

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS E-SERVICES OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO UTTAR PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

The exponential expansion of E-services in the tourism sector has completely transformed customer interfaces and buying patterns, providing convenience, personalisation, and ease of access. The objective of this study is to examine consumer behaviour in relation to E-services within the tourism industry, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, a historically and culturally significant state.

KEYWORDS: Consumer Behaviour, E-Tourism, ICT, Uttar Pradesh.

Introduction

The tourism sector is widely recognized as critically important for the economic development of nearly every country, both at the international and domestic levels. The present research has examined and elucidated the correlation between e-tourism services and customer behaviour. Fundamentally, these ideas are formulated to enhance comprehension of customer decisions and behavior. The primary objective of such studies is to identify the fundamental principles in consumer behavior in order to facilitate practical implementation and provide recommendations and predictions regarding the factors that influence customer behavior. The dissemination of tourism information through technological means significantly influences consumer behaviour. A significant proportion of consumers utilize websites to acquire information and make purchases of services provided by the e-tourism sector. The adoption of self-service technology in this industry offers firms advantages in terms of cost reduction and customer retention. Scholarly literature has extensively examined the impact of stimulus production on consumer behaviour in e-tourism services. The stimulus is created by considering the impact of previous experiences, desires, and interests of the consumer in using a product or service. The customer's evaluation of the product or service is directly proportional to its profitability. The stimulus produced in an individual plays a significant role in influencing the changes in behavior that take place during the purchase of tourism services. Therefore, it is crucial to continuously enhance the image of these services. To attain customer loyalty, the e-tourism industry must develop technology to capture customer responses to the stimulus they receive and provide them with more tailored products and services based on their individual preferences. Information Search is another significant dependent variable. It has been extensively studied as a crucial factor influencing consumer behaviour in e-tourism services in previous studies. Travel-focused websites are gaining popularity and are increasingly engaged in delivering essential online travel information. The evolving nature of the internet has made content creation increasingly effortless. Consequently, the present consumer has more control over how they can utilize the information available on the internet. Search engines have a significant impact in the current day by facilitating customers in accessing necessary information from social media platforms, blogs, and other

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sources. These sources allow customers to get an accurate understanding of a particular e-tourism service by reading the comments of previous buyers, which are based on their independent-individual experiences. Researchers have identified information search as a crucial component of the purchasing choice process, which has been transformed by the widespread use of the internet. In addition, it has also been noted that among the elements that impact the process of searching for information, previous visits (based on personal experience) and consideration of the destination (based on awareness) are among the most significant. The tourism sector is a dependent industry on information, and the internet is facilitating a dynamic platform for the provision and exchange of information in this sector. Nevertheless, it is of utmost importance that the content presented on the websites aligns with the customers' expectations, since this enables the assessment of consumer behavior about the e-tourism services provided. This study underscores the growing importance of E-services in shaping consumer behavior within the tourism industry, particularly in Uttar Pradesh. Factors such as ease of access, convenience, and personalized services drive the adoption of E-services among tourists, with younger, tech-savvy consumers showing the highest levels of engagement. Despite the evident advantages, challenges like concerns over online payment security and perceived service quality still pose barriers to wider acceptance. To further enhance consumer satisfaction and boost digital engagement, tourism service providers must address these issues by improving the reliability and transparency of their platforms, offering robust customer support, and focusing on building trust in online transactions. Additionally, targeted marketing strategies, especially towards less tech-oriented demographics, can help bridge the gap and expand the reach of E-services. By adopting these strategies, Uttar Pradesh's tourism sector can better align with the evolving digital landscape, ultimately contributing to the region's economic growth and development.

Review of Literature

Mattila (2004) conducted a comprehensive analysis of articles published in 2003 to identify significant trends and dominant areas of study in consumer behavior within the hospitality and tourism research sector. Furthermore, researcher emphasized certain obstacles encountered in this field in relation to the advancement of theories and methodological concerns.

Swarbrooke and Horner (2006) examined Consumer Behaviour in Tourism, which encompasses several aspects of tourism such as tour operator, tourist destinations, hospitality, visitor attractions, retail trade, travel, and transportation. Researcher also examined variations in consumer culture across different countries and presented research findings and concepts from many global regions.

