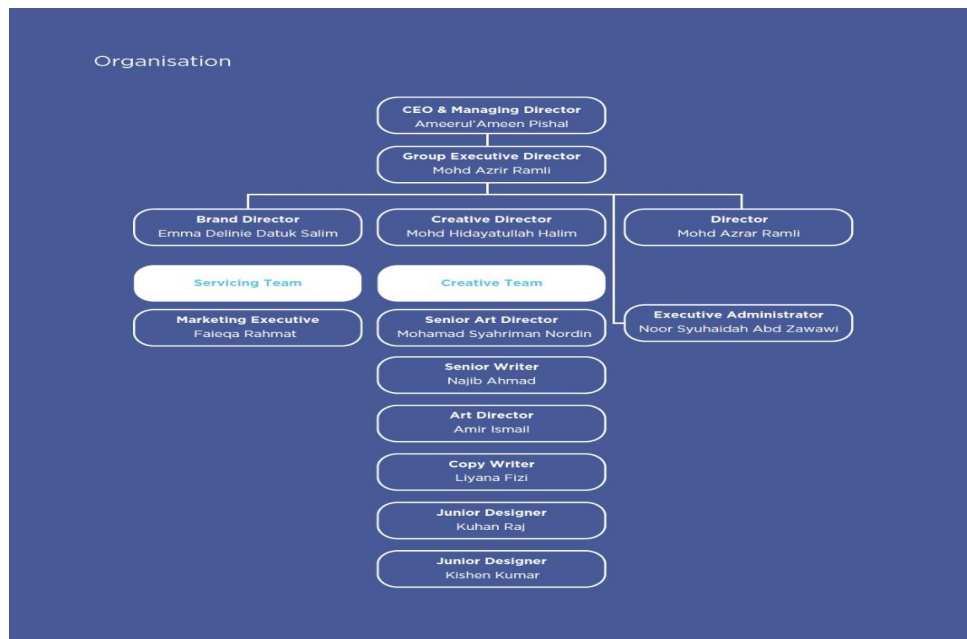
Service providers (SPs), or sometimes referred to as third-party are outsource entities that other businesses leverage to manage their transaction tracking, documentation control, and other benefit of their products. PEEPS tourism portal online systems service providers obtain, distributions, products and material in their right quantities from the source to the final destination (Sheikh & Rana, 2011).

1.8.3 Efficiency

Efficiency refers to the highest level of performance or a point when performance is at its peak while using the least number of inputs to attain the highest amount of output. Efficiency reduces the wastage of resources such as time, energy, and physical materials while accomplishing the desired output. Based on this definition, efficiency for PEEPS tourism portal online systems refers to achieving the highest level of performance in the entire operational process. As Andrejić and Kilibarda (2013) note, efficiency in tapped the venue and location are entails effective processes that a business uses to conduct its operations par.

Author	Definition
Heim and Fiel 2007, Goldcustomizel. 2002, Xing et al. 2010	Theoretical framework, a conceptual framework that will be applied specifically for the proposed study is recommended. It can be used to guide the study. The researcher can customise it to suit the current study. The customised framework is what is referred to as a conceptual framework.

1.9 Organization Analysis



CODE Origin Sdn. Bhd. company tapped into an increasingly growing tourism industry since globalization, technology, and outsourcing have taken over the business world. A simple analysis of the company's business environment shows a lot of strengths and opportunities that when PEEPS tourism online portal utilizes, can enhance profitability and growth. However, despite these opportunities, the tourism industry requires companies to have efficiency in the fast-tracking online booking, documentation tracking, real-time referral review and eliminating the communication barrier process. Being a start-up company, PEEPS tourism online portal systems lack efficiency, which can have adverse effects on the company's performance, profitability, and growth. Additionally, the lack of efficiency lowers a company's competitive advantage. Thus, PEEPS tourism online portal can lose its current customers to competitors. As Erkan (2014) notes, enhancing system efficiency increases a company's competitiveness. As such, the PEEPS tourism online portal systems should gain a competitive advantage and guarantee growth.

1.10 Conclusion

According to Mothilal et al. (2012), several factors affect the success of tourism industry companies. The researcher notes that on-time delivery performance is a crucial success factor in enhancing the relationship between logistic companies and customers as well as enhances satisfaction and financial measures for profitability and growth. Furthermore, Mothilal et al. (2012) argue that skilled and professional services improve the operational measures of consumer satisfaction and profit growth by enhancing the breadth of service by a significant margin. Based on this analysis, CODE Origin Sdn Bhd as tourism industries companies should ensure they streamline their services so as to guarantee customer satisfaction and enhance profitability of PEEPS tourism portal online systems

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Note: Arranged alphabetically according to author's name.