A Study Of Consumer Perception And Purchase Intention Of Online Travel Booking In The National Capital Region (India)

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to measure customer perception and purchase intention toward online travel booking in the National Capital Region (India). The study empirically applied quantitative research methods to find out the objective and testing of the hypothesis. The study was based on primary data collected through a self-administered questionnaire by adopting a simple random sampling technique. The collected data was analyzed by using suitable statistical tools. The finding of the study indicated that major factors of customer perception towards online travel booking were noted as perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived convenience, and perceived trust. The customer considerably perceived each of the identified constructs. The purchase intention of the customer towards online travel booking was also found to a considerable extent. Finally, a significant relationship was found between identified factors of customer perception and purchase intention.

Keywords: Intention, Online Travel Booking, Purchase, Perception

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advance in information technology-based systems, especially the Internet, is leading to fundamental changes in how to perform business and interact with customers (Bauer et al., 2005). The travel and tourism industry in particular has been positively affected by this great advancement and wide application of e-commerce in business, especially the way travel organizations deliver their travel products to the market and the customers (Buhalis, 2000; Law, 2004).

The Internet, as a universal and interactive communication means, has resulted in great changes in customers' behavior and attitude. Consumers can conduct travel information searching and travel service booking online (Buhali[1]s & Licata, 2002; Parasuraman et al., 2005). Moreover, customers can search for travel information online easily,

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including travel information, price information, and so on. Online channels dramatically reduce customers' searching efforts for travel information, including both searching time and searching costs.

In addition, online channels offer customers more information to support their decision based on their comparison of different travel products and prices. All these activities can be conducted online by customers

without face-to-face meetings, and customized service according to their demand can be possible (Athiyaman,2002). Some authors (Spark & Browning, 2011; Liu & Park, 2014) also consider the online review or experience as a very crucial factor when going for online booking of travel products & services. They believed that online reviews can increase the visibility of tourism products/services. Moreover, the website providing online reviews can increase the competitiveness of their respective products in emerging markets. Therefore, they suggested a direct relationship between online reviews and customer purchase intention in the tourism sector.

Therefore, some tourism organizations that manage destinations have successfully used the internet to provide pre-trip, as well as in-trip, information to tourists, therefore promoting their destination (Abou et al, 2013). Customers appreciate the accessibility, the reduced time needed, and the convenience that has arisen due to the number of firms that can now specialize in varied tourism products (El-Gohary, 2012) and marketing of travel-related services for booking airplane tickets, web check-in and selection of seats, as well as hotel booking. Brdsee et al.(2012) demonstrated how internet adoption by airlines has led to a simplification of ticket booking and scheduling. Lan (2012) describes the consumer travel planning process as dreaming, followed by planning and finishing with booking. Search engines provide information on destinations that suggest certain experiences that may motivate consumers (dreaming); the act of gathering information on the web, where customers may become informed about alternative trips and routes leads to planning. Kassem & Nassoura (2012) note how computerized technology also enables hotel owners to manage room bookings effectively to permit customer choice. Therefore, the Internet is a key promotional platform, where suppliers advertise travel packages; consumers can compare offers and book travel options that best suit them. The use of online search can provide customers with significant information leading to a decision on whether or not to make a purchase. Mills & Law (2013) state that in travel and tourism, the Internet is a critical medium for gaining information, and customer evaluation may include consideration of value, cost, and differentiation.

In India, e-tourism has emerged as one of the sectors having the highest growth potential with online travel companies like makemytrip.com, cleartrip.com, and yatra.com claiming 85% of the total industry share. Concerning the Indian context, online travel continues to dominate the country's travel market. Within 2014-2016, it was expected to grow by 17.2% while outperforming the global travel market by 6 base points. People with hands-on online travel and tourism booking experience are estimated to increase to an estimated figure of 46% in 2017 as compared to 41% in the third quarter of 2015 (Singh et al., 2016).

Moreover, due to increasing players in the online travel industry, consumers have different preferences and perceptions regarding them. Despite the growing importance of the Internet as an information source for prospective travelers, as a marketing tool, and as a way of doing business, there is a general lack of information related to perceptions of travelers for online travel products

and services (Singh et al.,2016). Understanding their perception and purchase intention is also of critical importance to travel marketers in formulating appropriate marketing strategies to fully exploit the developing potential of this new channel. Moreover, no studies to date have investigated in detail how consumers are changing their travel search and booking habits, as they gain increased access to technology. Thus, the present study will provide insights into the customers' perception and purchase intention towards the use of online travel booking in the National Capital Region (India).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The adoption of technology suggested that marketing research should concentrate on how innovative technology is perceived by customers in addition to how their responses to the use of technology may change with time and experience (Kim,2009). In the tourism business,

an online search can provide customers with significant information that may well lead to a decision about whether to purchase a travel service or not. Moreover, through online channels, both tourism marketers and buyers interact and share information relating to different travel services, to satisfy current needs when compared to other methods of making purchases (Bailey, 2011).

