
Original Article

Travel and tourism industry yet to exploit the Internet fully in India

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ABSTRACT The rapid growth of the travel sector in India, and increased usage of technology as a tool to facilitate online transaction, has led to a blending of technology with travel planning. Research across the globe indicates that modern travellers are looking for interactive facilities, high-quality travel services, varied information on products and appropriate information to assist them in decision making. The high degree of intangibility in the travel sector requires a clear understanding about the requirements of customers and integration of technology to address these needs. Like many other service industries, the travel and tourism industry has been significantly affected by the strides made in technology. Our research studies the experience of Indian customers' satisfaction with using online travel websites. The study concludes that the Indian customer is influenced by the service convenience attributes of online travel firms. However, the consumers place less importance on the trust and security aspects in financial transactions, than on other service attributes of online travel websites. If the services offered by these websites are increased coupled with display of relevant information about destinations, the Indian customer would be encouraged to visit these websites and use them for vacation planning.

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INTRODUCTION

Electronic commerce provides immense opportunities for companies in expanding

interface options with customers.^{1,2} Poon and Joseph³ posit that electronic commerce increases customers' purchasing and

transaction benefits. Globalization of services and increasing travel needs have transformed the characteristics of the travel sector as technology is used to increase the reach in the market. Rayport and Sviokla⁴ state that the intangible nature of the services makes technology-arbitrated models readily accepted in services. 'The rapid development in consumers' online access and usage for travel and tourism is being reflected by the status of online communication and sales activities within the tourism industries'.⁵ Online travel agents provide a point of contact for customers through the World Wide Web to facilitate customers in searching for appropriate travel planning, which is then booked and ticketed by the online travel agent.⁶ Research indicates that the modern breed of traveller is looking for interactive facilities, high-quality travel services, a variety of information on products and appropriate information to assist them in decision making.^{1,7-9} The use of the Internet for travel services is led by the belief that the benefits arise from the potential of making information readily available to customers and expanding communication with them.^{10,11} The Internet thus provides opportunities by which relationships with customers can be developed.¹² However, there are challenges involved in this process. The high degree of intangibility in the travel industry^{2,13} requires a cogent and lucid understanding of customer needs and the designing of technological models for facilitating them. The global travel industry has adopted new models such as computer reservation systems, global reservation systems and the Internet for service delivery.¹⁴

The adoption of the Internet for distributing services to customers has led to research on customer online buying behaviour. Geddie *et al.*¹⁵ state that the Internet can reduce transaction costs for customers and simplify transactions. Szymanski and Hise¹⁶ have discussed four

web dimensions, namely convenience, merchandizing, site design and financial security for customer satisfaction. Customer purchase of online travel services is a complex process, and constitutes a hierarchical set of activities that are affected by customer demographics and purchase intentions.¹⁷⁻¹⁹ The perception of the quality of the online service provider is inevitably linked to credibility, reliability and trust in the travel firm,^{20,21} and this represents an integral aspect of the intangible nature of services.^{22,23} Internet research shows that people use the Internet to seek information.²⁴ However, the availability of information does not necessarily imply that customers would use this information to purchase the service online. Travel products are heterogeneous, offer greater differentiation and are high-involvement.^{22,25,26} The Internet promises immense opportunity.

Our research was directed towards understanding and exploring Indian customer experiences and perceptions about online travel services related to services/convenience and financial security/trust and its affect on adopting them as an alternative medium for selling travel packages. In India, Internet use is primarily restricted to browsing the Internet to access mail services or exploring various websites; the Indian customer is still wary about using the Internet for shopping or banking.

The research was conducted with people who were aware of online travel services and used them to plan their holidays or business trips. It was carried out with the help of travel agents and firms in Allahabad, a class B city in Northern India. The purpose of selecting a non-metropolitan town was to understand general customer attitudes towards online travel firms. Customers in metropolitan cities are more affluent and have access to a greater variety of services as compared to customers in a non-metropolitan city. The research was conducted in two phases: in the first phase,

we attempted to understand the general perception of the customer towards online travel services, so that we could design a structured questionnaire for collection information. A focus group technique was used in the initial stage whereby we conducted three focus group interviews with three different age groups of customers (age groups 20–35 years, 36–50 years, and 51 years and above). The responses from the focus group were used to frame the questionnaire. The second phase comprised a descriptive research design, whereby data were collected with the help of travel agents through a structured questionnaire. The constructs in the questionnaire were segregated into service attributes, and the security and trust attributes of online travel firms.

