A Study on Customer Behavior towards E-Tourism with Reference to Madurai City

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Abstract

Information and Communication technologies are experiencing exponential growth and are greatly emphasized in today's business field. Tourism has been extremely affected by the swift growth in the technology, mainly due to internet. E-Tourism services provide various travel portals that makes the traveller self-dependent and provide them with all the information necessary in a single click. This paper focuses on different aspects of e-tourism and changes in the consumer behaviour towards e-tourism. Despite the significance of e-tourism, there is still a research gap on online satisfaction in travel and tourism industry. The present study was an attempt paper to fill this gap by finding the factors influencing and the satisfaction level of the customers towards e-tourism. It further identifies the difficulties in the adoption of online tourism services. A total of 100 travellers were selected as respondents in the survey & questionnaires were used as instruments. Results showed that e-tourism activities aid the traveller to plan their own trips according to their convenience.

Key words: E-Tourism, Online services, Customer behavior, Technology, Satisfaction

Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest emerging service sectors of the Indian economy. It contribute towards the GDP and foreign exchange reserve of the country, generates employment and considered as the backbone for other sectors like transportation, civil, hospitality. The use of Information and Telecommunication Technology (ICT) play a significant role in the development of tourism services. Electronic tourism (e-tourism) has evolved with the increased role of ICT in this sector, which radically transforms the tourism industry worldwide. Now, customers prioritize internet to search information related to tourism services. Services offered by the tourism site and travel portals to customers on the Internet are termed as online tourism services. The main purpose of these travel portals and sites is to make the traveler self-dependent and to furnish all information in a single click. Internet is a one stop-shop where travelers discover everything from an established destination to a remote place. These services support the domestic as well as foreign tourists. E-Tourism services play a prominent role in promoting any countries' tourism.

Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior encompasses all the activities that is associated with the purchase, use and disposal of goods and services, and also includes the consumer's emotional, mental and behavioural responses that precede or follow these activities. Understanding the Consumer behavior is quite important and helps to market the products and services successfully.

E-Tourism

E-Tourism is the application of Information and Telecommunication Technology (ICT) in the travel and tourism industry. It paves the way for establishing commercial relationships using the internet for providing tourism related services. Travel portals and tourism sites on the internet offers services such as flight booking, hotel reservation, car booking and so on for the customers.

Online Travel Portals

Incredible India is the official website of India's Ministry of Tourism and one of the most explored online travel portals on the web. It covers basic travel information such as Visa, online air ticket, bus ticket and hotel reservations.

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) regulates tour package for tourist covering important travel destinations across India. IRCTC is considered as one of the biggest e-commerce portal in India and it assists to book, flights, trains, special luxury trains and adventure tourism packages.

Indian Holiday provides tailor made tours to India with customizable itineraries. The company is offering services from last 20 years and acknowledged by Ministry of Tourism Government of India.

MakeMyTrip founded by Deep Kalra is the famous Indian online travel company, offers online travel services for domestic and international flight, Train tickets, hotel reservations and holiday packages and recognized as one of India's best travel portal that operates across many cities

Travelguru.com is the most noted travel website in India based in Mumbai. The founders of traveguru are Ashwin Damera and Jarad Fisher. It offers online vacation packages and hotel booking

Travelogy India proffers systematised tour packages for most of the Indian tourist attractions. The company offers a world class hospitality services in India, Nepal and Bhutan.

Goibibo, head quartered at Gurgaon, is an online travel service provider, and recognised as one of the India's largest hotels aggregator. The ibibo Group of companies was valued as one of the most trusted e-commerce brands in India.

EaseMyTrip is another most prominent online travel company in India that provides services like tour packages, holiday trip, flight tickets, hotel reservations and car rental. The company was once a travel agency and but now has overseas branches and delivers white label services to customer.

Cleartrip is an e-travel site providing online services for flights, trains and hotel reservations. Cleartrip furnishes a wide range of holiday packages and services of searching and booking tickets.

