Analysis

Consumers' Behaviour towards the Online Travel Related Transactions in Unorganized Environment

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Abstract

This study explores consumer behavior in online travel-related transactions, with a view to improving overall understanding of the key influences of a firm's online performance. Trust as a part of consumer behaviour has been identified as a key challenge for the rapid growth and development of online transactions. However, only a limited number of research studies have examined the key indicators of trust and their relative significance in an online, travel industry environment. These studies have typically taken place in the advanced economy. This study contributes to redressing this research gap, using a sample of 135 Indian consumers. Analysis suggests six dimensions, including order facilitation effort, website presentation and navigation, customer information exchange, customer control and collaboration, transactional security and prior knowledge of vendor, as being of critical importance in enhancing consumer trust within the online travel related transactions.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Trust, online transactions, travel

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Introduction

This study explores consumer behavior in online travel-related transactions, with a view to improving overall understanding of the key influences of a firm's online performance. The present study addresses the key issue of consumer behavior –trust. The success of a firm's online operations may be influenced by many factors, including the level to which the firm is perceived to offer value, high quality, trust and minimal risk in its relationship with consumers (So and Sculli, 2002). Of these, trust is considered most fundamental (Jarvenpaa et al., 1999; Srinivasan,2004), as it correlates positively with the customer's perception of the level of risk therein, which then influences the probability that the initial step towards forming a relationship will indeed occur. Given that consumer trust in online transactions has remained a major hurdle to the desired growth in online trade (Hoffman et al., 1999), and an intriguing area for researchers and managers of online businesses (McCole, 2002), there is a need to improve our understanding of how to build and maintain online consumer trust. The foregoing provides the *raison d'etre* for this study.

The concept of trust is situation-specific and may vary across cultures. Given this view, it is important that trust be studied

from different social contexts. Most previous studies on online trust, e.g., Cheskin Research (2000) and Jarvenpaa et al. (1999) have been conducted outside Asia (Fukuyama, 1995). The effect of consumer trust on online transactions within the Asian context has, thus, remained largely unexplored. This study seeks to contribute toward addressing this gap with a focus on the travel-related industry, which is one of the leading growth areas in online transactions worldwide.

Objective

The primary objective of this paper is to examine the appropriateness of a number of previously identified factors in facilitating consumer trust in online transactions. It is envisaged that a greater understanding of these trust indicators might assist in providing more informed guidance to managers of online businesses wishing to enhance consumer trust in online shop fronts/environments.

The remainder of this paper is organized in three parts. A review of the literature on trust, online trust and the determinants of online trust in exchange relationships, is undertaken. Thereafter, the method utilized in data collection and analysis is described. Finally, the results of the study and the managerial implications are discussed.

Literature Review

Nature of Trust

Trust can be explained as a willingness of consumers to rely on an exchange partner for the delivery of certain desired benefits (Lee and Turban, 2001; Ba and Pavlou, 2002). It has also been conceptualized as a personality trait or generalized expectancy about the trustee's competence and reliability; a belief that another person or organization on whom one depends will behave in a socially acceptable manner, fulfilling the expectations of the trusting party (Gefen et al., 2003). This predisposition is the outcome of regular, honest and cooperative behavior based on commonly shared norms in the society and an indicator of the expectation that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of the exchange partner, can be relied upon. Trust is also, significantly influenced by the willingness of one party in the relationship to accept being vulnerable in the exchange relationship (Moorman et al., 1993; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Thus, it can be argued that, consistent with previous definitions (e.g., Alpern, 1997), trust is a voluntary act and state of being, involving at least two partners. It is enabled by the belief and/or knowledge of the

reliability of the partners in exhibiting desirable behavior within the context of the society in which they operate.