Indian holiday travel is unique, as it focuses on visits to pilgrimage places rather than exclusively on sightseeing. Employees in the banking sector and government sector receive special rates and concessions for vacations once a year. Most Indians avail these concessions for visiting pilgrimage places with their families and elderly parents. The definition of a tourist destination for the Indian customer is very different from that of other nationalities, as it imbibes cultural and religious beliefs rather than the concepts of relaxation or family outing. Holiday planning involves attending marriage ceremonies, family get-togethers and family functions. Online travel firms in India must combine the religious and social beliefs of Indian customers while planning tour packages.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Selling through the Internet is becoming a trend for most service providers. The customer purchase intention towards online shopping is dependent on their acceptance of the Internet as a delivery channel. Shim *et al.*²⁷ suggest that customers' attitudes towards online purchasing are dependent on transaction services, convenience, sensory

experience and merchandise. Thus, the traditional service quality aspects of competence, courtesy, comfort and friendliness are not relevant in the online context.²⁸ The intangibility, perishability and heterogeneity of travel products²⁹ may require the service provider to increasingly adapt them according to customer needs.³⁰

'Online shopping is a complex process that can be divided into various sub-processes such as navigation, searching for information, online transactions, or customer interactions'.³¹ While evaluating the online services, customers assess the service in terms of its performance and outcome.³² To increase the attractiveness of travel websites, customers are bombarded with special deals, offers and holiday packages for planning their travel.²¹ Research states that convenience and product characteristics play a critical role in customers' online purchase behaviour.^{16,33,34} Winning customer loyalty and orders entails integration of marketing and operational aspects.³⁵

Online travel purchase is dependent on the design and layout of the website, service quality³⁶ and availability of information.³⁷ To obtain orders, the online travel firms must be able to ensure accessibility and hassle-free online services making it feasible for customers to use them. Hoffman and Novak³⁸ posit that on the web, customer navigation activities consist of searching for information on products and services. Kim³⁹ states that online customer satisfaction is categorized under after-sales service, purchase result and price attractiveness, product information, customer service, site design, product attractiveness, payment method, site information and log-on convenience. In developing countries, the customer may not be comfortable with the technical aspects of the website and may find navigating it difficult. Customers may find the Internet insecure and prefer face-to-face interaction.^{11,13} Thus, addressing these concerns is an important concern

for the online travel service firm, as electronic commerce provides immense opportunities for building relationships with customers.^{10,11,40}

For a customer, Internet-based travel services present expediency and ubiquity, and allow them to compare service offerings and prices at their leisure.⁴¹ The Internet has helped in forging new relationships with vendors, and provides vast opportunities for cost reduction in the travel service sector.⁴² In some cases, online services enable companies in strategic positioning and expanding their delivery channels. Business organizations with strong customer loyalty find the Internet a natural extension of their service delivery channels⁴³ and the expansion of their reach to customers. The customer does not have to interact with the travel agent for travel bookings.^{6,41} Machlis⁴⁴ states in his research that very few customers make bookings through online travel sites; most customers simply browse the website and only 1–5 per cent actually make a reservation. It becomes essential for online travel firms to encourage ‘browsers’ to become ‘purchasers’, by planning the service according to customer needs.

In India, companies are vying with each other to improve their service delivery systems and are encouraging customers to explore newer service delivery platforms. We believe a major revolution is in the offing that will improve service transaction through increased technology deployment. However, companies need to deal strategically with the fears and misgivings of the customer regarding technology as a facilitator in providing improved services. Indian customers may be net-savvy, but whether they are willing to use e-travel models is a question worth pondering. In recent years, India has witnessed the integration of the Internet in a multitude of services. Travel websites have grown in popularity, as they provide information

about planning a holiday, hotel rates, availability of flight and railway tickets, bookings and the major places one can visit. Websites such as yatra.com, makemytrip.com, SOTC tours, Rajasthan Tours and Travels, Raj Tours and Travels, and Thomas Cook provide facilities and services online.

