

Influencing Role of Key Determinants on Consumers' Preference towards Online Travel Agencies

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ABSTRACT

Today, the travel and tourism industry has been particularly affected by the great advancement and the wide application of e-commerce in business. The present study investigated the factors that affect customers' preferences towards the online and offline tourism market. This research also investigates the potential of those factors to influence the decision of travel agencies' choice. Most studies on travel agencies' choice consider that the customer preference is influenced before he make the decision based on the information that is available, online or offline. Thus, online travel booking is the act of booking travel over the Internet. Most travel bookings are nowadays done by using their websites and applications. It has been continuously eliminating the concept of traditional booking methods and is almost virtual now. The main purpose of the study is to know the determinants influencing consumer preferences and satisfaction levels towards online travel agencies. The secondary data, such as research papers and information, etc., that is available on various sources, are used in this research study. This paper provides in-depth insights into the key determinants of consumer preferences and discusses the various aspects of online travel agencies, which certainly increase consumer preference levels. Customer preferences in India are changing, creating tremendous potential for the tourism industry to explore innovative ideas and introduce new services with creative marketing approaches to tap into the huge working population.

Keywords: Consumer preferences, online travel agencies, barriers, influential determinants.

1. Introduction

Online travelling is the newest addition to the travelling ecosystem in India. The advent and proliferation of computers, coupled with the increasingly acceptable leveraging of the Internet, have caused some major changes in the travel industry. Online travelling in India is yet at a very nascent stage. Travelling has not been a focus area, but merely another application for engaging users when they are looking for some quick results. The engagement level of most users has also been low, with infrequent usage and loyalty. However, all this is changing with the spotlight sharply focused on complete travel booking. The traditional means of procuring airline tickets and associated travel arrangements are rapidly changing. These changes are primarily being facilitated by Internet travel marketplaces (such as makemytrip.com, yatra.com, etc.) that claim to provide an easier, less expensive alternative to traditional methods of ticket procurement without sacrificing service quality. If travel marketplaces are to be successful, then they need to understand

their customers and what the motivations behind their actions are when it comes to shopping for discount travel. This study aims to report a descriptive study that investigated the perceptions of Consumers for online travel and online travel portals. Online consumer behaviour is a broad and interesting area of study that can benefit organisations in their efforts to market and sell travel products and Services online. As consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards online travelling is a prominent factor affecting actual buying behaviour, this research has tried to investigate a modest part of that area. Moreover, due to the increasing players in the online travel industry, consumers have different preferences and perceptions regarding them.

1.1 Online travel Agencies

Online travel agencies (OTA) are the online organisations which facilitate the services of online travel booking via the internet. Purchasing travel services online is absolutely beneficial for both service providers and buyers. Online travel agencies play a major role in the online channels of travel booking as they provide the best price offers, information, pictures, and wider choices to the consumers to help them in making a decision while booking travel. The consumers can look for different options, can compare the prices of different websites, the quality of Online travel agencies, can check the perceived values offered and any other requirements of the consumers in online booking. "Online travel agencies are essential for hotels since they help them to give visibility, thus increasing the interest of tourists and occupancy rates (Ling et al., 2015)." Online travel booking has achieved an astonishing place, and this achievement is possible due to technology upgradation and the use of devices – "laptops, tablets, smart phones, etc."

OTA has been an important force in changing consumer behaviour and business practices in tourism (Wei et al., 2023). OTA is defined as an enterprise or an online platform which provides online booking services such as air tickets, hotels, travel tours, attraction tickets, and transportation etc. (Ray et al., 2021). As an online marketing and selling travel service, OTAs bring consumers the convenience of searching, comparing, booking, and paying for hospitality services anywhere and anytime (Wei et al., 2023). OTAs have attracted researchers' attention in recent years, and there have been several studies in various contexts across the world to explore factors that affect consumer intention in using OTAs. Nisar et al. (2020) have confirmed some factors that have effects on purchase intention, such as perceived value of accommodation, accommodation information, accommodation online review, and website usability. Lee et al. (2017) also affirmed that the interface's serving capability is an important factor leading to consumer preference towards OTAs.

