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Blending Information Technology in Indian Travel and Tourism Sector

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With the emergence of the Indian economy, India has also become a travel destination of choice for international and domestic tourists. The high degree of intangibility in the travel sector requires customization of services to meet the requirements of the customers. The current research studies the attitude of Indian customers towards online travel services. The results suggest that Indian customers are influenced by the service and trust attributes of travel Web sites. Strengthening the services and security aspects of online travel Web sites would encourage customers to visit the sites.

KEYWORDS financial transaction, Indian customers, online travel, service, trust, user-friendly Web sites

INTRODUCTION

The interface options available through e-commerce have drastically changed companies’ relationships with their customers. The Internet has altered customers’ search and purchase behaviors (Poon & Joseph, 2000). “The rapid development in consumers’ online access and usage for travel and tourism is being reflected by the status of online communication and sales activities within the tourism industries” (Lohmann & Schmidt, 2009). The modern technology-savvy breed of travelers seek interactive facilities, high quality travel services, detailed information on products, and easy to follow instructions (Rayport & Sviokla, 1995; Lubetkin, 1999; Christian, 2001; Law, Leung, & Wong, 2004; Sigala, 2007). Technology
reduces operating costs and improves customer service (Meuter, Ostrom, Roundtree, & Bitner, 2000; Lagrosen, 2005; Geddie, DeFranco, & Geddie, 2005; Gharavi & Sor, 2006; Thao & Swierczek, 2008; Cunningham, Young, & Gerlach, 2008). The high degree of intangibility in the travel industry (Laroche, Yang, McDougall, & Bergeron, 2005; Srijumpa, Chiarakul, & Speece, 2007) requires cogent and lucid understanding of customers’ needs.

New technologies like computerized reservation systems, global reservation systems, and service delivery processes are used in travel industry for managing growing customer needs (Bigné-Alcaniz, Ruiz-Mafé, Aldás-Manzano, & Sanz-Blas, 2008). Szymanski and Hise (2000) suggested four Web dimensions, namely convenience, merchandizing, site design, and financial security, for increasing customer satisfaction. Customer purchase of online travel service is a complex process and depends on both demographic and psychographic factors (Citrin, Sprott, & Silverman, 2000; Fesenmaier & Jeng, 2000; Blake, Neuendorf, & Valdiserri, 2003; Curran & Meuter, 2005). The decision to purchase is linked to quality, credibility, reliability, and trust factors (Patterson & Smith, 2001; Smith, 2004). Trust and reliability are integral components of online services (Bonn, Furr, & Susskind, 1998; Claycomb & Martin, 2001). Research suggests that travel products are heterogeneous and due to their customized nature the customer is highly involved in the buying process (Frew & Dorren, 1996; Bonn et al., 1998; Heung, 2003).

The current research was directed towards understanding Indian customers’ perceptions about online travel related to services and convenience as well as financial security and trust attributes. The influence of convenience and security aspects was studied with respect to its affect on adoption of online travel services. The research was conducted on people who were aware about the online travel services and used it for planning their holidays or business trips. The travel agents and firms were contacted and requested to help in the survey. The data comprised of the clients of these travel firms who regularly used Internet for purchasing travel services. Convenience sampling technique was used for data collection and Allahabad, a Class B city in Northern India was chosen for sampling. The purpose for selecting a nonmetropolitan town was online travel services are bound to grow in nonmetropolitan cities in the coming years, and understanding customers’ attitude towards online travel firms would be useful for travel firms. The research was conducted in two phases: in the first phase, a focus group technique was used to understand the perception of the customer towards online travel. The findings of the focus group were used for questionnaire construction for the second phase. Focus group studies were administered on three different age groups of customers (age groups 20–35, 36–50, and 51 and above). The second phase comprised of data collection with the help of travel agents through a structured questionnaire.
Indian holiday travel is unique as customers look for information about pilgrimage places rather than for site-seeing. The employees in the banking sector and government sector get a special concession for vacation for their families once a year. Most Indians avail these railway concessions for visiting pilgrimage places with their families and elderly parents. The definition of tourist destination for the Indian customer is very different from others as it imbibes cultural and religious beliefs rather than holiday or family outing. A typical Indian holiday involves attending marriage ceremonies, family get-togethers, and family functions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bakos (1998) suggests that e-commerce Web sites effectively bring together buyers and sellers on a single platform. However, customers’ intention to purchase online depends on their acceptability of Internet as a delivery channel. The intangibility, perishability, and heterogeneity of travel products require adaptation of products according to customer needs (Day & Bens, 2005). Emergence of online intermediaries has made it possible for customers to explore Web sites at their convenience and leisure (Lu, Deng, & Wang, 2007). For marketing travel Web sites, companies offer customers special deals, offers, and holiday packages (Smith, 2004).