Trust and online travel services

For customers not accustomed to the e-retailing environment, the design of travel websites can instil confidence in the service provider and encourage them to make purchases online. The intangible nature of services warrants that customers should feel reassured while using the service. Thus, trust in online services becomes an important ingredient for building relationships with customers.^{45,46} Trust relates to the degree of vulnerability the customer is willing to accept in an online environment.⁴⁷ Fam *et al*⁴⁸ state that the determinants of trust in an online environment are dependent on predictability, intentionality, capability, transference, tangibility and interactivity. In transactions, trust is a valuable catalyst in enhancing exchange.^{49,50} The online retail is different from brick and mortar environment^{51–54} and being faceless, sometimes even close to anonymous.⁵⁵ In developing countries there are insufficient infrastructure and communication networks, and thus there is more importance given to interpersonal interactions.^{56,57} Customers have apprehensions regarding online environments, as there is no contact with the company personnel.^{58,59}

The attribute of trust in services becomes amplified in e-service transactions,^{23,60} with a greater degree of uncertainty.^{45,55} Most customers prefer a service provider that they can trust, with security/privacy issues playing a significant role in customer satisfaction.^{16,54,61,62} If the customer trusts the service provider, this can enhance

flexibility and enable companies to cut their marketing costs.^{63,64}

The level of perceived risk in online services is instrumental in customer online purchase behaviour.^{65,66} This perception of risk is subjective and may vary from customer to customer depending on loss envisaged.⁶⁷ Card *et al*⁶⁸ suggest that online travel shopping behaviour is dependent on an individual's traits and characteristics. In online purchases, customers may feel sceptical about the website's reliability and authenticity. In developing countries, the unavailability of legal infrastructure support⁶⁹ for e-commerce websites exacerbates the lack of trust. Customers may be uninformed about the technicalities and procedures of transaction and the outcomes of online purchasing.⁷⁰ These issues make customers sceptical about online purchasing. In making bookings through online travel websites, financial transactions are involved (where customers have to provide their bank details), and they are uncomfortable with this, as the Internet does not give the assurance of a physical store. Thus, using the Internet for improving customer relationships and service quality is difficult to achieve in developing countries,⁷¹ and investment return may be difficult to measure.⁷² In India, customers prefer interpersonal transactions to a faceless medium; this is similar to the cultural attitudes of customers in other South Asian countries.^{11,13} In case of queries, the customer cannot seek assistance from the service personnel, as a website lacks a physical identity and is anonymous. Thus, the effect of perceived risk is amplified and hampers the customer's use of the service.^{73–75} Customer satisfaction plays a significant role in fostering trust in online services,⁷⁶ and leads to repeat purchase. A good e-commerce website design is responsible for strengthening customer trust⁷⁷ and improving customer satisfaction.⁷⁸ This leads to our first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: Online travel usage by Indian customers is dependent on the trust the customer feels in the website owner.

Service, convenience and online travel websites

Smith²¹ states that availability of free information does not ensure that customers will use it; this will depend on reliability of and trust in the supplier. The role of online travel websites is to facilitate in increasing accessibility of information and enhancing communication.⁷⁹ An efficient information system would facilitate customer satisfaction⁷⁹ and help in building customer satisfaction.⁸⁰

Companies with stronger focus on relationship-building are using the Internet for greater interactivity and enhancing customer support and relationships.⁸¹ The ability to make comparisons between the different products and services is also possible in an online environment, thus increasing customers' variety-seeking behaviour.⁸² Evanschitzky *et al*,⁸³ hypothesize that the online environment provides convenience to shoppers and enables stress-free and easy shopping.^{84,85} Koivumaki⁸⁶ suggests that displaying pictorial images of the goods has a greater influence on customers' purchase decisions than just listing the product details.

Customers can access product information at their convenience and expediency. Online customer service has long been limited in the prompt delivery of goods.⁸⁵ Jahng *et al*,⁸⁷ state that e-commerce sites are primarily information sites facilitating effective communications with customers. Customer satisfaction with online travel websites is dependent on the informative, attractive and interactive nature of the websites.^{34,88–90} Law and Leung⁹¹ identified product information, pricing information, online booking facilities and quick web page load time as determinants

of customer satisfaction with online airline travel sites.

According to van Riel *et al.*,³² preferences and customer satisfaction with online travel websites depends on accessibility, navigation, design, reliability and customization of the website. Nusair and Kandampully,⁹² in their research on attributes of customer satisfaction with online travel services, state that playfulness and customization can improve the online travel service and garner customer satisfaction. In services, interaction helps in instilling confidence in the minds of customers. Appropriate product information, user-friendly design, language options, graphics and interactive nature of the website^{7,8,93} can induce greater satisfaction and more sales conversions. Customers visiting or browsing a travel website may not necessarily imply willingness to purchase online. This leads to three hypotheses.

