ABSTRACT

Digitization in every industry has laid a new foundation in the consumer market. One of the booming sectors of the nation: Travel and tourism industry has also marked its entry in this virtual world and is also gaining popularity. India's travel marketplace is expanding rapidly, and is poised for strong double-digit growth for the next several years. Tourism being a service industry requires its absolute focus towards customer satisfaction.

With the increasing exposure of the companies’ to audience, challenge of attracting and thereby retaining its customers is also rising faster. In order to stay ahead in the highly competitive industry, marketers need to understand in depth about the digital landscape and rich insights into consumers’ online research and booking activity in this sector. So, the e-tourism companies must centre on the attraction and retention of more and more tourists.

E-commerce relationships are based on trust. Lack of trust is the most terrifying obstacle in building relationships with the customers online, as it involves transactions of personal and financial nature submitted to web merchants. Trust is one such important variable which not only enhances the company’s reputation, but also impacts on sales of the company and hence profitability.

The fundamental problem underlying the present study is to identify the factors that build trust in online companies (with special reference to Tourism companies) and thereafter establish & understand the nature of relationship between consumer trust and customer satisfaction. This study will be undertaken in three parts whereby the Part I deal with analyzing the characteristics of the consumers. This will make it easier for the online companies to segment the market and target right audience for increased sales. Part II of the study focuses directly on online tourism (e-tourism) industry by identifying crucial factors that build trust of the consumers to buy from them. Part III of the study analyzes the relationship between Consumer trust and customer satisfaction. In other words, it was the aim of this research to establish whether consumer trust has a positive effect on customer satisfaction. Some measures
will also be suggested on achieving betterment of consumer trust and customer satisfaction.

To build trust amongst its customers, a company must first understand its customers in the exact sense what they want. For better understanding of its customers, researcher has tried to study various characteristics of consumers who purchase from tourism websites/ online tourism companies. Analyzing these factors will give an estimate as to how the customer perceives the idea of shopping if given an option to purchase online or offline. This will let us understand as to which type of consumers opt for online shopping.

Since the online consumer cannot personally inspect products or services and does not even know what the retailer will do with the personal information that is collected during the shopping process. Therefore, online environment includes several distinct factors that influence trust namely: website design, content of the website, its functioning, reliability, how it communicates, reputation of the company, and many more.

If the goods or services provided by the company meets or exceeds the level of customer expectations, more will be the satisfaction level of the consumers. Online customers are increasing rapidly and thereby the companies now need to understand as to how their trust as well as satisfaction level can be increased.

An extensive literature review has been done in this context and results were different for different population sets. Demographics also had an impact on the purchase system of the consumers. The objective of this research study is to analyze and identify significant factors that have an impact on building consumer trust on e-tourism companies in order to increase the number of online bookings by creating more value for the customers. So, in order to determine trust building factors, tourist’s perceptions, preferences and expectations from e-tourism companies will be identified to meet and exceed their demand.

Consumer Trust is measured using 12 parameters namely, likeability, functionality, Usage convenience, site’s efficiency, information on website, reliability, communication, service customization, availability, promotional deals, value for money and cancellation/ refund policy.
The study revolves around these variables for domestic (Indian) tourists undertaking leisure tourism. A sincere attempt has been made to incorporate the respondents with varying demographics to better understand the relationship, it could safely be said that the results can be generalized to the rest of the online industry. Since the population is very large and scattered consisting of various clearly recognizable characteristics that differ from one another, simple random sampling technique was more acceptable. For the purpose of this research primary data has been collected with the help of multiple-choice, close ended, structured questionnaire from the customers. Also, responses and opinions of few members of Ministry of Tourism and top level management of few online tourism companies have been incorporated.

In investigating the variables that predict impact of consumer trust on customer satisfaction, a broad study was undertaken in which some hypotheses were formulated about the contribution of certain general factors. However, the study has a multiple purpose in the sense that it also explores a number of different variables or a combination of variables that helps in building consumer trust.

The study is very useful for the e-tourism companies to understand the factors responsible for creating trust in tourism websites. It is very helpful in designing the strategies for retaining the existing customers with the company. It is useful for the researchers to give them insight into the concept of Consumer Trust for consumers shopping online. Since, it is an emerging concept in India, it gives an impetus to the building of a more advanced and convenient mode of shopping. It will also help the consumers to convey their expectations from online companies and thereby enjoy this convenient mode of shopping freely.

Apart from the above mentioned points, the study is useful for the emerging online tourism companies to understand tourists’ perceptions, preferences and expectations from them in order to meet and exceed their demand. Since, the study revolves around domestic (Indian) tourists undertaking leisure tourism; better understanding of them will increase the revenue of the Indian Tourism Industry.