MN6P00NI Management Investigation and Dissertation

Autumn 2019-20

Proposal Draft

Effectiveness of Online Services of Travel Agencies

Submitted By:

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Submitted To:

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Submission Date:

14th January 2020

Word Count: 2174 words

MN6P00: Management Investigation and Dissertation
Research Proposal - Assessment Component 1
Autumn 2019-2020

Student Name:	Module Lecturer: Navraj Bhusal	Date:14/01/2020

Student ID:

Research Topic: Effectiveness of online services of travel agencies in Nepal

Assessment Criteria	Indicators	Needs improvement/comments
Topic and Aims (10%)	•**Clarity and justification of topic** •**Dissertation research topic vs. general course work topic** •**Aims are introduced and explained sufficiently** •**Aims are understood**	Excellent and clear aim and objectives were given with a well-reasoned rationale. Lots of consideration is evident
Background (20%)	•**What is the significance of your study?** •**Is the background sufficiently researched and**	Background is precisely stated. High level of effort is seen in the work.
Literature Review(25%)	•**Explained what is being researched in your field of study** •**Captured and identified the main ideas, theories and conclusions** •**Identified what gaps exits in the literatures** •**Introduced the key variables for your studies effectively and explained well** •**Provided a context for your**	Lots of excellent sources are given to show great understanding of the industry/organization and the theoretical framework. Reading well beyond essential would have improved the work
Research Method (20%)	•**Is your research method linked with the specific aims clear and complete?** •**Research Strategy** •**Data Collection**	Excellent methodology submitted, providing all requirements competed very high standard; well-reasoned and reference. Could have been improved by further reading and reasoning.
Time Line (10%)	•**Divide your research plans into schedules**	High standards is maintained in timeline
Ethical consideration (5%)	•**Bring integrity, fairness and honesty to your work** •**Take the participants' viewpoint and experiences**	Ethical issues are stated however, some improvement is necessary.
Style, Formatting, Citations, Grammar, Sentence Structure, Punctuation, and Word Choice (10%)	•**Ideas clearly stated** •**The page numbers, appropriate and consistent headings, and appropriate** •**Harvard Referencing Style and quality of sources**	Excellent layout of relevant information on document following guidelines excellent and appropriate language used; correct referencing. All appendices were submitted showing great care has been taken care in the completion.

Grade: A-

Overall Comments: You need to include higher numbers of recent research article while reviewing.

Second Marker Comments:

Agreed Grade:

Table of Contents

1. Potential Title

Effectiveness of Online Services of Travel Agencies in Nepal

2. Aim of the investigation and related objectives

This research aims to ascertain how customers get influenced to travel via the online services offered by travel agencies and the satisfaction they have experienced in the past.

Other objectives related to the investigation are:

- To examine online customers' perceptions of the e-service quality provided by travel agencies,
- To investigate the underlying dimensions of an online travel agency's e-service quality that have the greatest significance on these customers' satisfaction and re-purchase intentions.

3. Rationale for choosing the research topic

As tourism business has grown rapidly since the past decade, online travel agencies have faced intense competition, and thus have a great need to evaluate the e-service quality of their websites to succeed or even just to survive. This research project will allow for a better understanding of the impact of internet services from travel agencies and its effectiveness to encourage people to plan a trip better. Any conclusions drawn will contribute towards the study of what travel agencies in Nepal can do to improve their services to promote more tourism, and how satisfaction from online services from travel agencies increase customer intentions to travel more.

4. Literature Review

4.1.   Introduction

Travel agencies play a very important role in the tourism market. As per the Nepal government data, the number of travel agencies grew by 11% in 2016-17 and by 8% in 2017-18, showing the rapid increase in tourism business in Nepal (Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, 2018). Contribution of travel agencies is a result of the role that they have in tourist traffic and travel facilitation. (Tsang et al., 2010). They appear as mediators between tourists that require a range of services and business entities that provide those services. Their main task is, therefore, to connect many subjects on the tourism demand side and several entities (public and private sector) on the supply side. One of the key factors in achieving and maintaining the competitive advantage of travel agencies in the market is a high quality of services which provided tourist satisfaction. (Vinod, 2010). Since the internet has proven to be an effective means for advertising, marketing, providing information and distributing digital products, the information-intensive nature of the tourism industry, uses the internet to promote and market destinations and to obtain the bulk of its business. (Lin, 2010). Only those travel agencies that meet the expectations and demands of tourists in terms of the quality of services will be able to retain the existing and attract new tourists. (Ku & Fan, 2009). In modern times, therefore, the quality is a key factor for the survival of travel agencies in the market. The aim of this paper is to highlight the importance of quality of services for the enhancement of the overall business processes of travel agencies.