Hypothesis 2: The usage of online travel services by Indian customers is dependent on efficient service offered in the online environment.

Online transactions entail providing website services according to customer needs.⁹⁴ In an e-commerce setting, transparency in pricing, product features and services can enhance customer satisfaction and increase loyalty towards the service provider. In India, customers would prefer a reassurance that the transaction has been successfully completed. In this regard, receiving a confirmation through a text message or e-mail about the payment would reassure the customer about the credibility of the online travel firm. Nysveen *et al.*⁹⁵ suggest that the influence of value-based services, mobile terminals for exploring various options, travel options and agent-based services can improve customer satisfaction with a service.

Hypothesis 3: Customers' age differences affect their decision to use online travel services.

Hypothesis 4: Customer satisfaction with online travel websites is based on the level of trust the customer feels in the website.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in two phases. The research design in the first phase was exploratory in nature, and we used the focus group technique for comprehending customer attitudes and expectations about online travel websites. Leung *et al.*⁹⁶ posit that an exploratory design is 'more appropriate for collecting pre-scientific knowledge, pilot testing, generating constructs and hypotheses, and testing them against everyday experience'. Thus, for designing the constructs of the questionnaire, we aimed to understand the customers' attitudes towards online travel services and translate these into a structured questionnaire. Porcellato *et al.*⁹⁷ state that the focus group technique encourages discussion about perceptions, experiences and feelings and thus helps in discerning motivations more effectively. By using the focus group technique we expected to better understand the gap between what people say and what they actually do.⁹⁸ The focus group interviews were conducted with three age groups of customers (age groups 20–35 years, 36–50 years, and 51 years and above). The number of participants in each focus group varied between 10 and 12 respondents. The focus group participants were contacted and intimated about the purpose of the research. The interviews were conducted on Saturday and Sunday in the month of September 2009, with the help of travel agents. The respondents mainly comprised the regular customers of these travel firms. The findings of the focus group interviews are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Perspective on online travel websites of the target consumer groups

<i>Group</i>	<i>Online travel websites</i>
20–35 years	Looking at the various locations and rates Browsing the pictures of the locations Checking for the rates of the hotels Picking up a good bargain from the online travel websites. Looking at train and airline connections and rates. Would prefer to use travel websites, as they are very convenient.
36–50 years	Checking for the rates of the hotels Picking up a good bargain from the online travel websites. Looking at train and airline connections and rates. Would prefer to use travel websites, as they are very convenient. Comparison of various rates of hotels is possible, and selection can be done.
51 years and above	Have very little knowledge about online travel websites. Travel agents are friendly and provide more detailed information. Not comfortable with transactions through travel websites. Would not choose to use them, as they are more comfortable with a travel agent making the bookings. Some information about pilgrimage places should be available on the travel sites. yatra.com and makemytrip.com should provide information about the process of financial transaction. The financial transaction details should be provided with clarity. Some travel agents help in providing information through websites.

Table 2: Age breakdown of respondents

<i>Age of respondents</i>	<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
20–30 years	51	29.5
30–40 years	51	29.5
40–50 years	42	24.3
50 years and above	29	16.8
Total	173	100

Table 3: Gender breakdown of respondents

<i>Gender of respondents</i>	<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Male	82	47.4
Female	91	52.6
Total	173	100

The findings from the focus group were taken for framing the questionnaire. The second phase of the research was descriptive in nature and respondents were requested to fill a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 25 attributes related to security and trust attributes and service attributes of online travel websites. There were 11 attributes on trust customer feels in online travel websites and 11 attributes related to services offered through online travel firms. Three attributes were related to online travel website usage by customers. The questions were rated on a five-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 – strongly agree to 5 – strongly disagree.

The sample comprised people who were familiar with online travel firms and their services. The total sample was 200, but for analysis we could only use the 173 questionnaires that were returned complete.