Besides, based on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), Singh et al. (2022) verified that attitude, subjective norms, and social norms positively affect consumers' experience while using OTAs. On the other hand, Talwar et al. (2020b) used the theory of consumption values to explain the effects of value-related factors towards OTA purchase intention. Even though there were a considerable number of papers related to purchase intention towards OTAs (Nisar et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2022; Talwar et al., 2020b), these studies are discrete and independently assess distinct and specific aspects that might affect purchase intention towards OTAs. Accordingly, we realised that a model that can simultaneously assess both positive and negative perception towards purchasing OTAs' intention had not been considered in any study. A comprehensive framework like this should better explain consumer perception in the context of using OTAs. In addition, other characteristics of consumers like Openness to change and Compatibility, which are widely used in interpreting consumer behaviours, have not been considered in OTA context. In other words, previous studies ignored the importance of differences in personal traits of consumers and did not consider both positive and negative perceptions.

Despite the growing importance of the internet as an information source for Prospective travellers, as a marketing tool and as a way of doing business, there is a general lack of information related to perceptions of travellers for online travel products and services. Understanding their attitude is also of critical importance to travel marketers in formulating appropriate marketing strategies so as to fully exploit

the developing potential of this new channel. Literature review revealed that researchers have tried to study online consumer shopping behaviour in general, but no such specific study to understand consumers' perceptions related to online travel has yet been done. Thus, the study will provide insights about the Internet users' feelings towards information seeking and online travel booking and also help to know their experience, preferences and the purchase intention in future.

1.2 Online travel agencies and Consumer

The Online travel agencies are offering various options and advantages to the buyers of online travel services. There are various reasons behind opting for the online travel agencies. The information search is an important part of purchasing via the Internet. The Online travel agencies facilitate the information searching for consumers. Nowadays, Online travel agencies are often used for all types of travel search, review, comparison and booking. "Szynenski and Hise (2000) divide convenience into time and browsing benefits and stated that the perception in both categories is likely to be related to positive perception of convenience." Booking the travel online via Online travel agencies offers consumer prominent ease and satisfaction of not having any kind of transportation costs, as they can search, review and book their travel online, anywhere, anytime. Due to the ease of booking, no transportation cost and time, less thinking and deciding time, with the help of Online travel agencies. As information and booking options, the time required is shortened compared to the time required in traditional booking. Every consumer mainly looks for the Price before anything, and consumers can see the lower prices in booking travel via Online Travel Agencies. Online travel agencies provide the best price deals, discounts, and many promotional coupons, which automatically reduce the prices of travel which is not available in traditional travel booking. Numerous online travel agencies are working to facilitate the services, and a few are leading the market.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Comparison

Regarding the relationship between reputation and perceived value of OTA, and noted that a firm's reputation represents a value judgment about the company's attributes; a sound reputation is critical because of its potential for value creation (Roberts and Dowling, 1997). A sound reputation signals to the public how a firm's products, services, employment characteristics, strategies, and prospects compare to those of competing firms (Halpern and Devine, 2001). In other words, reputation represents a value judgment about the organisation's qualities (Dolphin, 2004) and shapes a customer's expectations before patronising a business (Loureiro and Kastenholtz, 2011). A good reputation after comparison suggests that the customer will expect a firm's products and services to be of high quality (Herbig and Milewicz, 1995) and that the customer will perceive value for money when the benefits of the product or service exceed its cost (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). Thus, comparison generates functional value for customers in terms of quality and price perceptions. On the other hand, reputable stores promote not only their products and their service quality but also their "pride of ownership of the products and a sense of premium, thereby augmenting the pleasure domain of consumer perception" (Thang and Tan, 2003, p. 195). In other words, as stated by Money and Hillenbrand (2006, p. 7), "the beliefs of individuals regarding an organisation's reputation impact on their attitudes in terms of the emotional appeal that they feel towards a business". Accordingly, in the context of the travel product purchasing process, the customer-perceived functional and emotional values are further strengthened or weakened after their experience with the travel product.