4.2.   Background of Problem

Online travel services refer to more intangible, functional, subjective, and relational elements so that the factor of information quality is derived and serves as a core component of service quality. (Ho & Lee, 2007). The Internet has changed the tourism environment, so that no business in this domain can escape its impact any longer. Though agencies like it or not, these e-services will not dominate tourism marketing for long, and companies willing to involve in this

e-business should benefit more from its advantages. According to the customer perception on online travel service delivery, an empirical research in China it was clear that online service delivery has grown as a popular direct distribution channel in the travel industry of China, but there are still considerable number of respondents who were still using traditional services to book a trip. (Li & Suomi, 2007). As per the research findings of (Thao, 2008) it was stated that poor IT infrastructure, distrust of the Internet System and legal issues were the major barriers to use of online services of the travel agencies. The emergence of online distribution channels has created both opportunities and challenges for the travel agencies. (Ku & Fan, 2009). Travel Agencies must not overlook the fact that before any visits, travelers get information about the destinations through them and their websites, so they play a vital role in the promotion of tourism in any place.

4.3.   Previous Studies on Quality of E-travel Sites

According to Ching Torng Lin, the findings suggest that website information must be adequately provided, quickly expanded and regularly updated to maintain precise and up-to-date content to meet users' information needs as well as an appropriate backing function to provide good levels of web-based customer service. These attributes should satisfy visitors, making them likely to revisit e-travel sites. (Lin, 2010). It requires online travel agent enterprises attach importance on customer's needs by offering personalized product and service and meeting their different requirements. Meanwhile, online services should be able to solve customer's problem quickly and efficiently, execute promised service to gain people's trust with promoting their satisfaction to greatest extent according to (Zhang et al., 2015). Also, according to the study of customer satisfaction perceived on hotel website quality states that even hotel websites quality influence customers for purchase and re-purchase intentions, so travel agencies should also maintain a good link with the good quality online hotel services. (Ali, 2016). The research conclusion of Carlos Devece, implied that travel agencies providing online services have always remained competitive and maintain a loyal customer base. Also, customers that that are habituated to booking via the internet have reported benevolence-based trust as a fundamental factor of loyalty. (Devece et al., 2015).

4.4.   Important Attributes for E-Travel Sites

The research study of impact of internet in the tourism sector in the past decade suggested that the studies related to online purchase, information search and website design should explore the organizational implications of the findings and recommendations. (Standing & Tang-Taye, 2014). Chaang-Iuan Ho and Yi Ling Lee have constructed a scale to measure the e-service quality of travel agencies by focusing on the information quality, safety and security, website functionality and customer responsiveness to understand the online service quality satisfaction. (Ho & Lee, 2007). The findings of Zhang demonstrated that sophisticated information systems composed by intranet and extranet can change the design and manufacture of products and services. (Zhang, 2004). According to another research by, Woo Gon Kim it has been stated in his research work that website designers should be considered as the discriminating factor while understanding the information and attraction content of online travel portals. (Kim & Lee, 2008). Edward and Yi came up with the recommendation that companies will need to make significant investments in safety sector and website content and quality along with greater managerial efforts to encourage customers to buy more services via online service provided. The empirical study of travelers in Hong Kong on the other hand show that the travelers in Hong Kong still prefer traditional services of travel agents rather than online, especially for short-haul travelers. (Law et al., 2004). Another aspect of e-travel agencies are the pricing aspects of partner hotels, where in the research of García, it was concluded that the increase in number of competitors reduces the price in any market environment changing the consumer perception to choose an agency. (Gracia, 2013).
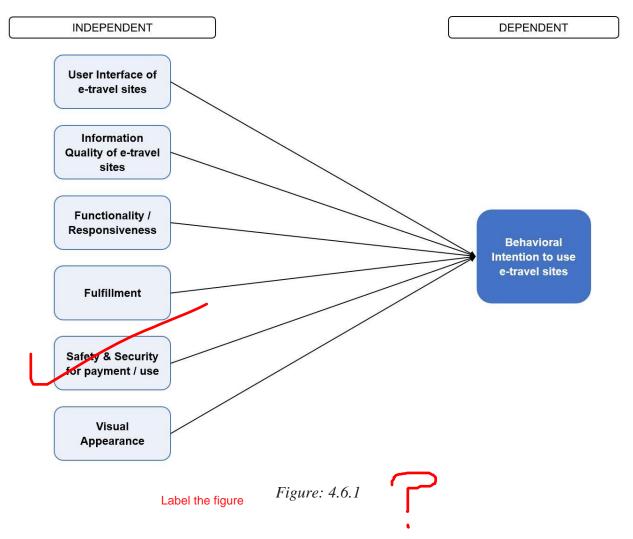
4.5.   Consumer Behavior