The demographics of the population are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In services, service quality is related to customer expectations and the actual service delivered.⁹⁹ On online travel websites, customer satisfaction is dependent on the services offered in terms of product descriptions and clarity of information and the trust the customer feels in the service provider's website. As a reliability test, we

computed the Cronbach's α value for the scale items. The α value for the questionnaire items was 0.656, which shows that the scale was reliable. The questionnaire items were segregated into two dimensions, related service attributes and trust attributes of online travel websites. The correlation between the two attributes with customers' satisfaction with visiting a travel website was computed. The results of the correlation are shown in Table 4.

The results show that correlation is high between customer satisfaction with travel websites and service attributes of the websites ($P=0.000$, which is significant at the 0.01 level) and for trust attributes it is not significant. Our results are similar to those of earlier research that websites' service and navigability attributes generate customer satisfaction.^{34,84,85,87,89,90} Customer satisfaction with online travel websites is dependent on the informative, attractive and interactive nature of the online website.^{34,88,92} The playfulness and interactive features of online travel websites enhance the service components;^{81,92} as the online services are faceless and lack an identity, the interactive nature of online travel websites enhances the service components.

The trust component in online travel services is difficult to deduce, as the absence of service personnel makes it difficult for

customers to seek clarifications or reassurance about the authenticity of financial transactions. Providing their bank account and credit card details in an online environment makes the customer sceptical as to whether the financial transaction will be completed. The customer's unawareness about the technical aspects exacerbates this lack of trust,⁷⁰ and they are fearful of using websites for financial transactions. The results connote that trust in online travel services is not responsible for garnering customer satisfaction for using travel websites, and the result supports earlier researches^{54,61,62,73–75} that suggest that customers prefer to carry out transactions with a service provider they trust. The level of perceived risk in the transaction is responsible for customers using the online travel websites⁶⁶ and the findings reiterate this aspect. In financial transactions, the level of perceived risk is high and the customer feels unsure about the reliability of the travel website. In developing countries, where the technology-related legal framework is weak, customers feel that there may not be supporting legal machinery to help them in case of problems in financial transactions.

To test whether there was any difference in customer perception of online travel websites' services and trust attributes based on the different age groups, we ran an ANOVA for the five age groups. The results of the Age ANOVA test are shown in Table 5.

The results show that there is no significant difference between the different age groups related to the trust attribute of online travel websites; however, for service attributes there is a significant difference ($P<0.05$). $F(3,169)=0.3.80$, $P=0.011$ for service attributes and $F(3, 169)=0.618$, $P=0.604$ for trust in travel websites.

We ran ANOVA to test whether there was any significant difference between the perception of men and women using online travel websites. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 4: Correlations between satisfaction of customers with online travel websites and service and trust attributes

	<i>Satisfaction with the decision to visit travel websites</i>
<i>Service attributes of website</i>	
Pearson correlation	0.391**
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
N	173
<i>Trust attributes of websites</i>	
Pearson correlation	0.043
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.579
N	173

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5: ANOVA – Age

	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Service attributes</i>					
Between groups	372.070	3	124.023	3.802	0.011
Within groups	5512.612	169	32.619	—	—
Total	5884.682	172	—	—	—
<i>Trust attributes</i>					
Between groups	31.183	3	10.394	0.618	0.604
Within groups	2841.638	169	16.814	—	—
Total	2872.821	172	—	—	—

Table 6: ANOVA – Gender

	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Service attributes</i>					
Between groups	5.391	1	5.391	0.157	0.693
Within groups	5879.291	171	34.382	—	—
Total	5884.682	172	—	—	—
<i>Trust attributes</i>					
Between groups	49.664	1	49.664	3.008	0.085
Within groups	2823.157	171	16.510	—	—
Total	2872.821	172	—	—	—

Table 7: Determinants of customer satisfaction with online travel websites: Multiple regression analysis

<i>Model</i>		<i>Unstandardized coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized coefficients</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β		
1	(Constant)	0.230	0.617	—	0.372	0.710
	Service attributes	0.082	0.015	0.396	5.529	0.000*
	Trust attributes	–0.008	0.021	–0.028	–0.388	0.699

Dependent variable: I am satisfied with my decision to visit travel websites.

*Service attributes significant at 0.01 level.

The results show that there is no significant difference between male and female customers with regard to the trust and service attributes of online travel websites. $F(1, 171) = 0.157$, $P = 0.693$ for service attributes and $F(1, 171) = 3.008$, $P = 0.085$ for trust in travel websites.

