

AN INVESTIGATION INTO CONSUMER DECISION MAKING IN THE INDIAN E-TOURISM MARKET

ABSTRACT

Well-designed E-Travel Websites are required to properly use the Internet's potential in the Travel and Tourism sector. However, the characteristics that influence Customer Perceptions of E-Travel Websites remain unclear. Aside from marketing materials offered by Travel businesses and intermediaries, the increasing availability of Internet Image albums, Personal Blogs, and Speciality Travel Blogs have transformed consumer behaviour drastically. The goal of the research here is to see how 'E-WOM' influences 'Travel Purchase Intention' along with marketing communications by the E-Travel Websites. The majority of research on Online Travel Purchase Behaviour concentrates on the impact of either the Service Quality of Travel Websites or the impact of Travel Reviews. However, no study has attempted to combine these two traits, to the best of the author's knowledge. The empirical findings of the study on Exploratory Factor Analysis conducted to identify parameters that influence Service Quality of Online Travel Websites are in line with several prior research findings, while Multiple Regression Analysis reveal that three factors of 'E-Travel Website Service Quality' have a significant impact on 'Travel Purchase Intention'. In the next stage of the analysis, the scale developed in the study is deployed to several customers of E-Travel Websites to understand their perceptions on performance of the sites and based on their scores, 'Importance Performance Gap Analysis' charts are prepared for five travel websites of India. 'E-Travel Website Service Quality' is assessed as a higher-order construct in the subsequent stage of study in order to incorporate the impact of 'E-WOM' into the model and analyse the simultaneous impact of both dimensions together. This dissertation also performs Multi-Group Analysis to test whether Socio-Demographic based groups yield significant differences in their Online Travel Purchase Intention. Results show several significant differences between socio-demographic groups in their perceptions of 'E-Travel Website Service Quality' and 'E-WOM' on 'Travel Purchase Intentions'. Customers' evaluations of service delivery are an important component in the development of marketing strategies; thus, the study's findings are relevant to marketing managers and practitioners who develop strategic plans and implement solutions to increase tourist online shopping through B2C e-commerce.

KEYWORDS: Tourism Sector; E-Travel Website Service Quality; E-WOM; Hierarchical Construct Modelling; Structural Equation Modelling; PLS; AMOS; Multi-Group Analysis; Importance-Performance Analysis