H1: There is a relationship between comparison and customer preference.

2.2 Convenience

Convenience is the recognition of utilities which reduce the time and effort of consumers in making a purchase or using a product or service (Berry et al., 2002). Consumers gain convenience by carrying out

actions and other transactions through the internet quickly and comfortably (Han et al., 2017). Besides, consumers could also gain various benefits such as better prices due to fierce online competition, effortless transactions, which will then increase the consumers' utilitarian value (Pal et al., 2020). It was determined by De Kerviler et al. (2016) that there is a positive correlation between consumers' purchase intentions and perceived benefit. In another research, Harris et al. (2016) studied factors that impact intention to install a mobile app and realised that perceived benefit indeed has a constructive impact on installation intention. Regarding online healthcare service, the study of Xiao et al. (2021) shows that perceived utility, including Social support, Convenience, and Utilitarian value, positively affects customers' use intention. Henceforth, we believe consumers' perceived benefit related to OTAs is are crucial elements that affect their purchase intention. These perceived benefits include, but are not limited to, convenience and utilitarian values of OTAs compared with traditional providers. Accordingly, consumers who have a higher perceived benefit value should have more rational reasons to purchase, leading to more favourable purchase intention.

H2: There is a relationship between convenience and customer preference.

2.3 User-Friendly

Mohd-Any et al. (2015) focused on identifying the six dimensions that capture the value experience of customers when using travel websites, including utilitarian value, emotional value, social value, perceived control and freedom, value for money, and users' cognitive effort. In the area of online travel websites, Kaushik and Srinivasa (2017) studied the effect of website quality on customers' purchase intention. They focused on the four main areas of website quality, including service quality, system quality, information quality, and website design, that have a positive impact on customer satisfaction and that can lead to customer purchase intention. Facilities like 24/7 access, fast booking, easy navigation, Refund ease, prompt assistance, assurance, Visible ratings, reviews, user feedback, High-quality web design & bundling deals, enhance convenience, satisfaction. Additionally, 3 attributes of e-service quality (web design, interface functionality, and support system) were used to evaluate the user's preference with air cargo management system. Efficient management of cancellations and confidence in service quality critically shape user experience and loyalty. User reviews and ratings are top influencers in OTA choice, especially among young, educated users (15–25 years). Visual appeal and clear, attractive design enhance cognitive and emotional reactions, even prompting impulse bookings. Recently, Jou and Day (2021) investigated the attributes of service quality of hotel online booking using the Kano model and suggested the following five attributes: functionality, fulfilment, customer relationship, content, and security.

H3: There is a relationship between user-friendly and customer preference.

2.4 Comfort

Comfort is explained as the degree to which a change is compatible with demand derived from prior experience of consumers, trust, and social and cultural values (Rogers, 2003). Likewise, Bunker et al. (2007) confirmed that Comfort refers to an innovation is meets the values and standards of consumers. Comfort is discovered as an important element which have an impact on the acceptance of innovation of consumers (Dhir et al., 2021; Ozturk et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2020). In the study about the intention to use online banking. Giovanis et al. (2012) found that compatible factors affect the intention behaviour of consumers through the mediator role of privacy and security risk. Giovanis et al. (2012) argued, if a product or service is seen as compatible with the lifestyle of a person, perceived risk about that product would be lower, leading to the consumer feeling secure. Moreover, in the setting of NFC-based mobile payment at restaurants, Ozturk et al. (2017) also confirm that comfort negatively influences perceived risk and privacy concerns. Simultaneously, this study verifies that comfort positively impacts consumers' perceived practical value and convenience. The observed comfort between the two channels would greatly

influence customers' purchase intention, given consumer migration from physical to online channels (Amaro and Duarte, 2015). Furthermore, Shi et al. (2017)'s study also supports that comfort will have a positive impact on purchase intention through omnichannel. Aligned with prior studies, we propose that comfort would have a positive effect on perceived benefit.