In their 2007 study, Steinbauer and Werthner highlighted the significant impact of the rapid technological advancements, particularly the Internet, on the information-intensive nature of the tourism industry in recent decades. A key outcome is the alteration in the behaviour of travellers. Therefore, the task of locating, attracting, and maintaining clients in the internet market, together with the problem of comprehending consumer views, is becoming a crucial determinant of success.

Hikkerova (2010) contended that the advent of the Internet has brought about substantial changes in the structure of intermediation in the travel business. Emerging competitors have entered the market, established entities like the GDS (Global Distribution System) have adjusted their strategies, manufacturers are expanding into direct sales, and consumer purchasing patterns have seen significant changes as individuals can now compare costs more efficiently and effortlessly.

In their 2010 study, Nedelea and Balan emphasized the significance of E-tourism and innovation in the tourist sector, particularly in terms of their influence on economic growth achieved by enterprises. Thus, tourism companies who have a well-designed website have access to a vast tourism market, so achieving success in presenting their products and services of interest to a wide range of consumers both nationally and internationally. Significant changes in consumer behavior necessitate the reform of rules, especially in the area of consumer protection. The protection of tourists is largely guaranteed by tourism organizations that promote e-tourism, and secondarily by the state through regulatory rules. The researchers intended to emphasize certain concerns regarding the significance of electronic procurement of tourism packages, the obligations of owners of websites, and the existing legal framework on safeguarding consumers for online travel services or products. By conducting a thorough examination of current laws and reviewing relevant literature, researchers suggested prioritizing the key areas to enhance consumer protection rules in the online tourism industry.

Bajpai and Lee (2015) contended that the rapid and effective technological advancements in recent decades have taken a significant impact on the tourism sector. The advent of new technologies,

such as the internet, has revolutionised the conventional approach to conducting business. Consequently, it has become crucial to comprehend consumer behaviour and perception in order to identify, engage, and keep clients in the internet-based travel sector. In the context of Taiwan, this study investigated the factors that impact the consumer behavior of prospective clients in using e-tourism services and demonstrates their interconnectedness. This study employed empirical research as its design and methodology to ascertain its findings. The development of a questionnaire was done by using previous research pertaining to the factors under investigation. The questionnaire was divided into four sections, each including four or five statements. A demographic section was also incorporated. Only 402 completed questionnaires were included in the analysis. The findings of this study indicated that the determinants examined, namely the generation of stimulus, information search, and service quality, significantly influence consumer loyalty and subsequently shape consumer behavior towards e-tourism services for travel planning purposes. This study was the first of its kind conducted on the consumer behavior of young people, particularly in the e-tourism sector from Taiwan's standpoint. Furthermore, the data collected directly from Taiwan's youth was empirically assessed, leading to the belief that its findings may assist organizations in enhancing the consumer orientation of the e-tourism industry in Taiwan.

The study conducted by Csikosova et al. (2019) examined customer behaviour within the tourism sector in the Slovakian region. Achieving the objective, the contribution utilized theoretical and practical knowledge in the field to analyze the primary elements that influence consumers in tourism and establish a typology of customers based on several segmentation dimensions. Analysis conducted in Slovakia focused on defining consumer typology in the tourism sector based on psychographic, demographic, and individual consumer behavior in certain segments. The research findings served as the foundation for developing conclusions and suggestions for future scientific investigations in the field of tourism market.

In their recent study, Faridha and Praveena et al. (2021) highlighted the rapid and significant expansion of Information and Communication technologies in the contemporary organizational landscape. The rapid advancement of technology, particularly the internet, has had a significant impact on the tourism industry. E-Tourism services offer a range of travel portals that empower travellers by providing independent access to all the required information with a single click. Furthermore, the study highlighted the challenges associated with the implementation of online tourism services. An overall sample size of 100 passengers was chosen as participants for the survey, and questionnaires were employed as the primary tools. The results indicated that e-tourism activities facilitate the tourist in organising their own vacations based on their desired convenience.