Customer Value is the foremost driver of competitive advantage in attracting and retaining customers in any e-business. Though hundreds of studies have been conducted in terms of offline business contexts but there are very limited studies in reference to online business. (Ku & Fan, 2009). Among various types of technology processing, interactive and online are largely addressed in the tourism and hospitality literature. (Cai et al., 2019). According to the research in context of the Turkish domestic market, it was recommended that travel agencies should

establish effectively functioning marketing departments with the necessary information collection and processing systems. In this way, travel agency management could be able to identify the problems related to the performance of their sales staff in marketing holidays, and the necessary precautions can be taken, implying even the travel agency staff add value to the company. (Koc, 2003). Also, as per the conclusion of (Kuo et al., 2012), it is proved that if a travel agency fails to provide effective service, it leads to decrease in customer satisfaction; ultimately customers are likely to switch to other travel agencies. So, such researches have time and again proved the importance of perceived customer value for promotion of tourism. Standing in his research paper stated that the market is not seen as efficient with product differentiation and has also led to difficulty in comparison between services, that is in turn a disadvantage to the consumers. (Standing et al., 2004).

Majority of literature you relied on are old. Better to go for recent articles while reviewing.

4.6.   Conceptual Framework

The concepts of service quality and customer satisfaction have already been widely discussed over the past decade. This is known to be a crucial part for the success of any service-oriented business. Past researchers were always interested in the quality of service provided, customer satisfaction and their intention on whether to purchase the service again. Despite many researches have been conducted in context of online travel purchase there are lots of unanswered questions in the Nepalese context. The online services that customers look for in a web-based travel service are the independent variable for this research paper. The behavioral intention of travelers to purchase the online services of travel agencies will be the dependent variable for the research work. The existing studies and research work still don't provide a clear evidence as to which attribute of the travel agencies are the most important in driving the behavioral intentions of users. The following figure shows the concept of research model applied in this research work:

Figure: 4.6.1

Label the figure

4.7. Hypothesis Testing

The Hypothesis the research will be testing are as follows:

H1: User interface on e-travel sites positively influence travelers to use online services offered.

H2: Information content provided by travel agencies impact positively in use of online travelers.

H3: Convenient and quick responses from travel agencies encourage people significantly to use offered services more.

H4: Safety and security of customers personal details and transactions ensured, positively people to travel more via travel agencies.

H5: Visual Appearance of Online Websites positively influence travelers to use e-services.

4.8.   Gap in Research

In Nepalese economy tourism sector has always played a very important role, being the major source of foreign exchange earnings. Various attractions for tourists all around the world have always helped Nepal become one of the top travel destinations. Despite this fact the tourism sector of Nepal has always faced challenges when it comes to online services provided by the Nepalese travel agencies. So, there is a huge gap in this sector for research, especially in the Nepalese context. In the forgoing literature review it shows that service quality, customer satisfaction and their purchase behavior intentions are related to each other in this sector of business. So, it is even more important to understand the e-service quality dimensions that have greater effectiveness in consumer re-purchase behavior.

5. Research Questions and Related Methodology

The research questions which this paper will look to answer are:

- What are the major factors influencing travelers to plan a trip via the online travel agencies?
- Do the attributes mentioned help travel agencies improve their business, attracting more travelers to use their services?