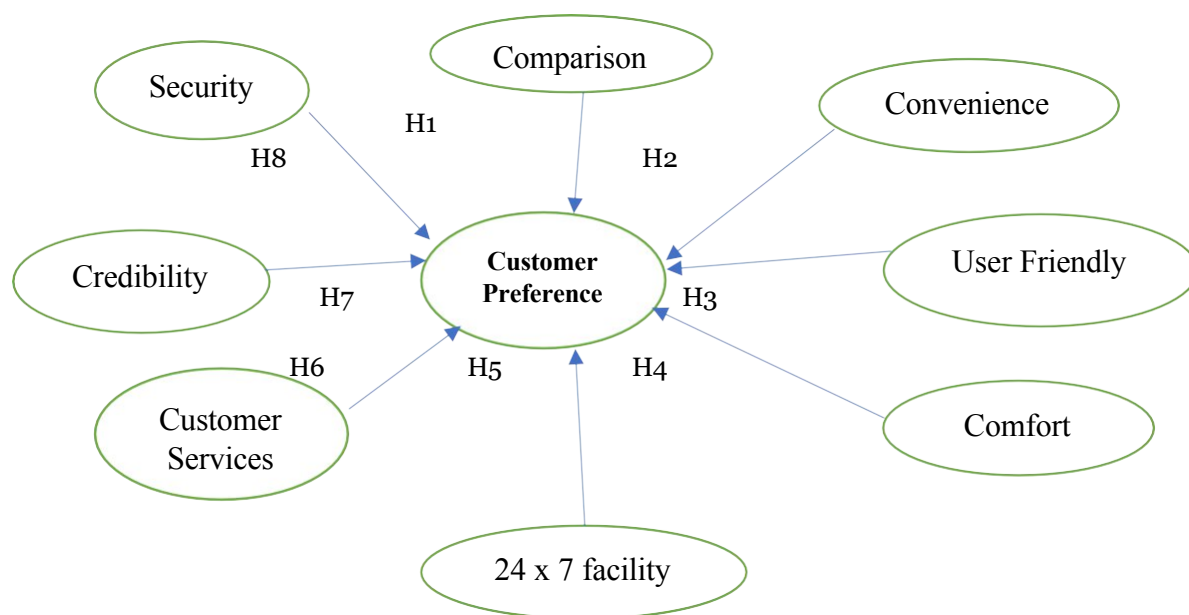
H4: There is a relationship between comfort and customer preference.

2.5 24x7 Facility

OTAs enhance usability by enabling 24/7 access, quick searches, easy comparisons, and fast bookings, all of which increase perceived usefulness and ease of use for users. Essential features include strong search filters, fast-loading interfaces, multiple payment options (including EMI), straightforward booking mechanics, and flexible cancellations, all boosting user convenience. OTA customer preference heavily depends on the refund process, prompt responses, ease of interaction, and assurance, particularly during disruptions. The 24x7 facility expansion perspective, research indicates that tourists are most interested in information regarding the scenery, cuisine, and culture of prospective destinations, as a comprehensive understanding of such information enhances their attraction and willingness to travel (Torres et al., 2024; Li et al., 2024). The dissemination of information on tourist destinations is crucial, as it encapsulates their ambience and essence, encompassing physical, social, symbolic, and natural dimensions, constituting the primary attraction for tourists (Naruetharadhol & Ketkaew, 2018). Simultaneously, some studies reveal that the depth of digitalisation also demonstrates the values of openness, inclusiveness and enterprise of companies. With the breakthrough of traditional closed and simple performance doctrine, richer tourism projects and construction can fully integrate regional characteristics, thereby attracting tourists (Leal-Rodriguez et al., 2023). The widespread use of smartphones and other digital devices enables the comprehensive online dissemination of information about tourist destinations. This facilitates consumers in acquiring travel information rapidly and accurately. Additionally, transportation and accommodation are crucial concerns for tourists.

H5: There is a relationship between a 24x7 facility and customer preference.