The objective of Svajdova's (2021) study was to determine the elements that influence prospective travellers during the information collection and evaluation phase of the consumer behaviour marketing model. In order to accomplish the established objectives, the survey was implemented. The study analysed the elements that influence consumer decision-making in tourism and provide guidance to tourist operators on improving communication with their clients.

Dimanche and Havitz et al. (2022) argued that consumer behavior research is a fundamental aspect of marketing strategy and practice. Furthermore, there has been a growing body of scholarly work on tourist behavior in recent years. This work analysed the existing literature. The main emphasis of the study was on conceptual and measurement concerns, with consideration given to the consequences of each of these areas for marketing practice.

Li & Cao (2022) developed a comprehensive framework of research concepts on tourism consumption. Drawing on the findings of behavioral analysis, researchers put forward tourist development strategies focusing on three key areas: the reformation and promotion of tourism marketing techniques, the enhancement of tourism product and service quality, and the improvement of tourism destination management methods. The findings indicated that,

- The domestic market is categorized into four categories based on the tourist features, including climatic and geographical considerations. Various marketing tactics are implemented to cater to the specific market characteristics.
- In terms of tourism consumption preferences, a network study of attractive locations reveals that tourists tend to choose three specific tourist routes.

- This study explained the tourism image from two dimensions: cognitive image and emotional image, based on the “cognitive-emotional” paradigm, for the evaluation of tourist perception behavior.

The study conducted by Volo and Irimias (2022) thoroughly examined the behavior of tourists. From their motivations to their actual decisions and consumption patterns, the examination of tourist behavior has significant consequences for both theory and practice. Consumer behaviour in e-Tourism refers to the complex array of tourist behaviours facilitated by technology, which occur at several stages: before embarking on a holiday, during the holiday, and afterward, when visitors are involved in post-vacation evaluations. Examining these three pertinent domains, this study presented the most significant developments facilitated by the e-Tourism period from the viewpoint of both tourists and providers. The study also examined the significance of behavioral modifications caused by digitally mediated encounters, delineates technical progress, and offers future outlook for the fields of tourism and hospitality.

Aragon and Munoz (2023) contended that digital markets have transformed the dynamics of economic actors' interactions and have profoundly influenced the conduct of visitors. Furthermore, the COVID-19 epidemic has demonstrated the need of continuously monitoring the development of digital consumer behaviour and the determinants that impact it, as they are dynamic components that undergo changes over time. This study examined the disparities in digital access and confirms the primary elements that impact tourists' decision to use online tourism services. Analysing the booking mode of lodging and transport services, this study utilised a dataset of 69,752 and 23,779 observations, respectively, collected from the Resident Travel Survey of the National Statistics Institute of Spain from 2016 to 2021. The study verified the differences in the online consumer profile and the attributes of the journey. A highly significant discovery was the reduction of the age disparity in the online booking of tourist services. Nevertheless, there are ongoing digital disparities, including geographical disparities and others influenced by the educational attainment and financial status of travelers. Furthermore, it was emphasized that various categories of journeys, contingent upon the geographical location, the nature of lodging or transportation, exhibit varying tendencies to be reserved using digital purchasing platforms. With the availability of large data sources and the latest progress in machine learning models, the approaches for studying digital consumer behaviour have also advanced and need to be included into tourist research. The objective of this work was to evaluate and contrast the prediction capabilities of several approaches within the domain of e Tourism. Researchers assessed the predictive capability of machine learning approaches in elucidating consumer behaviour in e-Tourism and compared it with the outcomes achieved by conventional statistical methods.

Consumer Behaviour and E-Tourism in Uttar Pradesh

One of the most rapidly growing service industries in the Uttar Pradesh is tourism. It contributes to the state's GDP, creates employment, and is regarded as the foundation for other industries such as transportation, civil aviation, and hospitality. Application of Information and Telecommunication Technology (ICT) is crucial for the advancement of tourism services. The field of electronic tourism (e-tourism) has rapidly developed alongside the growing influence of information and communication technology (ICT), leading to a significant transformation of the global tourism industry. Currently, consumers give primacy to the internet for searching information pertaining to tourism services. Internet serves as a comprehensive platform where travelers can explore a wide range of destinations, ranging from well-known locations to more isolated areas. These services cater to both domestic and international travelers.