In line with the belief that trust is a multi-dimensional concept (Dooney and Cannon, 1997; Tan and Sutherland, 2004), researchers have identified differing classifications of trust such as cognitive-based trust, which derives from individual beliefs about peer reliability and dependability and affective-based trust, signifying the existence of mutual interpersonal care and concern (Komiak and Benbasat, 2004). Shapiro et al. (1992) have also examined consumer trust from a transactional perspective, and identified three types of trust, i.e., deterrence-based trust, knowledge-based trust and identification-based trust, from a transactional perspective. They explain deterrence-based trust as occurring where the potential or likelihood of costs or retributive action exceeds the short-term advantage of distrustful behavior. Thus, if the overall outcome of being trustworthy is more beneficial than the gains accruing from contrary behavior, then in a business relationship, the partners would engage in behavior that prevents or minimizes any unpleasant outcomes by abiding to agreed rules and regulations. Knowledge-based trust refers to a state of mutually accepted predictability of the trustworthiness of the exchange partners. In such a

relationship, the partners would act cooperatively and reciprocate each other's expected exhibition of desired behavior in the relationship. The relationship is generally characterized by less uncertainty. Identification-based trust, for which the conditions for both deterrence-based and knowledge-based trust must be in existence before it takes hold, is built over a long period of time during which mutually beneficial in-depth knowledge and understanding of the exchange partner is attained. The parties in such a relationship would be in tune with each other's expectations and engage in little or no monitoring of the probability of distrustful behavior by either party.

Koehn (2003) identified goal-based trust, calculative trust, knowledge-based trust and respect-based trust. Goal-based trust resides in a relationship where the parties think they share a common goal. The focus is on the attainment of the goal rather than personal relationship building. Calculative trust reflects a prediction by either member in a relationship, as to the likely behavior of the other party based on the limited evidence available. Knowledge-based trust is exhibited in a relationship where the parties in a relationship are familiar with each other, bordering on friendship. Respect-based trust resides in personal friendship situations with the

participants sharing similar values. The focus is on the relationship being maintained. Yet another dimension is institution-based trust (Pavlou and Gefen, 2004), where the buyer exhibits a perception that effective third-party institutional mechanisms, e.g., feedback feature, escrow services and credit card guarantees, are in place to facilitate a successful transactional process.

Online Trust and Determinants

Although the contributions of the Internet to business efficiency (e.g., enabling exhaustive consumer search for product/service availability in the marketplace) is widely recognized, consumer trust in internet transactions has been difficult to develop and maintain due to issues such as privacy and security (Coupey, 2001; Srinivasan, 2004). Those issues are, indeed, contributing to the slow growth in online transactions (Durkan et al., 2003; Foster, 2004). Reflecting the lack of physical contact between the consumer and the seller in online transactions, its implications for the buyer (Jarvenpaa et al., 1999; Durkan et al., 2003), and the challenges of data transfer control during online transactions (Komiak and Benbasat, 2004), the author follows a comprehensive definition of online trust:

a consumer willingness to engage in an online transactional relationship, despite being vulnerable to the seller as a result of the lack of verifiable and adequate knowledge of the vendor, the product/service being sold and no guaranteed assurance of how or where disputes will be resolved.

Suggested dimensions of online trust include experience-based and cue-based trust. Experience-based trust refers to trust arising from a number of prior interactions while cue-based trust is that which is generated on an individual's initial encounter with a stimulus, e.g., a web site (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Lambe et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2004). Tan and Thoen (2002) clarifying the nature of institution-based trust in the online environment, suggest the need for a distinction between trust in the online organization and trust in the online organization's control systems for online transactions. An exhaustive list of factors that they believe contribute to the development of trust in online transactions was identified. These include availability, competence, consistency, discreteness, fairness, integrity, loyalty, openness, promise fulfillment, and receptivity (McCole, 2002); perceived size and perceived reputation of Internet store (Jarvenpaa et al., 1999); seals of approval, brand, fulfillment, navigation, presentation, and technology (Cheskin Research and Studio

Archetype/Sapient, 1999); state of the art security, merchant legitimacy, fulfillment, tone, customer control, and consumer collaboration (Dayal et al., 1999); uncertainties in the regulatory environment and overlapping legal issues in cross border transactions (Jevons and Gabbott, 2000; Stahl, 2002); the technology facilitating the transaction (Ratnasingam, 2002), and the existence of a "bricks and mortar" operations of the online vendor (Srinivasan, 2004).