Figure 1: Proposed Research Framework



2.6 Customer Services

Sultan and Wong (2010) studied the critical research issues in terms of quality of customer services in higher education and found that there still exists potential and a critical research agenda in the field of service quality in the higher education sector. Lam and Zhang (1999) conducted research on travel agents to assess customers' expectations and perceptions of service provided by travel agents and to explore how the service factors related to overall customer satisfaction. They concluded that customers' perceptions of service quality fell short of their expectations and that overall customer preference was statistically related to five service quality factors as suggested by Parasuraman et al. (1988). Milla'n and Esteban (2004) developed a multiple-scale for measuring customer satisfaction through the services offered by travel agencies in Spain. They proposed a factor model composed of six basic highly correlated dimensions: service encounters, empathy, reliability, service environment, efficiency of advice and additional attributes. Johns et al. (2004) examined the service quality delivered by travel agencies by using the SERVQUAL scale. They surveyed 337 current users of travel agencies on the island, and they found that respondents were concerned most with the efficiency and least with the personalisation of the services offered. They also concluded that promptness, empathy, efficiency and service-scale aesthetics were the main determinants of customer preference (Schneider and White, 2004). Inseparability indicates that services occur during the service delivery from the service firm personnel to their customers.

H6: There is a relationship between customer service and customer preference.

2.7 Credibility

Featherman and Pavlou (2003) and Kim et al. (2008) discovered that perceived risk does have negative effects on the intention to make an online transaction. In another study about acceptance towards mobile payment, Lu et al. (2011)'s results also support that there is a negative effect between perceived risk and intention. Moreover, in the study about installing mobile apps and online purchase, scholars also detected the inverse relationship between credibility and intention (Harris et al., 2016). However, Talwar et al.' (2020) paper presented an opposite result, perceived risk positively impacts using intention of consumers. Furthermore, in the sphere of accommodation sharing service, as Airbnb, the results of So et al. (2018) showed that perceived risk does not have any impact on intention to use Airbnb. In the context of online transactions, prior studies have shown contradictory results, which means the relationship between perceived risk and intention to use online services has not been clearly explained. Hence, this paper aims to further clarify this relationship. When using OTA services, users are required to provide personal data, financial information, and their itinerary details, which could increase feelings and concerns about privacy and security. Similarly, risk could be amplified when consumers notice they overpaid for services, which makes them feel vulnerable and exploited.

H7: There is a relationship between credibility and customer preference.

2.8 Security

Consumers' uncertainty about the effects of utilising a good or service is known as perceived risk (Featherman and Pavlou, 2003). Kim et al. (2008) expected that perceived risk is the belief in the likelihood of unfavourable outcomes occurring when purchasing a product or service. In their study on the usage of new technology, the study found that several types of risk, including time consumption, financial risk, physical risk, and social risk, have deterred people from using mobile payment systems. In the setting of recycling electric waste, consumers feel the risk of wasting effort, time, and money (Dhir et al., 2021). Using a sample of mobile payment users in restaurants, Ozturk et al. (2017) assume that security concerns about the privacy of images are a negative perception of consumers. In online buying, perceived risk, delivery procedure, understanding about technology, risk of disclosing personal information and financial information, lack of contact and personal feelings are risky factors which demotivate the

possibility to of purchase users (Tandon et al., 2017). Hence, in different contexts, the security could be described by dissimilar factors. In the setting of OTAs, perceived risk is viewed as the perception of consumers about latent negative values and uncertainty about engaging with OTAs (Chen and Kuo, 2017). Besides, Talwar et al. (2020) confirmed in their study that vulnerability barrier is also a type of risk in the OTA context. Another study mentioned risk in privacy and security is the concern that OTA providers would collect and use personal information for hidden, malicious purposes (Gao et al., 2015). Some companies indeed exploit consumer personal information to gain additional economic advantages, which leads to considerable threats to consumer privacy rights (Son and Kim, 2008).

H8: There is a relationship between security and customer preference.