To understand the preference of customers towards online travel websites, we ran a Multiple Regression analysis (Table 7). The dependent variable was customer satisfaction with the decision to visit online travel websites. The analysis shows that information about holiday packages, easy navigability, attractive website design, interactivity and customization enhance the service attributes

of the website, and these were considered significant attributes for customer satisfaction. The results show that the t value is 5.529 and $P = 0.000$ ($P < 0.01$), which is significant at the 0.01 level. For the trust and reliability attribute of online travel websites, the t value is 0.388 and $P = 0.699$, which is insignificant at the 0.01 level.

The results thus suggest that increasing the service components of an online travel website can positively affect customer satisfaction with visiting the website. This is in tandem with earlier research findings that interactivity, playfulness, attractiveness, easy navigability and customization are related to customer satisfaction with online

environments.^{1,8,9,34,36,39,88,92} The trust attributes were not considered vital predictors in encouraging customers to use online travel websites. The lack of confidence in the online environment may be related to financial aspects of the transactions, where the customer is not convinced about the reliability of travel websites.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Online travel services are a new service interface model for Indian customers, and customers with easy accessibility to the Internet in their workplace are apt to use them frequently. The rationale behind using online services is the service convenience they offer. However, Indian customers still prefer face-to-face interactions with service staff, as this gives them an assurance that their requirements are being addressed. Malhotra *et al*¹⁰⁰ and Srijumpa *et al*¹³ state that interpersonal relationships govern most business practices in Southeast Asia, and our result reflects the lack of trust in customers' attitudes in trying online services. An interpersonal relationship with the travel agent instils confidence in the customer and they can interpret a lot of information through gestures and non-verbal cues.⁵⁷

Travel firms can make their websites more user-friendly so that they promise efficient services. The instructions provided on these websites should be easy to follow and understand. Too many hyperlinks that do not upload quickly confer a negative impression on the customer. The features should be easy to navigate, with colourful pictures and images of locations. The customer would feel more assured if there were some phone numbers of local travel agents provided on the website. This would enable customers to clarify their queries by making a phone call. The intangibility of the website can be ameliorated by personal interaction with travel agents.

The travel agents may be used for building relationships with customers and then encouraging them to use the firm's website for travel bookings and information.

The hesitation customers feel about using online travel websites involves their personal information possibly being divulged and the fact that online travel services do not provide the assurance of a physical store, and this perception of risk deters them from using online services.⁷³ Online travel services should include uncomplicated instructions about payment modes and transactions. Tie-up with the national banks may reduce customer scepticism regarding financial transactions. The travel agent's availability by telephone may provide additional assurance to the customer.

The website layout and design should be adapted according to customer expectations. The level of interactivity of the websites may be augmented by offering details of hotels and destinations and making it feasible for customers to select combinations according to their own requirements and financial situation. Chu⁸⁸ suggests that customer satisfaction with online travel websites is dependent on the informative, attractive and interactive nature of the websites. Pilgrimage places could be included with details about special holiday packages or off-season discounts. Immediate confirmation of reservations or bookings may be provided by e-mail or text message. Many older people do not have e-mail IDs and therefore feel irresolute about using online travel services. If they are able to receive affirmation about the transactions from the firm on their mobile phones, this would create trust in these services. The satisfaction with online services is dependent on the user's confidence in them. If interactions are increased, the satisfaction may also be enhanced. The pictures of destinations, rooms of the hotel and markets make the website interactive.

Customers feel that they can check the products' functions. As planning a vacation is an emotional decision, pictures can augment customers' feelings. Koivumäki⁸⁶ posits that pictorial images of the goods are more instrumental in motivating customers to purchase a product than just listing the product details; thus, adding these features may motivate customers to visit travel websites.

Most customers visiting or browsing a travel website were not necessarily willing to purchase online. To encourage them to purchase, online travel websites have to also use the help of travel agents. Travel agents would provide a human element to the transaction, and the use of a virtual environment is recommended. The personal interaction would help in instilling confidence about online travel services in the minds of the customers. We feel that the younger customer (age group 20–45 years) is more computer-literate and has fewer inhibitions in using online travel services. This may be a potential segment willing to switch to online transactions, and thus their suggestions should be considered. The navigability and accessibility of travel websites can improve customers' adoption of online travel services. There is definitely growing scope for online services in India, and e-commerce is poised to expand in multiple sectors.

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