Online search is far easier than the option to search a variety of products online. It is believed that the online travel search provides information about available airlines and hotels, concerning their flight and accommodation rates (Darley et al, 2010). As well as, online travel search enables the identification of the most affordable and preferred travel specifications, such as identifying flight charges from one destination to another in a matter of a few minutes (Dennis et al., 2011). Online travel search has gained popularity as the most preferred travel search method, as it utilizes less time, and fewer resources in comparison to traditional offline travel methods (Mills & Law, 2013).

There have also been numerous studies of the tourism sector, one of which was conducted by Gibson (2007), who noted how tourists use online searches to identify their destinations. Destinations received more attention if they have an online presence. Gibson (2007), established that tourists with a high intention to search online were often up-to-date with current platforms. Availability of information is thus critical, as customers make decisions based on the provided information; the more information, the easier the decision-making process.

Research by Morrison et al., (2001) suggests customers who book online travel services exhibit a greater interest in maintaining positive attitudes to search for information online, whilst also using these searches more frequently. It has been mentioned that a primary motive for undertaking information searches is to enhance the quality of the purchase decision. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that information search and evaluation would have a significant influence on purchase intention. The perception that an online system is easier and offers some usefulness to the customer positively influences customer intention. Thus, it can be noted that using the internet for searching information on travel products and services will have a significant impact on customers' purchase intention.

Casalo et al., (2011) noted that among the multiple variables affecting attitudes when using a specific system, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are significant. More recently, in the context of online travel communities, provide a new definition of perceived usefulness, suggesting it to be the level to which individuals consider participating in the travel community online. Chang et al.,

(2012) echo this view demonstrating that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are antecedent factors that have an impact on attitude toward using online mobile services.

Numerous studies have attempted to explain the impact of perceived usefulness towards the purchase of online travel activities. For instance, Bhattacharjee (2001) examines cognitive beliefs and the effect that influences individual intention to continue using online services on purchase intention. On the other hand, perceived ease of use shows an inconsistent effect on consumer purchase intention. Xu at el. (2010) support these findings with their investigation of the relationship between the perceived usefulness of travel information, its perceived ease of use, and trust in travel information. Recent evidence offered by Peng et al., (2012) also gives insight into the factors that determine tourists' acceptance of online services. Their findings indicate that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use drive customer attitudes toward the use of online travel services.

Recent developments in online consumer behavior have heightened the need for investigating consumer convenience, in terms of buying tourism services on the Internet. Perceived convenience is defined in terms of time-saving effects and the removal of both location and geographic constraints. The removal of these obstacles creates search and purchase convenience, especially for online travelers (Hung et al., 2013). From a marketing perspective, this convenience comprises five dimensions: time, place, acquisition, use, and execution. If the customer perceives online travel information search as time-saving, or that ticket booking can be done at any time and place, his or her behavioral intention to search and purchase is likely to be positively influenced. Further, if the customer experiences execution convenience (e.g. having holiday packages arranged and provided by online travel sites) their intentions to use the internet to search for online booking services will be increased. So, perceived convenience will have a significant impact on customer purchase intention for travel products.

The term trust has come to be used to refer to an individual's belief that their requests will be satisfied in the future by the actions carried out by another party (Lewicki et al., 2006). Fung and Lee (1999) provide a new definition of trust as a willingness to believe a variety of attributes about the other party, e.g. fairness, goodness, strength, ability, benevolence, honesty, and predictability. Trust is usually developed based on the repeated use of a site; as the user gains experience, they increasingly believe in what is presented when his/her expectations are met during visits (Bart et al., 2005). Online customers of travel services may perceive various forms of risk, ranging from personal to economic and performance risk. Depending on the risk type, and the value of that risk to the customer, their level of trust changes considerably. Online customers who have suffered personal and economic risks are more likely to have less trust in the site causing the risk.

Customer perception of trust in online search and booking of travel products is critical to the search intention of customers. Trust ensures that customers obtain a better experience as they navigate online services, without having fear of losing sensitive personal and financial information (Arthur, 2009). Thus, perceived trust is significantly related to the purchase of travel products through the Internet.