2.9 Customer Preference

Many companies have recognised the importance of customer preference theory in recent years. They have started using customer data to improve their products and services. For example, Amazon uses customer data to make sure its customers are happy with their purchases. Customer preference is defined as what type of products or services an individual customer likes and dislikes. Customer preferences can be used in many ways, such as understanding what customers want from a product or service. Consumer preference is a term that refers to consumers' choices to maximise their preference. Consumers have some degree of control over the type of goods they buy, but they cannot always choose what they want. Kanagal (2023) researched and analysed consumer preferences, online travel sites, key factors that influence their choice and custom, and consumer prospects with respect to booking their travel online. The author aims to show the systematic marketing research that can be deployed for the development of new product concepts, which would provide a space for new entrants in the market. Folstad et al. (2021) also mentioned that on a corporate level, chatbots are increasingly being used for marketing purposes such as customer relationship management (CRM), pre-and post-purchase support, and customer preferences, as they represent a potentially cost-effective solution that can save up to 90% depending on the characteristics of the functions being automated. Ahsfaq et al. (2020) investigate the impact of virtual agents on consumer satisfaction, product attitude, and purchase preference. Because such new technologies have the potential to satisfy the user's needs/desires by providing personalised information, making the shopping experience more enjoyable

3. Research Methodology

The research instrument was first validated by academic experts and then tested to add value to the survey. The sample of this study mainly includes 273 customers who have experience in online travel agencies. Some of the participants met certain standards and were therefore asked to contribute to the study via e-mail. The survey instrument was developed using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from disagree (1) to agree (5). The components Comparison, Convenience, Security, User Friendly, Credibility, Customer Services, Comfort and 24 x 7 facility impact on customer preference. In addition, information and examples such as age, gender, education, and occupation were collected using convenience sampling methods. Initially, 361 participants were targeted via online survey using email, but after removing missing responses, the data was reduced to 273 participants. Primary data was collected with the help of a well-structured questionnaire, which was prepared based on relevant literature (Suganthi et al., 2001)

Table 1: Demographic details

Demographics	Frequency	%
Age		
21–30	75	27
31–40	113	41
41–50	46	17
Above 50	39	15
Gender		
Male	152	55
Female	121	45
Education level		
Under Graduate	52	19
Graduate	122	45
Post Graduate	98	36
Occupation		
Private Organisation	123	44
Public Organisation	62	23
Business	42	16
Students	46	17

4. Data analysis and results

This research utilises SEM as a part of Smart PLS 3.2. (Sarstedt et al., 2014), by utilising a bootstrap resampling methodology of 5,000 (Hair et al., 2011). This technique is used to evaluate both the estimation and structural model. PLS-SEM is very rational and effective to use for breaking down complex models. Moreover, the incorporation of two developmentally measured constructs of the research model makes the utilization of PLS, i.e. Partial least squares, in the light of the fact that it can give assessments to the model, rather than SEM, structural equation models which are unable to assess complex models (Hair et al., 2011; Hair et al., 2012). PLS is capable of explaining the connection between dormant variables. A latent variable is an unnoticed variable which is connected with the other identifiable factors. Hence, this technique can function with the unnoticed factors and determine the measurement error in the improvement of such unnoticed variables (Chin, 1998). The assessment of single-item reliability is done by evaluating simple correlation. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), items are considered to be reliable when their value is above 0.55, and according to Table 2, all the items are regarded as reliable. Furthermore, convergent validity is determined by using (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE).

1.3 Reliability and validity analysis

To ascertain discriminant validity, cross-loadings, the square root of the average variance extracted and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) is analysed. The matrix of correlation in Table 3 demonstrates that for every pair of constructs, the correlation among latent variables is lower than the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) of every construct. Hence, the results follow the

criterion given by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Furthermore, Table 4 shows cross loadings of each item, and it demonstrates that all the loadings are higher on their particular constructs compared to their corresponding constructs, and the differences between cross loadings is higher than the recommended standard limits of 0.1 (Gefen and Straub, 2005; Raza et al., 2018).

The most widely used measure for diagnosing the reliability of the entire scale is Cronbach's alpha. Before applying factor analysis, the reliability of the scale was checked with the help of Cronbach's α to assess the internal consistency of the entire scale (Malhotra, 2008). The generally used agreed-upon lower limit for Cronbach's alpha is 0.70, although it may decrease to 0.60 in exploratory research (Hair et al., 2005).