These factors represent the potential barriers to trust development in online transactions which may be categorized into (1) the need for customers to have a reasonable prior knowledge about a specific online vendor and its online operations, (2) the safety of volunteered information in the online environment and the customer's level of control over that information, (3) the final outcome of the transaction and the processes associated with the delivery of that outcome, being consistent with the terms of the contract between the vendor and the online customer, (4) the design of the vendor's website as a representation of a store and how it facilitates the transactional experience, and (5) the availability of third-party independent evaluation sources of the vendor and its operations (Sung-Joon, 2002; Koehn, 2003; Wang et al., 2004; Patton and Josang, 2004).

METHODOLOGY

Both Primary and secondary data have been used in this study. The primary data for this study were generated through a multi-section questionnaire administered to a sample of Indian consumers. Thereafter, the questionnaire solicited information on respondents' Internet usage patterns/transactions, online purchase behavior, perceptions of online trust factors, and demographic profiles. The first item in the questionnaire was designed to eliminate non-Internet users from the study. The online trust items, 27 in all, were designed to measure the degree of importance placed by the respondents on the online trust variables identified in previous research (see Dayal et al., 1999; Cheskin Research and Studio Archetype/Sapient, 1999; Javenpaa et al., 1999; McCole, 2002). These variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, i.e., 1 = Least important, 2 = Less important, 3 = neither important nor unimportant, 4 = Important, and 5 = Very important.

Steps taken to enhance the content validity of these measures included consultations with academic colleagues with requisite expertise in the topic area, pre-tests of the draft questionnaire on twenty respondents and the subsequent revision of the instrument prior to data collection. These items

subsequently achieved Cronbach value greater than 0.70, which suggests acceptable construct validity (Nunnaly, 1978). Actual data collection took place in India's prime cities during late summer of 2009. Eventually, the responding sample included a total of 135 shoppers, comprising 36 males (26.7%) and 99 females (73.3%), aged between 21 and 60 years. It must be noted that even though previous authors suggest some partial evidence of gender differences in customer online behavior and attitudes (Sheehan, 1999), a later study (Kolsaker and Payne, 2002) found no significant gender differences for customer online trust, suggesting this to be the result of a convergence of relevant attitudes between the genders over time. In addition to the predominance of females in the sample, about 92.6% of the respondents were between 21 and 40 years old, reflecting the relatively higher level of familiarity and experience in internet usage amongst the younger generation. While no claims are made about the representativeness of the responding sample, the author has no reason to doubt the adequacy of this one-off, cross-sectional sample for the present exploratory study. This sampling approach has been successfully employed in previous research (see e.g., Austin, 2002).

Conscious of the merits of methodological triangulation (Kamath et al., 1987), a small number of in-depth interviews were undertaken to complement the earlier described questionnaire survey. The interviews involved a purposive sample of travel agency webmasters. In selecting the sample of travel agency webmasters, an online search of six relevant websites was conducted to generate a list of India-based travel agencies. These were then categorized into four groups, i.e., (1) those with e-mail contact addresses but no websites, (2) those with e-mail contact addresses and websites for information only but without booking or payment facilities, (3) those with e-mail contact addresses, websites for information search and online booking facility only, and finally (4) those travel agencies who had all of the above services, including online payment facilities at their website. Although initial telephone contacts seeking participation of webmasters indicated a good number of willing participants, only three respondents (i.e., one from each of the first three categories of stages of online travel agency operations indicated above) were eventually interviewed, due to time constrains for both the parties.

Initial data analysis involved the calculation of the mean scores for, and correlations among, the 27 online trust items.