Salwani, Marthandan, Norzaidi, and Chong (2009) conducted a research on tourism sector in Malaysia. Their results indicate that technological competency, firm size, Web-technology investment, competition, and back-end usage have significant influence on e-commerce usage by customers. In a similar vein, H. Kim (2005) suggested that online customer satisfaction depends on after sales service, purchase, price attractiveness, product information, customer service, site design, product attractiveness, payment method, site information, and log-on convenience. Customers perceive transactions through the Internet to be insecure and prefer face-to-face interaction (Srijumpa et al., 2007; Thao & Swierczek, 2008). Addressing these concerns may help in improving online services and building relationship with customers (McGowan, Durkin, Allen, Dougan, & Nixon, 2001; Gharavi & Sor, 2006; Thao & Swierczek, 2008). Internet-based travel services present expediency and ubiquity, as customers’ are able to compare offerings and prices at their leisure (Combes & Patel, 1997; Clemons, Hann, & Hitt, 2002; Brown & Kaewkitipong, 2009). Machlis (1997) found that very few customers make bookings through online travel sites, and most customers simply browse the Web sites. Only 1%-5% of customers were actually using travel Web sites for booking and reservation.

Indian customers may be net-savvy, but a question worth pondering is, are they willing to use e-travel models? Travel Web sites have grown in popularity as they provide information about holiday planning, hotel rates,
availability of flight and railway tickets, bookings, and the major places one can visit. Companies like Yatra.com, makemytrip.com, SOTC tours, Rajasthan Tours and Travels, Raj Tours and Travels, and Thomas Cook are providing facilities and services online.

Trust and Online Travel

Trust plays an important role in building relationship with customers. Wen (2009) stated that trust relates to the reliability attribute of the service provider and is important for success and customer relationship in online environment (McKnight, Chudhury, & Kacmar, 2002; Kimery & McCard 2002; Krauter & Kaluscha, 2003). Fam, Foscht, and Collins (2004) in their research found that trust in an online environment depends on predictability, intentionality, capability, transference, tangibility, and interactivity. In transactions trust is a valuable catalyst in enhancing exchange (Doney, Cannon, & Mullen, 1998; Griffith, Hu, & Ryans, 2000). The online retail is different from brick and mortar environment (Degeratu, Rangaswamy, & Wu, 2000; Lynch & Ariely, 2000; Heiner, Gopalkrishnan, Josef, & Dieter, 2004; Liu, He, Gao, & Xie, 2008) as its faceless nature heightens the risk (Salo & Karjaluoto, 2007). Developing countries with poor infrastructure and communication networks give more importance to interpersonal interactions (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000; Forsythe & Shi, 2003; Malai & Speece, 2005; Zhang & Morrison, 2007).

Wen (2009), in his research on factors influencing online buying decisions, found that three factors were important in determining customers' online purchase intention. These were related to online travel Web site design that should enhance trust, attitude perception, and satisfaction. The trust in online distribution channels becomes amplified due to uncertainty involved in transactions (Claycomb & Martin, 2001; McKnight et al., 2002; Eastlick, Lotz, & Warrington, 2006; Salo & Karjaluoto, 2007; Wen, 2009). Most customers prefer service providers whom they can trust (Szymanski & Hise, 2000; Vijayasarathy & Jones, 2000; S. Y. Kim & Lim, 2001; Chen & Dhillon, 2003; Nooteboom, 2003; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2005; Cunningham, Gerlach, Harper, & Young, 2005; Liu et al., 2008). In developing countries, the unavailability of legal infrastructure support (Aljifri, Pons, & Collins, 2003) for e-commerce Web sites exacerbates trust as customers fear financial loss (Murray, 1991; Murray & Schlater, 1990). A good e-commerce Web site design is responsible for strengthening customer's trust (Flavian, Guinaliu, & Gurrea, 2006; Lowry, Vance, Moody, Beckman, & Read, 2008) and improving customer satisfaction (Law & Bai, 2008). This leads to our first test hypothesis.