Table 2: Reliability and validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's α	Composite reliability	AVE
COM	COM1	0.769	0.733	0.882	0.79
	COM2	0.855			
	COM3	0.909			
CON	CON1	0.849	0.762	0.863	0.678
	CON2	0.813			
	CON3	0.781			
UFR	UFR1	0.832	0.798	0.892	0.675
	UFR2	0.839			
	UFR3	0.849			
	UFR4	0.813			
COF	COF1	0.781	0.842	0.818	0.617
	COF2	0.832			
	COF3	0.839			
	COF4	0.639			
24x7	247-1	0.905	0.812	0.826	0.806
	247-2	0.899			
	247-3	0.892			
CUS	CUS1	0.904	0.881	0.910	0.706
	CUS2	0.892			
	CUS3	0.863			
CRE	CRE1	0.885	0.853	0.821	0.773
	CRE2	0.863			
	CRE3	0.885			
SEC	SEC1	0.781	0.793	0.769	0.696
	SEC2	0.663			
	SEC3	0.785			

	SEC4	0.687			
CUP	CUP1	0.681	0.782	0.791	0.624
	CUP2	0.724			
	CUP3	0.795			

Table 3: Correlation matrix

	COM	CON	UFR	COF	24x7	CUS	CRE	SEC	CUP
COM	1.0								
CON	0.83	1.0							
UFR	0.73	0.78	1.0						
COF	0.757	0.764	0.814	1.0					
24x7	0.701	0.689	0.699	0.712	1.0				
CUS	0.701	0.694	0.723	0.702	0.789	1.0			
CRE	0.638	0.624	0.671	0.63	0.689	0.78	1.0		
SEC	0.59	0.638	0.624	0.671	0.63	0.689	0.699	1.0	
CUS	0.641	0.59	0.638	0.624	0.671	0.63	0.689	0.699	1.0

By referring to Table 2, it can be realised that all the variables are reliable as they meet the criteria of both Cronbach's alpha, given by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), and Composite reliability, set by Nunnally et al. (1967). According to these criteria, the Cronbach's alpha should exceed 0.70 the value of Composite reliability should exceed 0.70. The determination of convergent validity is set up for a construct if the AVE, i.e. the average variance extracted, is above 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), and all the constructs meet this standard, which is acceptable, as seen in Table 2.

4.2 Path Analysis

The Path analysis is shown in Table 4, in which the correlation of each path with the hypothesis is displayed. The coefficient values display the degree to which independent variables affect dependent variables, while their sign, size and significance determine the hypotheses between these variables. Furthermore, the significance of hypotheses is determined by the p-values should not be greater than 0.1, in case of this case study. Hence, Table 4 suggests that all the hypotheses are accepted, with all the coefficients being positive.

Table 4: Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Regression path	Effect type	t-Value	Remarks
H1	COM → CUP	Direct effect	2.012**	Supported
H2	CON → CUP	Direct effect	2.096*	Supported
H3	UFR → CUP	Direct effect	2.109*	Supported
H4	COF → CUP	Direct effect	3.158**	Supported
H5	24x7 → CUP	Direct effect	4.214***	Supported
H6	CUS → CUP	Direct effect	4.609*	Supported
H7	CRE → CUP	Direct effect	1.354	Not-Supported
H8	SEC → CUP	Direct effect	4.330***	Supported

5. Findings & Discussion

The results presented above imply that every hypothesis is validated because they are all important. Comparison, convenience, security, user-friendly, customer services, comfort and 24 x 7 facility have a positive and substantial association with customer preferences. This outcome is in line with another research (Amin, 2016; Jiang et al., 2016). While the credibility shows an insignificant negative relationship with customer preferences. Thus, the OTA managers must also consider improving their understanding of individual attributes with unchanged weights. For example, we found that the consumption experience did not alter the weight of information. This is likely because information is critical for choosing an OTA, demonstrating its centrality to customer evaluation criteria regardless of the passage of time. Thus, managing valuable information for new and repeat customers is vital. Indeed, it is fundamental to maintaining customer focus from the OTA search stage to the repeat visit consideration stage. Therefore, we recommend that managers provide salient information that captures customers' preferences and enhances real-time customer service, as these efforts may prove to be the most effective for all customer types. Finally, comparison, convenience, security, user-friendly, customer services, comfort and 24 x 7 facility are positive strategic tools for OTAs, but managers must enhance their understanding of how they are applied. Our findings demonstrate that customer service is more effective for repeat customers than for first-time ones.