This showed that a high number of the online trust variables are correlated at the 0.30 level or above. The number, and complexity of the relationships necessitated the use of factor analysis; this procedure is generally considered appropriate for data reduction and identification of underlying structure amongst variables (Hair et al., 1998). The size of the sample was 135, which is considered good enough, as it provides a 5:1 ratio of observations to variables. The R-type approach was adopted in calculating the correlation matrix and principal component model was used. The decision on the number of factors to retain for examination and possible rotation was made based on multiple criteria. These include the scree test, the number of significant factor loading per factor, and stability of factor solution across different factor analytic methods (Hair et al., 1998). Adopted also was the orthogonal rotational (varimax) method which, more than the oblique approach, meets the need of this analysis to obtain an uncorrelated, simple factor structure.

Analysis and Results

Analysis of the Likert scale responses to the 27 question items produced preliminary indications of the perceived importance of the explored online trust variables. Table 1 shows four

items with the high mean scores, i.e., “nondisclosure of credit card details” (4.99), “reliable security measures” (4.86), “uses latest encryption technology” (4.82), and “asks my permission to keep personal details”(4.78), suggesting a high level of importance of the security of transactions and secure storage of consumer provided information. The next group of items of importance to the respondents were “provides explanation for all costs involved” (4.76), “says how products/services will be delivered” (4.67), “explains how info collected will be used” (4.62), “allows me to easily complete/revise orders” (4.61), “delivers products/services in reasonable time” (4.61) and “allows the deletion of personal info at any time”(4.60), all of which characterize a concern for the ordering process and how delivery is effected. The lowest mean scores went to variables such as “allows e-mailing of advertised special offers” (3.14), “allows independent contact of previous clients” (3.15), and “has a customers forum for info exchange” (3.19), indicating the lesser importance of information exchange between consumers and online vendors.

TABLE 1. **Mean Scores of the Variables**

	Mean (n = 135)	**Std. Deviation**

Reliable security measures	4.86	0.443
Uses latest encryption technology	4.81	0.460
No disclosure of credit card details	4.99	0.121
Security guaranteed by seal of approval	4.55	0.466
Easy-to-read privacy statement	4.55	0.620
Belongs to previously used travel company	4.01	0.877
Belongs to an established well known company	4.48	0.597
Provides detailed info about the company	3.95	0.925
Uses third party audit services for certification	4.17	0.815
Allows me to easily complete/revise orders	4.61	0.546
Provides explanation of all costs involved	4.76	0.460
Delivers products/services in reasonable time	4.61	0.546
Fast/accurate answers to online queries	4.57	0.605
Says how products/services will be delivered	4.67	0.518
Has prompts/tutorials to guide users	3.94	0.976
Uses complementary color/images	3.76	0.787
Presents products/services in simple format	4.41	0.695
Uses appropriate level of animation	3.36	1.117
Uses appropriate/readable font size	4.01	0.974
Asks my permission to keep personal details	4.78	0.468
Explains how info collected will be used	4.62	0.584
Allows the deletion of personal info at anytime	4.60	0.649
Provides comparative info about products/services	4.13	0.818
Allows independent contact of previous clients	3.15	1.136
Has a customers' forum for info exchange	3.19	1.045
Allows e-mailing of advertised special offers	3.14	1.023
Provides links to other useful external sites	3.67	0.881

Source: Complied from the data collected

As indicated earlier, a factor analysis procedure was utilized. This produced a structure of eight underlying factors, which largely met the pre-specified criteria, i.e., Eigen-value of 1.0 or greater, scree test, the number of significant loadings per factor, and stability of factor solution across different factor

analytic methods (Hair et al., 1998). These eight composite factors explained 72.95% of the variance in the obtained responses, and accounted for similarly high amounts of the variations in the responses to each of the question items (67% of the variables have communalities of 0.70+).

The factor loadings and communalities produced by the varimax rotation, as well as the percentage of explained variance and the reliability coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha), are shown in Table 2; the original order of the variables has also been rearranged to reflect the order of the rotated factor structure, with the constituent elements of the revealed factors rendered in bold fonts. As can be seen from Table 2, a good number of variables load significantly on each of the composite factors (five significant loadings on Factors 1, 2, 3, 5 and three on Factors 4 and 6). Factors 7 and 8 are exceptions, with the latter recording only one significant loading and the former loading two seemingly irreconcilable/contradictory variables. Both factors are, thus, excluded from further discussion.