The term purchase intention is understood to mean the likelihood with which customers may purchase a particular product or service (Lu & Su, 2009). Wayne et al (1994) identify key dimensions of purchase intention, finding that a feeling of comfort with the information search process had a positive association with a higher purchase intention. Many types of research showed that an increase in customer perception of e-service quality and customer satisfaction has had a positive impact on purchasing behavior of customers. Thus, it was suggested that dimensions like website design, reliability, responsiveness, and trust affect overall service quality and customer satisfaction and also significantly affect customer purchase intentions. Similarly, it was also shown that factors like site design, convenience, product information, product offering, and financial security identified from conducting confirmatory factor analysis were observed to positively affect consumer buying decisions (Masoomeh et al., 2006). In this ever-changing market, firms need to understand the perception and purchase intention of customers towards online travel booking and the relationship between both concepts related to online travel companies.

OBJECTIVES & HYPOTHESIS
The objectives of the study are as under:
- To find out the factors of customers' perception of online travel booking in the National Capital Region (India).
- To investigate consumer perception towards internet adoption in travel choices online.
- To explore consumer purchase intention of online travel booking.
    The major Hypothesis of the study is that 'The customers' perception of online travel booking is significantly related to their purchase intention.' The sub-hypothesis of the study is:
- H_01The customer perception does not significantly influence their purchase intention.
- H_11The customer perception significantly influences their purchase intention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The present study was conducted in the National Capital Region (India) of India to investigate the customers' perceptions and purchase intentions of online travel booking. The study was majorly based on primary data collected by adopting a random sampling technique with the help of a self-structured questionnaire. The perception and purchase intention of the customers was recorded by using a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree-5 to strongly disagree-1). Suitable descriptive and inferential statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean, and regression analysis were used for the attainment of the objective. Moreover, factor analysis was also used to find out the factors/components of customers' perception of online travel booking.

RESULT OF THE STUDY
The major characteristics of the respondents, which included age, gender, income, level of education, marital status, internet experience, travel experience, and frequency of buying online travel products are presented through descriptive statistics. The gender classification indicated the majority of male respondents (63.5%) as compared to their female counterparts. Most of the respondents were in the age range of 18 to 34 years (75%) and the remaining was above 34 years.

In terms of marital status, more than half of the respondents (59.67%) were unmarried, while others were married. Based on the education-wise classification, the majority of the respondents (81%) were having at least a graduate or above education qualification. The remaining almost $1/5^{th}$ (19%) were educated below graduate or having at least secondary level education. Regarding income, almost $3/4^{th}$ of the respondents were in the income group of 2,0001 to 4,0000 (73.6%). More than $1/4^{th}$ of the respondents (26.4%) were below 20000 and more than 40000. In considering the factors centered on the level of experience with the internet, level of prior online travel booking experience, and the number of prior online travel products purchased. A breakdown of the level of internet experience showed that the sample respondents were experienced in using the internet (85% had more than 5 years of experience), while the level of prior experience in online travel search was also substantial, with 28.7% having three to 4 years and 47.6% having five years or of such experience respectively. The frequency of buying online travel products also demonstrated knowledgeable respondents: 71% had bought online travel products from 1 to 6 times, 26% had done so 7 times and above, while only 3.2% had never bought a travel product online.

FACTORS OF CUSTOMER PERCEPTION OF ONLINE TRAVEL BOOKING

Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was used to reduce the non-significant items from the original list of variables. The items that did not reach the required critical level were removed from the variables list.

Table I: Component Matrix

Component	Factor Loading			
Perceived Usefulness	1	2	3	4
Using the internet for information and searching for travel products is useful	0.81			
Using the internet improves effectiveness in searching for travel products	0.82			
Using the internet for information and searching for travel products allows one to get work done quickly	0.81			
Using the internet to search for travel products can improve the ability to make good decisions	0.82			
Perceived Ease of Use				
Learning to use the internet for information and searching for travel products would be easy		0.81		
Using the internet for information searching for travel products easy to use		0.85		
Using the internet for information and searching for travel products requires little effort		0.78		
Using the internet for information searching for travel products is clear and understandable		0.87		
Perceived Convenience				
Search for travel information is possible at any time by using the internet			0.77	
Search for travel information is possible at any place by using the internet			0.82	
Using the internet for information and searching for travel products is convenient for booking holiday			0.85	
Finding suitable holiday packages arranged by online travel sites are convenient			0.80	
Perceived Trust				
Online travel sites are known as sites that keep commitments				0.85
Online travel sites are trustworthy				0.90
Information provided on online travel sites is realistic				0.88
Compared to other channels, online travel sites are reliable				0.85
Rotation Method: Principal Component Matrix				

