An Analysis of the Value of Websites as a Promotional Marketing Tool:
A Case Study of the Institutional Catering Industry in Hong Kong.

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Declaration

Statement Of Originality

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Acknowledgment Of Authorship/ Collaboration

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this Thesis is the result of original research, the greater part of which was completed subsequent to admission to candidature for the degree (except in cases where the Committee has granted approval for credit to be granted from previous candidature at another institution).

Signature: ______________________  Date: 19 September 2008
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This dissertation aims to evaluate the value of a Website for the institutional catering industry in implementing marketing strategies in Hong Kong. In view of the limited literature exploring why there are firms that are still not establishing Websites, this research investigates whether the adoption of a Website as an Internet marketing tool is undervalued by the firms or is inappropriate to suit a particular industry in a specific geographical location. This research evaluates whether a Website is an effective marketing tool for institutional catering companies in Hong Kong.

This exploratory research adopts a case study approach using qualitative methods. A purposive sampling design is adopted to identify the appropriate respondents. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 firms with and 5 firms without a Website. A comparative analysis and content analysis are used to compare and analyse the findings of these two sub-samples. This research explores the underlying reasons and possible determinants of non-establishment of a Website for some firms. The findings indicated that there is a difference between perceived effectiveness and actual effectiveness of Websites in performing its basic functions as well as in implementing its marketing strategies. The actual usage of company Websites deviates from its intended use in implementing marketing strategies due to an incapability of current Website features to fully match with the desired strategic marketing implementation.

This research also provides a thorough discussion on the firms’ intention of adopting a Website as an Internet marketing tool in future. Moreover, the perceived trend of using a Website as a marketing tool has been examined. Findings indicated that firms with existing Websites would continue employing this marketing tool while those firms without Website would consider adopting one since it is perceived that this Internet marketing tool will increase in importance in the coming decade.