**H1:** Online travel usage by Indian customers is dependent upon the trust customer feels from the Web site owner.
Service, Convenience, and Online Travel Web Sites

Meuter, Bitner, Ostrom, and Brown (2000) stated that customers’ prefer online service Web sites because of convenience and flexibility. Yen (2005) found that customers’ use of online services depends on efficiency, ease of use, performance, perceived control and convenience attributes. This helps in facilitating customer satisfaction (DeLone & McLean, 1992; Srirojanant & Thirkell, 1998; Law & Bai, 2008). Customers’ can make comparisons between different products and services in an online environment (Rohm & Swaminathan, 2004). Customer satisfaction for online travel websites would depend on the informative, attractive, and interactive features (Chu, 2001; Kuan, Bock, & Vathanophas, 2008; Schmidt, Cantallops, & Santos, 2007; Wen, 2009). In their research, Law and Leung (2000) identified product information, pricing information, online booking facility, and quick Web page load time as determinants to customer satisfaction in online airline travel sites. van Riel, Liljander, and Jurriens (2004) posited that customer satisfaction for online travel Web sites depends on the accessibility, navigation, design, reliability, and customization features. Nusair and Kandampully (2008) identified playfulness and customization as important ingredients for success of online travel service. This leads to three hypotheses:

\[ H2: \] Online travel usage by Indian customers is dependent upon efficient service offered in an online environment.

To encourage online transactions, companies must provide Web site services according to customers’ needs (Fassnacht & Koese, 2006). In India, customers would prefer being reassured that the transaction has been successfully completed.

\[ H3: \] Customers’ age differences affect their decision to use online travel services.

\[ H4: \] Customers’ satisfaction with online travel Web sites is based upon the service and trust customers feel from the Web site.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in two phases. The research design in the first phase was exploratory in nature, where we used the focus group technique for comprehending customers’ attitude and expectation about online travel Web sites. For designing the constructs of the questionnaire, an understanding about the customers’ attitudes towards online travel was necessary. The focus group technique encourages discussion about perceptions,
experiences, and feelings, and helps in discerning customer motivations more effectively (Lankshear, 1993; Porcellato, Dughill, & Springett, 2002).

The focus group interviews were conducted on three age groups of customers (20–35 years, 36–50 years, and 51 years and above). The number of participants in each focus group varied between 10 and 12. The focus group participants were contacted and intimated about the purpose of the research. The interviews were conducted on Saturday and Sunday in the month of September with the help of travel agents. The respondents were mainly comprised of the regular customers of these travel firms. The findings of focus group interviews are summarized in the Table 1.

The findings from the focus group were taken for framing the questionnaire. In the second phase of the research, respondents were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 25 items related to security and trust attributes and services attributes of online travel Web sites. The questions were rated on a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The sample was comprised of respondents who had used online travel services. The total sample was 200, but only 173 completed questionnaires could be used. The sample consisted of 47.4% male and 52.6% female respondents. The total percentage of respondents ages 20–30 years were 29.5%, 30–40 years 29.5%, 40–50 years 24.3%, and above 50 years 16.8%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Online travel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20–35 years</td>
<td>Looking at the various locations and rates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Browsing the pictures of the locations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checking for the rates of the hotels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Picking up a good bargain from the online travel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Looking at the train and airline connections and rates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Would prefer to use the travel Web sites, as it is very convenient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36–50 years</td>
<td>Checking for the rates of the hotels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Picking up a good bargain from the online travel Web sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Looking at the train and airline connections and rates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Would prefer to use the travel Web sites, as it is very convenient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comparison of various rates of hotels is possible, and selection can be done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51+ years</td>
<td>Have very little idea about online travel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel agents are friendly and provide more detailed information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not comfortable about the transactions through travel Web sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Would not prefer to use it, as they are more comfortable about the travel agent making the bookings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some information about pilgrim places should be available on the Travel sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yatra.com and makemytrip.com should provide information about the process of financial transaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The financial transaction details should be provided with clarity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some travel agents help in providing information through Web sites.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Since the questionnaire had been designed for the research, it was necessary to test its reliability. An exploratory factor analysis test was run on the 25 items to examine the dimensionality of the online travel scale items on Indian customers. Table 2 represents the results of the confirmatory factor analysis with varimax rotation and reliability scores for the scale. The analysis revealed two factors, which covered 66.59% of variability. A total of 15 items had factor loadings less than .5 and failed to fit Nunnally’s (1978) recommended level of internal consistency for scale development. These were removed from the final analysis. The items could be segregated into two factors, which were labeled as Service and Trust Attributes of online travel Web sites. The Cronbach alpha value for both the factors was also computed. Each factor had five items which were taken up for further analysis (Table 2).

The correlation between the two attributes with customers’ satisfaction to visit travel website was computed. The results of correlation are stated in Table 3.