For identifying the factors of customer perception of online travel booking, the principal component factor technique was applied. The components of customers' perception of online travel booking were noted as perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived convenience, and perceived trust. To test the reliability and internal consistency of each factor, the Cronbach's alpha of each was determined. The result showed that the alpha coefficients ranged from 0.83 to 0.87 for the four components. Component perceived usefulness contained four items and explained

71.22% of the variance in the data, with an eigenvalue of 2.85 and a reliability of 0.86. Perceived ease of use rotated four items explaining a variance of 66.70%. The eigenvalue and reliability of this component were 2.67 and 0.83 respectively. Component perceived convenience rotated four items explained 68.71% variance with 2.75 eigenvalues and 0.85 Cronbach alpha value. The next component, perceived trust indicated a 66.01% of variance value, 3.30 eigenvalue, and 0.87 reliability value.

CUSTOMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS AN ONLINE TRAVEL BOOKING

The perception of the customers regarding booking of travel products/services was measured on a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree=5 to strongly disagree=1). The result of the descriptive statistics was presented as under:

Table II: Customer perceptions towards factors of online travel booking

Component	Mean	S.D.
Perceived Usefulness		
I find using the internet for information and searching for travel products to be useful	4.26	0.62
Using the internet improves my effectiveness in searching for travel products	3.97	0.75
Using the internet for information and searching for travel products allows me to get my work done quicker	4.18	0.70
Using the internet to search for travel products can improve my ability to make good decisions	4.0	0.73
Perceived Ease of Use		
I find it easy to use the Internet for purchasing travel products	4.20	0.67
I find using the internet for information and searching for travel products easy to use	4.05	0.74
Using the internet for information and searching for travel products requires little effort from me	3.69	1
Using the internet for information searching for travel products is clear and understandable.	3.81	0.73
Perceived Convenience		
I can search for travel information at any time by using the internet	3.63	0.93
I can search for travel information at any place by using the internet	4.34	0.66
Using the internet for information and searching for travel products gives me convenience in booking my holiday	3.82	0.73
I find the suitable holiday packages arranged by online travel sites convenient for me.	4.49	0.59
Perceived Trust		
Payment/transaction systems on the internet/online travel sites are safe	3.51	0.79
Online travel sites are trustworthy	3.76	0.68
I find the information on online travel sites is realistic	3.81	0.60
Compared to other websites, online travel sites are reliable	3.86	0.92

Customers more significantly perceived the usefulness of the Internet for searching about travel products (mean=4.26, S.D.=0.62) followed by the usefulness of the Internet in searching the information about travel products very quickly(mean=4.18, S.D.=0.70), the usefulness of internet in increasing the efficiency to make a good decision regarding online travel booking(mean=4.0, S.D.=0.73) and increase in travel search efficiency on the internet(mean=3.97, S.D.=0.75). In terms of perceived ease of use, the item easy to use the internet for purchasing travel products (mean=4.20, S.D.=0.67) and easy to search information about travel products (mean=4.05, S.D.=0.74) were strongly perceived by customers as compared to using the internet for searching clear and understandable information (mean=3.81, S.D.=0.73) and effortless search of information on internet (mean=3.69, S.D.=1.0). The perceived convenience in using the internet for travel booking, finding out the suitable package tour conveniently (mean=4.49, S.D.=0.59) is significantly perceived by customers followed by a search on the internet about travel product at any place(mean=4.34, S.D.=0.66), convenience in the booking of travel products(mean=3.82, S.D.=0.73), convenience to search travel information at any time of the day (mean=3.63, S.D.=0.93). The descriptive statistics regarding perceived trust regarding using the internet in travel booking as reported in the above table indicated the internet as the more trusted channel to purchase travel products as compared to another channel (mean=3.86, S.D.=0.92), followed by realistic information provided on the internet(mean=3.81, S.D.=0.60), trustworthiness of travel websites(mean=3.76, S.D.=0.68) and trusted payment/transaction system through the internet(mean=3.51, S.D.=0.79) in making travel booking.

CUSTOMER PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS AN ONLINE TRAVEL BOOKING

Descriptive statistics for the customer intention to purchase travel products online indicated that customers are intended to purchase travel services through the Internet in the future (mean=4.21, S.D.=0.63). Customers indicated that their purchasing frequency via the Internet will also increase in the future (mean=3.99, S.D.=0.72). Customers also reported that if they search for travel products on the Internet, they will surely purchase travel products online (mean=3.77, S.D.=0.74) followed by their regular purchasing of travel products through the Internet (mean=3.43, S.D.=1.06).