Yatra.com is the most popular Indian travel search engine and also an online travel agency, based in Gurgaon. The company acquires 100% stake in Travelguru. It provides wide range of travel packages.

Statement of the Problem

Tourism as an information intensive business has been affected strongly by the speedy changes in the technology, mainly due to the internet. This in turn creates changes in the travelers' behavior. Therefore the challenge o0f understanding the consumers' perceptions is becoming a crucial success factor in order to retain the customers in the online market. This paper mainly focuses on the factors that influence the potential travelers to make use of the internet for travel planning. The present study also attempts to find out the satisfaction level of the customers and also identifies the problems faced the consumers towards online tourism services.

Objectives

- To find out the factors influencing the consumer

  behavior towards e-tourism.

- To know the satisfaction level of the customers from the service quality of e-tourism.

- To identify the problems faced by the consumerstowards e-tourism.

Review of Literature

Dargah and Golrokhsari (2012), in their study 'E-Tourism and customer satisfaction factors 'suggested that lack of customer services will be a major threat to the e-tourism firms but these threats can be changed into opportunities by the e-tourism firms if they provide better online services than traditional travel agencies to retain the customers.

Jain, et al (2013), in their paper 'Drivers affectinge-tourism services availability' concluded that there is a massive scope for enhancing the e-commerce adaptability in tourism. This adaptability will bring positive change in the e-tourism penetration.

Bajpai and Lee (2015) ,in their paper 'Consumer behavior in e-tourism services: A case of Taiwan' concluded that if the customer is satisfied with the service quality of the service provider he stays loyal to fulfil his future travelling requirements, but if the customer feels dissatisfied he quits.

Park et al, in their study 'An empirical analysis ofinternet users' intention' concluded that e-purchasesare easy and convenient for the customers, but complete customer satisfaction can be achieved if the service providers have proper management to ease the travel of the customers.

Methodology

The present study comprises both primary and secondary data collected from the respondents of the Madurai city.

Primary Data: The primary data were collectedfrom the respondents using online travel portals in Madurai city.

Secondary Data: The secondary data were also collected from various standard text books, magazines, journals, newspapers and internet, which constituted a supportive literature for the purpose of making analysis and suggestions.

Period of the Study: The study was undertaken during the months of January and February 2020.

Sampling Design: Convenience sampling techniquewas used.

Sample Size: Sample sizes of 100 respondents wereselected for this purpose of the study.

Statistical Analysis: SPSS 23.0 software packages and Simple techniques such as percentage, mean, simple ranking and Likert's scaling, regression analysis, were used for the statistical analysis. The questionnaire was divided into four parts. Part A obtains information on respondents' profile. Part B is to identify the factors influencing, which consists of various aspects. Part C is to know the satisfaction level from the service quality of e-tourism. Part D is to identify the problems faced by consumers towards e-tourism. Analysis and Interpretation Demographic profile of the respondent-

Percentage analysis

Table 1: Distribution on Overall Result of Profile of respondents

Particulars	Variable	No. of respondents	%
Age	21-40 years	48	48

Gender	Male	58	58
Marital Status	Unmarried	56	56
Educational Qualification	Post-Graduation	38	38
Occupation	Professional	24	24
Monthly Income	Above 50000	32	32

Source: Primary Data

With regard to the finding on profile of respondents it is clear that under the category age majority of the respondents belong to the age group 21-40 years [48%], gender - men [58%], marital status - unmarried [56%], educational qualification - post graduate [38%], occupation - professional [24%] and monthly income - above 50,000 [32%].

Factors Influencing the Customer Behavior towards e-tourism Table 2: Distribution on Factors Influencing Towards E-tourism

S. No	Factors	No. of Respondents	%
1	Time efficiency	28	28
2	Possibility of accessing anywhere	24	24
3	Convenience of accessing anytime	22	22
4	Direct access to information	14	14
5	Cost effectiveness	12	12
	Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Primary Data

From the table for factors influencing towards e-tourism, it is clear that out of 100 respondents majority of the respondents belong to time management category [28%] followed by possibility of accessing anywhere [24%], convenience of accessing anytime [22%], direct access to information [14%] and cost effectiveness [11%].