E-Tourism services are crucial in enhancing the tourism industry of any country. E-Tourism facilitates the cultivation of commercial partnerships through the internet for the provision of services associated to tourism. Internet-based travel portals and tourism websites provide consumer services including flight booking, hotel reservation, automobile booking, and more. It is widely acknowledged that the tourist sector has been at the forefront of digital transformation and is still undergoing fast-paced overhaul worldwide. E-Tourism enables travellers to independently organise their journeys based on their convenient preferences. Online travel portals are designed with a structured interface that requires only a fundamental level of technological expertise for customers to navigate and carry out most of their planning. E-tourism enhances the convenience of making purchases from any location and facilitates effective time management for customers. E-commerce travel platforms conserve resources and incentivize customers to choose additional services. Therefore, the tourism sector is progressing towards a more interconnected future where platforms, specialization, and unified technology have a decisive impact.

One of the important aspects of any industry including tourism industry is consumer behavior, which refers to the comprehensive range of actions related to the acquisition, utilization, and disposal of products and services. It also involves the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral reactions of consumers that occur before or after these actions. A comprehensive grasp of consumer behavior is crucial for effective marketing of products and services.

Consumer behavior in e-tourism in Uttar Pradesh is undergoing significant transformation due to the growing influence of digital platforms. Travelers increasingly rely on online resources for researching and booking their trips, with websites, apps, and social media playing a critical role in influencing decisions. The ability to customize experiences and receive personalized suggestions based on past preferences has further enhanced the convenience of e-tourism platforms. The ease of access provided by mobile apps and websites has simplified travel planning, allowing consumers to make last-minute bookings with ease.

Price sensitivity is another crucial aspect of consumer behavior in Uttar Pradesh, where travelers are drawn to platforms offering discounts, deals, and cashback offers. Online price comparison tools also allow users to explore various options for accommodation, transportation, and activities, making cost-effective decisions easier. Trust plays a significant role in shaping consumer preferences, with travelers relying heavily on reviews, ratings, and user-generated content when choosing a service. Security concerns related to payment methods and data privacy further influence platform choices, with users opting for services that offer robust protection and clear cancellation policies.

E-tourism is also promoting the growth of local tourism by drawing attention to lesser-known destinations across Uttar Pradesh, such as cultural and heritage sites in Varanasi, Lucknow, and Agra. This trend aligns with the rise of cultural tourism, where travelers seek unique, local experiences that reflect the state's rich heritage. Alongside this, there is a growing interest in eco-friendly and responsible travel, with consumers increasingly opting for environmentally sustainable options. Platforms that promote eco-friendly accommodations and local community involvement are gaining traction, as travelers become more conscious of their impact on the environment and local economies.

Finally, language and regional considerations are important for e-tourism platforms operating in Uttar Pradesh, as the state has a diverse population. Many consumers prefer platforms that offer multilingual support, ensuring a seamless experience for both domestic and international tourists. Therefore, e-tourism in Uttar Pradesh is adapting to the evolving demands of modern travelers by providing convenience, trust, personalization, and promoting sustainable and local tourism experiences.

Conclusion

A potent force, digitalization is transforming the tourism sector in Uttar Pradesh. Being one of the most culturally affluent states in India, Uttar Pradesh has significant potential to draw both local and foreign tourists. Yet, in order to fully exploit this potential, the state must adopt digital technologies and use them to improve the visitor experience and advance sustainable development. These efforts encompass the creation of a tourism analytics division, establishment of partnerships with service providers, development of a tourism dashboard, enhancement of tourist awareness and image, adoption of emerging technologies, digitization of under-visited destinations, creation of a website and mobile app focused on tourists and implementation of automated interfaces. These efforts strive to offer tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh data-driven decision-making, enhanced awareness, interactive and immersive experiences, and smooth transactions. Digitization is not only an imperative but also a chance for Uttar Pradesh to exhibit its abundant cultural legacy and variety to the global audience. The use of digitization has the potential to position Uttar Pradesh as a prominent tourist destination not only in India but also in other regions.

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