This study is based on a comprehensive review of the literature, the above literatures revealed that Consumers convenience and the price are positively associated with the purchase decision. Online Travel Agencies plays major role in providing convenience and best price deals to the consumer for online travel booking. It provides a platform where consumer of online travel booking services can book for the travel anytime & anywhere. Discounts, ease of booking, ease of cancellation, booking and many other offers which benefit the consumer are available on the websites and applications of Online Travel Agencies. The above literature showed the positive as well as negative attitudes of the consumers towards online travel agencies but more in a positive way. Most of the travel booking is done online nowadays and the online travel industry is growing rapidly and covering the maximum share of the market. The online travel portals cover the hospitality business (hotel booking) too.

Nowadays, consumers is more informed and educated, not to buy only but also post the reviews and comments online about the online travel agencies, and destination. consumer will see many things before booking and many of the things influence the consumer preference such as - price and promotion offers,

convenience, perceived value, information, safety & security, website quality, online reviews & comments, hotel type and destination photos. however, these factors values differs with the consumer personal characteristics such as age, education, visibility, perception, security concerns and hygiene consciousness, which plays a moderating role in the purchase decision. There are some barriers too such as safety and security, hygiene consciousness, usage constraints, personal characteristics and internet connectivity issues which restricts the consumers for purchasing online travel. Most of the Online Travel Agencies or online travel platforms requires to fill the personal information and bank details for booking and payments, which is not suitable & trustworthy for all the consumers due to their privacy & safety concerns.

Sometimes low or poor internet connectivity with some customers don't allow them to go for the online booking option. Consumers also pissed of the bad experience of the last stay or travel which are the cause of the dissatisfaction such as - low value, uncomfortable & dirty rooms, unfriendly environment. Thus, the Online travel agency work towards creating more trust within customers. Online Travel Agency should Have a local presence as they can deliver better customer preference. Having an offline presence can cater even to offline customer as in INDIA only 8.5% population has access to internet. (Source www.iws.com). Online Travel Portals should concentrate more towards selling hotels and holiday packages and travel portals should promote deals and offers that people are attracted to buy and create experience. Online travel firms should encourage 'browsers' to become 'purchasers', by planning the service according to customer needs.

6. Conclusion

The online travel shopping behavior is dependent on an individual's traits and characteristics. In online purchases, customers may feel skeptical about the website's reliability and authenticity. In developing countries, the unavailability of legal infrastructure support 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. These issues make customers skeptical 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, and investment return may be difficult to measure. Customers prefer interpersonal transactions to a faceless medium; this is similar to the cultural attitudes of customers. 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. Customer satisfaction plays a significant role in fostering trust in online services, and leads to repeat purchase. Hence a good e-commerce website and its Physical presence would help strengthening customer trust, provide greater flexibility in payments, personal attention to individual customer and customized offerings would lead to improving customer preferences.

7. Suggestions

There are some recommendations which may enhance the worth of Online travel agencies in the future. To take care of the factors which leads to the customers satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The safety is a major concern for the consumer. So, Online Travel Agencies should ensure safety & security of the consumer, so that consumer can feel safe. By improving the website quality and updating the correct information, they can attain the more customers. The Government must intervene to regulate the prices, for security and safety of travelers and to support the tourism agencies too. Therefore, managers should frame prices

differently when repeat visitors search for products or services compared to first-time visitors. In particular, designing promotions targeting repeat customers to foster loyalty can help improve preference and encourage revisits. For example, presenting a price similar to that of a competitor on the first page of the OTA's site and then clearly stating that the researchers can implement these price promotions to foster and retain loyal customers.

8. References

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