The results show that correlation is positive between customer satisfaction with travel Web sites and service attributes of the Web sites \( (p = .000 \text{ significant at } 0.01 \text{ level}) \) and it is negative for trust attributes \( (p = -.014; \text{ significant at .05 level}) \). The results support earlier research that found that Web sites’ service and navigability attributes generate customer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online travel items</th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online travel Web sites are convenient for gathering information regarding travel and holiday planning.</td>
<td>.673</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online travel Web site is easy to operate and understand.</td>
<td>.542</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online travel service is prompt.</td>
<td>.538</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can easily book my tickets through online travel company.</td>
<td>.568</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easy to plan the holiday with travel websites.</td>
<td>.567</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The travel Web sites provide good information about tourist places.</td>
<td>.591</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha</td>
<td>.603</td>
<td>.566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to visit the travel Web sites for information, but make bookings through a travel agent.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel agents are more reliable than online travel firms.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to book my tickets through a travel agent than a travel Web site.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not comfortable with the financial transactions of online travel firms.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not comfortable providing my bank details to online travel Web sites.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha</td>
<td></td>
<td>.706</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

satisfaction (Jahng, Jain, & Ramamurthy, 2000; Lee & Overby, 2004; Ranjamma et al., 2007; Kuan et al., 2008; Schmidt et al., 2007; Wen, 2009). Customer satisfaction for online travel Web sites depends on service features, which imply that informative, attractive, and interactive Web sites would generate more online traffic (Sirojanant & Thirkell, 1998; Chu, 2001; Nusair & Kandampully, 2008; Wen, 2009).

The trust component in online travel is difficult to deduce, as absence of service personnel makes it difficult for customers to seek clarifications or reassurance about the authenticity of financial transactions. Providing their bank account and credit card details in an online environment makes the customer skeptical whether the financial transaction will be completed. The fear of loss of confidential data creates a fear in customers’ minds, and the negative correlation exhibits the customers’ fear perception. The customers’ unawareness about the technical aspects exacerbates this trust (Lim, Leung, Sia, & Lee, 2004), and they are fearful of online frauds. The results connote that trust for online travel is not responsible for garnering user satisfaction and supports earlier research findings (Guseman, 1981; Murray & Schlater, 1990; Murray, 1991; S. Y. Kim & Lim, 2001; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2005; Liu et al., 2008). In financial transactions, the level of perceived risk is high and the customer feels unsure about the reliability of the travel Web site.

To understand the difference between different age groups’ perceptions about online travel Web sites’ services and trust attributes, ANOVA tests were run on the five age groups. The results of age ANOVA test are shown in Table 4.

The results show that there are no significant differences between the different age groups related to the trust attribute of online travel Web sites, however for service attributes there is a significant difference ($p < .05$). The results found $F(3, 169) = .380, p = .011$ for service attributes and $F(3, 169) = .618, p = .604$ for trust in travel Web sites.

| TABLE 3 | Correlations Between Satisfaction of Customers With Online Travel Web Sites and Service and Trust Attributes |
| Service Attributes of Web site Pearson Correlation | .605** |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | .000 |
| N | 173 |
| Trust attributes of Web sites Pearson Correlation | $-.159^*$ |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | .014 |
| N | 173 |

*Significant at 0.05 level. **Significant at 0.01 level.
To test whether there was any significant difference between the perception of males and females using online travel Web sites, an ANOVA test was conducted. The results are shown in Table 5.

The results show that there is no significant difference between male and female customers related to the trust and service attribute of online travel Web sites. The results found $F(1, 171) = .157, p = .693$ for service attributes and $F(1, 171) = 3.008, p = .085$ for trust in travel Web sites.

Multiple regression analysis was administered to understand the determinants of online travel Web sites (Table 6). The dependent variable was customers’ satisfaction with their decision to visit online travel Web sites. The analysis indicates that service factors related to information about holiday packages, easy navigability, attractive Web site design, interactivity, and customization were considered significant attributes for the customers’ satisfaction ($p = .000$; significant at .01 level). The $R^2$ value of .377 suggests that service attributes accounts for 37.7% of customers’ use of online travel Web site. Strengthening the service dimensions can increase customers’ use of online services.

The results are in tandem with earlier research findings that suggest the importance of interactivity, playfulness, attractiveness, easy navigability, and customization in improving customer satisfaction in online environments (Chu, 2001; H. Kim, 2005; Christian, 2001; Law et al., 2004; Sigala, 2007; Yi & Gong, 2008; Nusair & Kandampully, 2008; Wen, 2009). The trust factor, age, and gender of customers were predictors in customers’ online travel Web site usage. The lack of confidence in an online environment may be related to financial aspects of the transactions, where the customer is not convinced about the reliability of travel Web sites.