Turning to the relative explanatory power of the remaining six factors, it can be seen from Table 2, that the first three factors account for larger amounts of variance in the obtained responses (12.73%, 12.68%, and 11.98%) than the latter three

(9.34%, 8.07%, and 7.57%). This suggests that Factors 1, 2, and 3 may have greater impact in explaining the online trust behavior of the responding sample relative to Factors 4, 5, and 6 (Hair et al., 1998).

Naming the Factors of Online Trust

Factor 1 is rich in detail as it contains five variables, which suggest the importance of clarity, timeliness, and accuracy of information/ feedback (on products, delivery and costs), and merchant's responsiveness and support in building and maintaining consumers' trust in online environments. Given that these items pertain to the processes and issues that facilitate the satisfactory completion of the consumer's online order, this factor is labeled *order facilitation,* arguably approximating the fulfillment dimension suggested by McCole (2002), Cheskin Research and Studio Archetype/Sapient (1999), and Dayal et al. (1999). It is interesting to note that, in addition to having 12.73% explanatory quotient, this factor recorded a Cronbach's Alpha (or reliability coefficient) of 0.84, which underlines its internal consistency (Hair et al., 1998). Further indication of the importance of this factor came from the interviewed Webmasters, who highlighted the trust-enhancing properties

of providing accurate and consistent information across the firm's online and offline platforms. One of the interviewees, for example, remarked thus: "Our online quotations must tally with our quotations that are advertised in the newspaper. . ."

Factor 2, similarly, encapsulates five items, which reflect the importance of appropriate/readable font size, presenting products/services in simple format, using appropriate level of animation, providing prompts/tutorials to guide users, and using complementary colors/images. The factor reinforces the criticality of the online shop front's overall attractiveness and appeal, and may be labeled as *website presentation and navigation* (see also Cheskin Research and Studio Archetype/Sapient, 1999; Dayal et al., 1999). This factor explains 12.68% of the variance in the consumer responses and has a Cronbach's Alpha score (or reliability coefficient) of 0.81.

Factor 3 also encompasses five items, which explored respondents' perceptions regarding the importance of having a customers' forum for information exchange, allowing independent contact of previous clients, allowing e-mailing of advertised special offers, providing comparative information on products/services, and providing links to external useful sites. These variables largely capture the importance of

facilitating active pre-purchase information exchange and evaluation in developing consumer online trust. This factor, labeled *customer information exchange*, explains 11.98% of the variance in the obtained responses and has a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.81, suggesting considerably high reliability and internal consistency. Although these explanatory and reliability coefficients may seem out of sync with the modest mean scores individually achieved by the constituent variables, according to Hair et al. (1998), such an outcome is explained by the inherent tendency of the varimax rotation method to maximize the sum of variances associated with high loading factors.

Factor 4 encapsulates question items that explored the extent to which respondents' trust in an online environment might be influenced by asking their permission before personal details are kept, explaining how information collected will be used, and offering them unrestricted opportunity to delete personal information. The factor, thus, captures issues of *customer control* of volunteered personal information *and collaboration* with online firms (see Dayal et al., 1999; McCole, 2002). It explains 9.34% of the variance in the survey responses and has a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.63.

The items with significant loadings on Factor 5 suggest respondents' perceptions of the importance of *transactional security* (as exhibited by the technology driving the transaction, third-party independent certification of the transactional process and vendor website assurance of reliability) in engendering trust in online environments. This factor, which explains 8.07% of the variance in the obtained responses, appears to capture the same dimension as such previously identified labels as the "state of the art security" and "security of information" (see Geyskens et al., 1998; Dayal et al., 1999).