Regression Analysis for Factors Influencing towards E-tourism and Independent Variables

H_0: There is no significant association between independent variables and factors influencing towards e-tourism.

Table 3: Regression Analysis for Independent Variables and Factors Influencing Towards E-tourism

Particulars	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
(Constant)	-	-.011	.991

Age	.421	2.210	.032
Gender	.045	.336	.739
Marital Status	.237	1.429	.160
Education	-.280	-1.593	.119
Occupation	.474	3.484	.001
Income	-.155	-1.001	.322

R^2	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.353	.262	1.165

Source: Computed Data

Predictors: Independent Variable

Dependent Variable: Factors influencing towards e-tourism.

The table shows regression analysis for Factors influencing towards e-tourism and independent variables, the R^2 value for this model is .353. Age has a standardized coefficient .421, gender .045 marital status .237, educational qualification -.280, occupation .474 and monthly income -.155. Thus from the table it is very clear that the dependent and independent variables are positively associated with each other, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis [H_a: There is significant association between independent variables and

2	Utility	4.08	1
3	Reliability	4.04	2
4	Customer service	3.78	5
5	Efficiency	4.00	3
6	Security	3.78	6

Source: Computed Data

It could be observed from the above table that utility was ranked in the first place with a mean score of 4.08. It is followed by reliability with a mean score of 4.04. Lastly, the customer services as well as security were in the sixth position with a mean score of 3.78. It was concluded that customers are satisfied from the utility factor of e-tourism.

Problems Faced by the Customers towards E-tourism Simple Ranking Method

Table 5: Problems Faced by the Customers Towards E-tourism

S No	Particulars	Mean	S. D	Rank
1	Absence of face to face contact	2.64	1.35	I

2	Problem of stealing information	3.48	1.79	III
3	Risk of online fraud and cyber security	3.06	1.58	II
4	Upgradation of information	3.88	1.96	V
5	Difficulty in online payment	3.84	1.68	IV
6	Government norms and procedure	4.10	1.44	VI

Source: Computed Data

In the above table for identifying the problems faced by the customers towards e-tourism simple ranking technique was used. After calculating the Factors influencing towards e-tourism] is accepted.

Occupation of the respondents is the most influential independent factor in tourism decisions.

Satisfaction Level of the Customers from ServiceQuality of e-tourism Likert Scaling Technique

Table 4: Satisfaction Level from the ServiceQuality of e-tourism

S. No	Particulars	Mean Score	Mean Rank
1	Economic	3.96	4

mean and standard deviation ranks were allotted for the variables. It is clear that absence of face to face contact ranks first [I] with a mean and standard deviation of 2.64 and 1.35, followed by risk of online fraud and security ranks second [II] with a mean and standard deviation of 3.06 and 1.58. Lastly, Government norms and procedure ranks sixth [VI] with a mean and standard deviation of 4.10 and 1.44. It was concluded that absence of face to face to contact was the major problem faced by the customer.

Suggestions

- Customer relationship management should constitute as an integral part of the e-tourism to serve the customers better.

- Online travel portals should have a proper management to ease the travel purchases made by the customers and solve their problems.

- As most of respondents are concerned about the cyber security and fraud, the security system should be strengthening so that people won'tscare about their money and transactions.

Conclusion

The tourism industry has been considered as one of the pioneer of digital renovation and continues to be revamped at a rapid rate across the world. E-Tourism facilitates the travelers to plan their own trips according to their convenience. Online travel portals are structured in such a way that the customerneeds just a basic technical knowledge to access themand do most of their planning. The paper concludes that e-tourism

increases convenience of purchasing anywhere and aid the customer in time management. The study also reveals that the customer satisfaction towards online tourism services rather than using traditional travel agencies is mainly due the utility attributes such as comfort, user friendly and easy accessibility. Online travel portals save resources and motivate the customers to opt more services. Thus tourism industry is heading towards an enhancing connected future in which platforms, specialisation and unified technology play a prominent role.

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