### Table 5: ANOVA—Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$SS$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>$M^2$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service attributes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>5.391</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.391</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>5879.291</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>34.382</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5884.682</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trust attributes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>49.664</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>49.664</td>
<td>3.008</td>
<td>.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>2823.157</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>16.510</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2872.821</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Online travel services present a new service delivery channel for Indian customers. Customers with easy access to Internet at their workplace are apt to use it frequently for browsing and shopping. Indian customers prefer face-to-face interactions with service staff, as it assures them that their needs are being addressed. Malhotra, Ulgado, Agarwal, Shainesh, and Wu (2005) and Srijumpa et al. (2007) found in their research that interpersonal relationship governs most business practices in Southeast Asia. Relationships with travel agents give confidence to customers as they are assured through the staff’s nonverbal gestures (Zhang & Morrison, 2007). The Web sites should have user-friendly features, hyperlinks that open properly, and instructions that are easy to follow. The Web site pages should have colorful pictures and images of locations. The customer would feel more assured if there were some phone numbers of local travel agents provided on the Web site. Customers fear that the Web sites are not authentic, and phone numbers or contact details could help them in contacting agents. This would enable customers to clarify their doubts by placing a phone call. The intangibility attribute can be backed by personal interaction with the travel agents. The travel agents may be used for building relationship with the customers and then luring them to use the firms’ Web site for travel bookings and information.

The trepidation customers feel about using online travel Web sites is that their personal information may get divulged. The online travel services should include uncomplicated instructions about payment modes and transactions. Association with national banks may reduce the customers’ skepticism regarding financial transactions. The travel agent’s availability via telephone may provide additional assurance to the customers. Once the transaction has been completed, a confirmation through e-mail or a phone call can reduce the customer anxiety.

### MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Online travel services present a new service delivery channel for Indian customers. Customers with easy access to Internet at their workplace are apt to use it frequently for browsing and shopping. Indian customers prefer face-to-face interactions with service staff, as it assures them that their needs are being addressed. Malhotra, Ulgado, Agarwal, Shainesh, and Wu (2005) and Srijumpa et al. (2007) found in their research that interpersonal relationship governs most business practices in Southeast Asia. Relationships with travel agents give confidence to customers as they are assured through the staff’s nonverbal gestures (Zhang & Morrison, 2007). The Web sites should have user-friendly features, hyperlinks that open properly, and instructions that are easy to follow. The Web site pages should have colorful pictures and images of locations. The customer would feel more assured if there were some phone numbers of local travel agents provided on the Web site. Customers fear that the Web sites are not authentic, and phone numbers or contact details could help them in contacting agents. This would enable customers to clarify their doubts by placing a phone call. The intangibility attribute can be backed by personal interaction with the travel agents. The travel agents may be used for building relationship with the customers and then luring them to use the firms’ Web site for travel bookings and information.

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### TABLE 6 Determinants of Customer Satisfaction With Online Travel Websites:
Multiple Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online travel service and age, gender factors</th>
<th>Standardized coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service attributes</td>
<td>-.596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust attributes</td>
<td>-.019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Dependent variable: I am satisfied with my decision to visit travel Web sites.
The Web site layout and design should be adapted according to customers' needs. The interactivity and customization of the Web sites may be augmented by offering details of hotels and destinations and making it feasible for customers to select combinations according to their own requirements and budget. The pilgrimage places may be included with details about special holiday packages or off-season discounts. Immediate confirmation of reservations or bookings may be provided by e-mails or text message on the mobile phones. Many older people do not have e-mail addresses and therefore feel irresolute about using online travel services. If they are able to get affirmation about the transactions from the firm on their mobile phones, it would create trust for these services. Each customer group has different requirements while planning holiday and these needs should be taken up while designing Web sites. Older people are more interested in pilgrimage places, and assistance can be provided to them so that they can browse the travel Web sites. The travel agents can operate and show the elderly people the travel Web sites, so that they feel confident about its utility.

The satisfaction towards online services depends on users' poise and confidence. The young customers are more Internet savvy, thus are willing to adopt e-commerce. This may not be with the older customers, who are afraid to visit shopping Web sites. Easy to follow instructions can help the older people in navigating the travel Web sites. The younger customer (age group 20–45 years) may be a potential segment willing to switch to online transactions, thus their suggestions should be considered. The pictures of destinations, rooms of the hotel and markets make the Web site interactive. The customers feel that they can check about the products' functions. As planning a vacation is an emotional decision, pictures can augment their feelings. To encourage customers’ to purchase online, travel Web sites have to take the help of travel agents. The travel agents provide a human element to the transaction and they may recommend the use of online travel Web sites. The personal interaction would help in instilling confidence about online travel services in the minds of the customers. There is definitely growing scope for online services in India and e-commerce is poised to expand in multiple sectors.

REFERENCES