The constituent items in Factor 6 are those that explored respondents' perceptions on the relative importance of *prior knowledge of the vendor* and its operations. This factor covers issues such as the online vendor's ownership of, or association with, an established/well-known company; the customer's previous transactional experience of the vendor; and the availability of detailed information about the company. It seems to capture the same dimension as previously identified labels such as "merchant legitimacy" (Dayal et al., 1999), "perceived size and reputation of the Internet store" (Jarvenpaa et al., 1999), "competence,"

"consistency," "fairness," and 'integrity' (McCole, 2002), and the vendor's "bricks and mortar" operations (Srinivasan, 2004). Although this factor explains 7.57% of the variance in the obtained responses and has a relatively modest Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.55, its importance to building online trust is underpinned by additional interview evidence that "Singaporean consumers appear to feel comfortable dealing with reputable organizations with strong brands, even if online." To summarize, the six composite factors capture important dimensions for developing consumer trust in online transactions, and their implications for managerial decision-making and future research has been discussed in the following lines.

Discussion

The study has identified six underlying factors as being critical to the development of consumer trust in the online travel marketplace. It contributes in a number of important ways, including providing valuable empirical insights into the key influences on consumer online trust formation in the Southeast Asian travel industry context, and assessing previous conclusions from the preponderantly Western-based research, on the whys and wherefores of developing and

maintaining consumer trust in online environments. It emerged that the resulting composite factors are generally consistent with previous relevant research findings (see, e.g., Geyskens et al., 1998; Dayal et al., 1999; Jarvenpaa et al., 1999; Cheskin Research and Studio Archetype/Sapient, 1999; Kelly and Rowland, 2000; McCole, 2002; Srinivasan, 2004); these factors, thus, require the focused attention of managers aiming to achieve enhanced consumer trust in their online marketplaces.

More specifically, the observed importance of the "order facilitation" dimension suggests the need for online businesses to prioritize the provision of a user-friendly, error-free, efficient and responsive online purchase process, as part of their overall effort at developing and engendering consumer trust in online transactions. Practitioners might also gain by investing appropriate level of commitment and resources to fine-tuning the processes associated with the placement and subsequent delivery of the products or service purchased by the online customer.

Also, the reported importance of "website presentation and navigation" in influencing consumer trust in online transactions highlights the real need for managers of online

operations to pay particular attention to providing professionally designed websites. Given that websites are the storefront of the online vendor, relevant effort should be made to successfully replicate the customer purchase process as it occurs in the traditional outlet and assure the potential customer of a smooth, efficient and satisfying purchase experience. This requires creativity in how products and services may be sampled, examined, paid for, and delivered to the customer.

Appropriate effort in the above regard (guided by the relevant best practice literature–see e.g., Ahola, 2000) might go some length in responding to the other online trust-building factor dimensions identified in the present study, including "order facilitation" (providing a user-friendly, error-free and responsive online purchase process); "customer information exchange" (providing supportive assistance to the consumer in the pre-purchase information evaluation stage); "customer control and collaboration" (facilitating customer control of volunteered personal information and collaboration with the online vendor); "transactional security" (e.g., through the adoption of relevant cutting-edge technologies and display of

appropriate third party-certifications); and “prior knowledge of the vendor” (providing relevant information on the

TABLE 2. Elements of the Rotated Factor Structure, Loadings, Communalities and Reliability Coefficients of Online Trust Responses

	Order Facilitation	**Web Presentation and Navigation**	**Customer Information**	**Customer Control & Exchange**	**Collaboration**	**Transactional Security**	**Prior Knowledge of Vendor**	**Undefined**
								Commonalities
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	
Says how products/ services will be delivered	**.836**	–.067	.226	.215	.039	.114	–.011	–.112	.828
Provides explanation of all costs involved	**.798**	–.084	.137	.082	.167	.092	–.164	.145	.753

