

To Study the Effectiveness of Online Reviews on the Tourism Sector in India

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Abstract: *Purpose:* The study focuses on tourism, and how online consumer ratings are handled. Online reviews and properly managing them are critical components of running a successful tourism business. *Research Methodology:* A descriptive research design is used to collect data utilizing the survey method and a structured questionnaire is used and the survey is carried out online. *Findings:* According to the respondents, more than 80 percent of travelers have booked travel services online, and most of them had read internet reviews before making travel purchases. Before making a vacation reservation, many clients read internet reviews. *Originality:* The research can be leveraged as a foundation for further research on Tourism and Hospitality. The uniqueness is in how internet reviews affect the tourist industry and the many segments of the tourism sector, and how these reviews play a vital role in the growth of the firms. In this study piece, we tested how internet reviews affect MakeMyTrip, Yatra.com, and Cleartrip's user behavior.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, e-Visa on arrival (evoa), e-Tourist visa (etv), Feedbacks, Holiday, Internet, Online bookings, Online reviews, Tourism and hospitality.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, online reviews have a significant impact on nearly every business and affect consumers' purchase decisions. Online reviews can be found on many different online platforms, such as the company's website, Yatra.com, Cleartrip, MakeMyTrip, and Facebook and Instagram profiles. The Internet and

technology have a significant impact on the tourist business, just like they do on any other industry (Samala *et al.*, 2020).

II. BACKGROUND STUDY OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

The economy of India depends heavily on tourism, which is expanding quickly. The World Travel and Tourism Council estimated that in 2021, tourism would contribute 5.8% of India's GDP, or \$170 billion, and sustain 32.1 million employments [2]. By 2031, the industry is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 7.8%, reaching \$33.8 lakh crore (US\$420 billion), or 7.2% of GDP (Li *et al.*, n.d.; Mondal *et al.*, 2020; Singh *et al.*, 2021.).

A. Trends and Technologies in Tourism Sector

Economic well-being is significant for the growth of tourism and tourists. The cultural influence on society due to tourism cannot be ignored (Gour *et al.*, 2021.; Mondal and Samaddar, 2021).

Artificial Intelligence (AI): AI is quickly becoming a key technology for the tourism industry. AI can be used to improve customer service, automate mundane tasks, and deliver personalized customer experiences.

Chatbots: Chatbots are becoming increasingly popular in the tourism industry. They can be used to manage customer inquiries, provide personalized recommendations, and even help customers book flights and hotels.

Augmented Reality (AR): AR technology is being used in the tourism industry to create immersive experiences for customers.

Virtual Reality (VR): VR technology is also being used to give customers a virtual tour of a destination before they visit it.

B. Accommodation

This sector includes hotels, resorts, homestays, hostels, and other accommodations. It also includes activities related to the management of lodging such as housekeeping, maintenance, and reservations. Accommodation in the tourist industry may range from a simple hotel room to luxurious resorts and cruises. Hotels, resorts, bed & breakfasts, hostels, homestays, and vacation rentals are all popular forms of lodging. Hotels and resorts should be inspected and certified by the local government to ensure guest safety.

C. Food and Beverage

This sector includes restaurants, bars, fast food outlets, catering services, and other food and beverage outlets. It also includes activities related to the preparation and service of food and beverage such as kitchen staff, wait staff, bartenders, and food servers. Food and beverage is an integral part of the tourist industry and contribute significantly to the entire travel experience.

D. Travel Services

This sector includes travel agents, tour operators, and other travel services. It also includes activities related to the management and operation of travel services such as reservations, customer service, and marketing. Travel services are essential in the tourism industry as they make it easier for travelers to plan and book trips (Chittipolu *et al.*, 2021). By providing a variety of services, travel services make it easier for travelers to find the best deals and make the most of their trips.

E. Recreation

Recreation in the tourism sector can be used to create a unique and enjoyable experience for visitors, making them more likely to come back to the destination in the future. It can also be used to promote sustainable tourism by encouraging visitors to engage in activities that don't harm the environment or local culture (Dutta *et al.*, 2009.). Additionally, recreational activities can help attract tourists from different countries and cultures to the destination, increasing its diversity and offering more unique experiences for visitors.

III. CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND ONLINE REVIEWS

Online reviews are digital feedback distributed via the Internet. Reviews are constructive talks that take place on numerous platforms and can affect or encourage someone's perspective

of an organization, business, or event [11]. Consumers' written reviews on commercial sites of firms can affect people's purchasing decisions [10]. Customers discuss their interactions with that supplier [11].

A. MakeMyTrip

MakeMyTrip is an Indian online travel company that was launched in 2000. The company, which has its headquarters in Gurugram, Haryana, offers a variety of online travel services, such as airline tickets, local and foreign vacation packages, hotel bookings, and rail and bus tickets. As of March 31, 2018, they have counters in four major Indian airports, over 30 franchisee-owned travel stores in 28 cities, and 14 company-owned travel stores in 14 cities (Rishi *et al.*, 2012). Indian community for their US to India travel needs. MakeMyTrip started Indian operations in September 2005, offering online flight tickets to Indian travelers. In 2011, the company created some travel related apps for mobile devices. In 2016, MakeMyTrip and IbiboGroup [11], India's largest travel booking portals, merged through a stock transaction.