Table III: Customer purchase intention towards booking of travel service on the internet

Purchase Intention	Mean	S.D.
I intend to purchase online travel products in the future	4.21	0.63
Given that I have access to the internet, I predict that I would purchase online travel products	3.77	0.74
In the future, I intend to regularly purchase online travel products	3.43	1.06
I expect my purchasing of online travel products to increase in the future	3.99	0.72

HYPOTHESIS: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CUSTOMER PERCEPTION AND PURCHASE INTENTION

The relationship between purchase intention and customer perception towards online travel booking was tested by applying multiple regression analysis. The equation for customers' purchase intention was expressed in the following equation:

$Y_s = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4$, Where,

Y_s = Customers' Purchase intention in National Capital Region (India)

β_0 = Constant (coefficient of intercept)

$\beta_1 X_1$ = Regression coefficient of Factor 1(Perceived Usefulness)

$\beta_2 X_2$ = Regression coefficient of Factor 2(Perceived Ease of Use)

$\beta_3 X_3$ = Regression coefficient of Factor 3(Perceived Convenience)

$\beta_4 X_4$ = Regression coefficient of Factor 4(Perceived Trust)

Table IV: Relationship between customer Perception and Purchase Intentions

Regression Analysis				
R	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**		**Std. Error of Estimate**
.768[a]	.589	.579		1.239
Independent Variables	**Beta**	**t-value**	**Sig.**	**F Value/Sig,**
Perceived Usefulness	0.227	4.400	0.000	**F= 59.668, Sig=0.000**
Perceived Ease of Use	0.137	2.548	0.011	
Perceived Convenience	0.179	3.935	0.000	
Trust	-0.77	-1.620	0.106	
a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention				

In the above table, the findings of the regression analysis will be discussed concerning the relationship between customer perception and their purchase intention towards online travel booking in the study area. The R of the independent variables (four factors of customer perceptions of online travel booking) and dependent variable (purchase intention) is 0.768, which shows that the factors of customer perceptions have a positive impact on purchase intention. The R^2 is 0.589, suggesting that 58 percent of the variation in customers' purchase intention is explained by these four components or related factors of customer perception. The F ratio is 59.668 showing whether the result of the regression model could have occurred by chance. The p-value is 0.000(<0.05), which was considered significant.

In the regression analysis, the beta coefficients can be used to explain the relative importance of each of the four factors (independent variables) in contributing to the variance in customer purchase intention (dependent variable) towards online booking of travel services. Factor 1(perceived usefulness: beta=0.227, p=0.000) had the highest contribution to variance, followed by Factor 3 (Convenience: beta=0.179, p=0.000), Factor 2(Perceived Ease of Use: beta=0.137, p=0.011) and Factor 4(Trust: beta= -0.77, p=0.106). The result of regression analysis indicated that the Factors of customers' perception of online travel booking have a significant influence on their purchase intention towards online booking travel booking. The results showed that a one-unit increase in purchase intention with the perceived usefulness factor would lead to a 22.7-unit increase in customers' purchase intention, with other variables being held constant.

RESULT OF THE HYPOTHESIS

The result of regression analysis depicted that all factors of customers' perception of online travel booking (except a trust) in the National Capital Region (India) showed a significant relationship with customers' purchase intention on online travel booking. Thus, H_01 can be rejected (by supporting H_11) as the purchase intention of customers was significantly influenced by their factors of perception. Finally, based on the result of regression analysis, it can be concluded that customers' purchase intention was significantly influenced by their perception of online travel booking.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to understand customer perception and their purchase intention towards online travel booking. For identification of components of customers' perception of online travel booking, principal component analysis was conducted which resulted in four rotated components viz. perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived convenience, and perceived trust. All the components were loaded with four items that loaded most heavily on the components as compared to other variables. The component perceived convenience, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use were more considerably perceived by customers whereas the component perceived trust was found less important as compared to another construct. The customers' purchase intention was also found significant and positive in terms of every statement of purchase intention. The application of regression was used to find out the influence of customer perception on their purchase intention towards online travel booking. The results of the present study supported that perceived convenience, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use positively impact online purchase intention. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that individuals, who engage in more extensive search and booking concerning online travel information, are more likely to express a positive purchase intention. The only component which noted non-significant related to purchase intention was perceived trust towards online travel booking. Therefore, the findings of the study suggested that travel firms must take some measures to integrate trust-building indicators into their websites, by concentrating on safety, privacy, and security to improve the acceptance of online travel booking.

Moreover, it would be advantageous to conduct comparable studies in other geographical locations with a broader representation of internet experience especially related to the trustworthiness of the internet will be useful for policymakers and concerned stakeholders.

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