

Chapter 2

Traveler Decision Making in Online vs. Offline Buying Behavior: A Contrasting Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The growing preference of consumers to search for information and make web purchases in travel and tourism context is forcing a number of enterprises to go online. Looking at the complexity that already lies in offline decision making, attracting consumers online, understanding their psychology, and making them purchase is becoming a stringent job for the marketers. Though significant research work has been done in terms of adoption of website services for travel websites, a comparative understanding of the offline and online purchase decision-making process of the consumer and how that can be leveraged in making the consumer loyal through continuous usage of the website services still needs an in-depth understanding. In this chapter, the authors have tried to differentiate between online and offline behavior and proposed a model based on intention adoption and continuance framework which will surely provide insights to both the academicians and marketers/website developers in terms of improving the online buying behavior of consumers in travel and tourism context.

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding consumer behaviour has been a key area of concern for academicians for several decades, however decoding the nuances of consumer buying have over time become more and more complex especially with the growing emergence of online travel related services (Olsen & Connolly 2000). Although the steps in consumer decision making that persuades consumers in the offline world are applicable in the online platform also, still there are differences which needs to be highlighted in a specific manner. The change in the context and medium makes a huge psychological impact on the consumer behaviour making it more challenging for the marketer to understand the online consumer decision making process (Rayman-Bacchus & Molina, 2001). On one hand a consumer may walk into a store look at every option and may decide to buy online a concept called as show-rooming or vice versa a concept known as web-rooming, where a customer checks the products or services online but decides to make the purchase offline making it more complex for the marketers to formulate an integrated marketing mix strategy (Holm, 2006). However understanding this contrasting behaviour is critical for marketers as many companies are accessible to consumers through both offline and online mediums (Chatterjee, 2001).

Consumer purchase decision making procedures are made out of a few factors that impact buyer decision for specific items and services. Travellers may pick lodging, depending on its area, brand name, different offices, service quality, price, loyalty program, and quality evaluations by past visitors. Value delivery is an essential concept in retaining clients be it online or offline. Past research has discovered that value is directly connected with behavioural expectations in all kind of industries and travel & tourism is not an exception to it. In this way, it is vital for hoteliers to examine the key predecessors affecting the procurement goals in order to positively impact clients from the pre-buying stage itself. Arranging a trip includes a worldly, dynamic, progressive, and multistage unexpected choice process (Starkov, 2001). Information needs and information seeking strategies can be accepted to fluctuate for various stages in the decision making process (Li et al., 2013; Litvin et al., 2008). Likewise, travel arranging includes a huge number of factors for which decision choices should be made.

Advances in data innovation and the presentation of new techniques for correspondence have prompted progressively critical changes in consumer behaviour. These progressions have created a stir in organizations marketing strategies and business administration, particularly in the travel business. The Internet enables potential visitors to accumulate data about lodging pleasantries and facilities in a utilitarian nature since they can think about costs without reaching a hotels sales

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