Fast/accurate answers To online queries	**.771**	.228	.085	.001	–.079	–.098	.292	.050	.757
Delivers products/ services in reasonable Time	**.655**	.494	.034	.098	–.109	.063	.030	–.205	.743
Allows me to easily complete/ revise orders	**.604**	.236	.244	.400	.219	–.024	–.166	.057	.719
Uses appropriate/ readable font size	.079	**.816**	.209	–.009	.159	–.030	–.057	.119	.760
Presents products/ services in simple Format	.176	**.791**	.036	.048	.040	.234	.075	.101	.733
Uses appropriate level of animation	–.071	**.608**	.554	.221	.077	.080	.048	.055	.748
Has prompts/tutorials									

to guide users	. 185	**.395**	.129	.577	.250	.062	.238	–.159	.688
Uses complementary color/images	.096	**.394**	.443	.219	.049	.356	.322	.006	.642
Has a customers' forum for info Exchange	.218	.183	**.840**	.185	.062	–.095	.017	–.091	.842
Allows independent contact of previous clients	.261	.055	**.837**	.116	.089	.016	.122	–.133	.825
Allows e-mailing of advertised special Offers	.138	.535	**.561**	–.009	–.033	–.113	.007	.059	.638
Provides comparative info about products/services	.289	.287	**.530**	–.108	–.009	–.030	.130	.466	.694
Provides links to other useful external Sites	–.049	.247	**.321**	.014	.096	–.258	.663	.076	.688

Asks my permission to keep personal Details	.135	.016	.085	**.821**	–.036	–.018	.025	.169	.731
Explains how info collected will be used	.397	.101	.152	**.636**	–.147	.024	.081	.298	.713
Allows the deletion of personal info at Anytime	.416	.376	.219	**.427**	–.185	.005	–.460	.223	.841
Security guaranteed by seal of Approval	–.007	.089	–.058	–.106	**.872**	–.091	–.086	.010	.798
Easy-to-read privacy statement	.065	.233	.215	.186	**.678**	.128	.087	.058	.627
Uses third-party audit services for Certification	.189	–.293	.129	.207	**.597**	.443	.031	.164	.762
Reliable security measures	–.116	.440	.051	.002	**.435**	–.050	–.614	–.077	.784

Uses latest encryption Technology	–.003	–.156	–.028	.602	**.340**	–.075	–.330	–.084	.625
Belongs to an established well known Company	.015	.252	–.158	.071	.072	**.782**	.048	.188	.749
Belongs to previously used travel Company	.046	.056	–.033	–.061	–.054	**.750**	–.118	.271	.662
Provides detailed info about the Company	.010	–.166	.481	–.181	.131	**.557**	–.164	.018	.646
No disclosure of credit card details	–.051	.104	–.147	.230	.019	.104	.035	**.772**	.696
Percentage of variance explained	12.73	12.68	11.98	9.34	8.07	7.57	5.74	4.82	72.95
Reliability Coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha)	0.84	0.81	0.85	0.63	0.63	0.55	0.14	0.77	

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization converged in 15 iterations.

vendor's *offline* or *brick and mortar* operations, including key brand assets, addresses of physical premises/locations, and so on.).

Conclusions and Limitations:

This study draws its relevance from the fact that it provides valuable empirical insights into the key influences on consumer online trust formation in the Southeast Asian travel industry context, and assessing previous conclusions from the preponderantly Western-based research. Analysis suggests six dimensions, including order facilitation effort, website presentation and navigation, customer information exchange, customer control and collaboration, transactional security and prior knowledge of vendor, as being of critical importance in enhancing consumer trust within the online travel related transactions. The analysis should help in shedding some light on this new and exciting environment, and should be especially useful to marketing professionals working in travel related industries to understand their customers and their behavior on online environment, or anyone else who may be considering utilizing the unorganized e-environment for marketing efforts.

Some notes of caution must, however, be added regarding the present study's limited context. For reasons already indicated, the study focused on the travel sector to the exclusion of other industries, and employed a cross-sectional sample of consumers from India. The findings reported may, therefore, not be generalized beyond these specific contexts. That said, the observed level of consistency between the present study's results and previous relevant literature (on the determinants of consumer trust in online transactions) suggests considerable convergent validity (Hair et al., 1998). With the above limitations in mind, nevertheless, future research efforts on online consumer trust should seek to examine online transactions in a variety of industries. It might also be useful to make a distinction between those factors that are essential in developing online consumer trust and those that are required for maintaining the desired level of consumer trust in the medium.

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