B. Yatra.com

Yatra is one such travel agency, which was founded on 1st August of 2006. The company provides various services, such as air travel and hotel bookings, home stays, end-to-end cabs, tour packages, and cruises. Yatra.com based in Gurgaon, started with 3 members in 2006 that rose to 700 in 2008 and 1000+ in 2016. Yatra.com provides reservation facilities for more than 50,176 hotels in India and over 500,000 hotels around the world. Yatra.com has achieved huge success in its journey till now. In April 2014, Yatra.com announced to be the Official Travel Partner of IPL Team Rajasthan Royals [12].

C. Cleartrip

Cleartrip (previously known as Cleartrip Travel Services Private Limited) is a global online travel company, headquartered in Mumbai. The company operates an online travel aggregator website for booking flights, train tickets, hotel reservations, and activities in India and the Middle East countries. It founded in 2006 as a hotels and air aggregator by Stuart Crighton, Hrush Bhatt, and Matthew Spacie. Its app also came with geo-location feature to choose the airport for departure from the current location [13]. Since the acquisition of Cleartrip by Flipkart, the company has participated in the Flipkart Big Billion Day event in October 2021 [14].

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

An online survey was conducted using Google Forms and a structured questionnaire. This survey was conducted randomly, with a majority of the participants being students or professors from KLE Technological University. The questionnaire was

distributed to 200 individuals. The data collected through this survey was processed and visualized using Google Forms.

The results of the survey indicate that 66.7% of the respondents have previous experience with booking travel services online. Conversely, 2% of the respondents did not have any prior experience in online travel service bookings. This suggests that a significant portion of the participants had prior exposure to online travel product purchases. Of those who had experience, 38.1% had made online travel service purchases a few times, 33.3% frequently used online platforms for such purchases, and 4.8% always relied on online methods for their travel service bookings. In contrast, 23.8% of the respondents reported never having purchased travel services online.

Additionally, 57.1% of the participants indicated that they mainly consulted online reviews when booking travel packages online. Among them, 28.6% always checked online reviews before making a booking, while 9.5% never considered online reviews. The majority, representing 60% of the respondents, relied on online reviews as an essential part of their decision-making process.

Regarding the influence of online reviews on purchasing decisions, 14.3% of respondents stated that online reviews always played a decisive role for them. Half of the respondents (50%) mentioned that online reviews mostly influenced their purchasing decisions, and 38.1% indicated that online reviews sometimes had an impact on their travel purchases. A small fraction, 4.7% of the total respondents, reported that online reviews had no influence, while 42.9% acknowledged the significant role of online reviews in their decision-making process.

In terms of feedback and interaction with service providers, 19% of the respondents claimed to have frequently been asked to write reviews by service providers, while 23.8% said they had never received such requests. Furthermore, 19% reported always being asked to provide feedback.

Addressing issue resolution, 9.5% of respondents mentioned that their feedback had been responded to and resolved. The majority, 42.9%, stated that their issues were never addressed or solved, indicating a substantial challenge. Meanwhile, 19% mentioned that their issues were mostly resolved, and 28.6% reported that their problems had sometimes been addressed and resolved.

V. FINDINGS

The report was conducted to assess the influence of online reviews on the tourism industry. The findings reveal that online reviews wield a significant and indispensable impact on the tourism sector. A considerable number of respondents have firsthand experience with being requested to write reviews about their service providers. Furthermore, many of them have prior experience in composing online reviews. Interestingly, it was discovered that approximately 40% of this valuable feedback often goes unnoticed by service providers. Among

various online review platforms, MakeMyTrip emerged as the most trusted source for online reviews.

Respondents expressed their belief in the increasing importance of online engagement in the tourism industry's future, with the internet poised to become a dominant force. They emphasized the pivotal role of online reviews in fostering the growth and development of companies. Therefore, soliciting feedback is deemed essential for companies as it offers a valuable means of self-assessment.

Additionally, respondents stressed the importance of addressing customer dissatisfaction and maintaining practices that satisfy consumers. They urged travel agencies to prioritize cost-effectiveness and transparency, given the escalating competition in the industry, which is expected to continue growing.

VI. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Travel agencies can Develop Cultural Exchange Programs which allow tourists to experience the culture of India. This could include tours of historic sites, cultural festivals, and other activities that will give tourists a deeper understanding of the country. Also Investing in video marketing is an excellent instrument for reaching and engaging with your target audience. Understanding the benefits of video marketing and how to effectively implement the best video marketing tips will help you create engaging content for a wider audience. The scope of tourism is very vast. It includes a number of industries, including those related to lodging, food and drink, transportation, travel services, and leisure.

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