The descriptive research design has been adopted to undertake fact finding operation searching for adequate information in context of efficiency in tourism sector. This research will be based on the positivism philosophy as the researcher considers that the satisfaction level of the customers can be measured from their past experiences of online travel. This positivist philosophy will use a deductive approach as data that will be collected for the research purposes will be quantitative in nature. This strategy will help to develop a relationship between the online travel agency services and their effectiveness to promote tourism. (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

6. Relevant Data Required and Data Collection Methods

The strategy that will be used to collect data for this deductive study are surveys. Information that this study requires will base on the experiences of customers who have travelled using the online services of travel agencies. (Tsang et al., 2010). Primary research data will be considered for the outcome of the research. The data will focus on the six essential factors that influence customers to use the online travel sites. These factors will not only help analyze the effectiveness of travel agency online services but will also help understand the intention of consumers to re-purchase the online services of travel agencies. (Park et al., 2007).

For the purpose of this research, random sampling technique will be used, and data will also be collected in person by interviewing some travel agents. The online surveys will be designed in such a way that the participants of the survey have minimum burden of understanding the questions to fill the survey. The sample size for the online survey will be around 150 to 175, where sample will be the population who have had experienced online services from travel agencies. The questionnaire will mainly target the customer rating on the different factors based on the research of (Park et al., 2007). This research will also integrate secondary data analysis, as it is expected to add value and comparison to the primary data analysis.

7. Accessibility, Reliability, Validity and Ethics

The research is to be conducted on volunteers, whose consent shall be distributed the questionnaire online and anonymity preserved. No names or identifying data will be collected. All due care shall be taken when handling the collected data in order to ensure data protection. Access to the subjects will be obtained via approaching people at random email surveys and questionnaires. An online version of the survey will be created which will be shared across the web, including questions regarding people past experiences of travel agencies online services used. Also, the data will be filtered where only relevant and accurate filled data will be considered for the study.

Questionnaires used for the study will be adapted from prior researcher's research work which have already been validated and tested. Cronbach Alpha will be used to test the reliability of the questionnaire.

8. References

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9. APPENDIX

9.1.   Timeline

AUTUMN 2019-20 (Nov – April)														
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3-4	Week 5-6	Week 7	Week 8-9	Week 10	Week 11-12	Week 13	Week 14-15	Week 16-17	Week 18	Week 19	Week 20
Supervisor meeting and topic Research	■													
Finalizing topic and Establishing objectives		■												
Literature Review			■	■										
Design Questionnaire and survey, population					■									
Methodology						■	■							
Data Collection								■	■					
Data analysis and interpretation										■	■			
Findings and Abstract												■		
Review													■	
Print, Biding and Submission														■

9.2.   Ethical Considerations

Ethics Review Checklist

(please read the guidelines on the previous page before completing this form)
This form should be completed by the student undertaking a research project after consultation
with their supervisor and a signed copy included in the appendices of the research proposal

Student Name: Umang Bajaj

Student Number: 17030869

Student email address: np01ba4a170007@islingtoncollege.edu.np

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1. Please provide a brief description of the proposed research for which ethics clearance is requested (maximum 50 words):

The research aims to analyse the effectiveness of online services provided by travel agencies in Nepal to promote tourism in Nepal.

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2. Please give the name of the Module leader, module title and course code:

Mr. Navraj Bhusal / MP6P00NI / Management Investigation and Dissertation

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3. Name of supervisor

Mr. Navraj Bhusal

Potential ethical concerns (delete **Yes** or **No** as appropriate)

1. Are any of the people involved in <u>collecting or analyzing data</u> for the proposed activity **not** employed (on formal or honorary contracts) or enrolled as (undergraduate, postgraduate or short-course) students by London Metropolitan University?

   No (all of those collecting or analyzing data are employed by/enrolled at London Metropolitan University)

2. Does the proposed activity involve any foreseeable legal risks or risk of physical, psychological or social distress to staff, students or participants? **No**

3. Does the proposed activity <u>only</u> involve library-based work or work based only on the analysis and scrutiny of publicly available documents? **No**

4. Does the proposed activity involve the collection or use of body tissues or body fluids (including excreta) from humans or animals? **No**

5. Does the proposed activity involve the collection of data from human or animal participants? **No**

6. Does the proposed activity involve the collection of data through the direct or indirect observation of human subjects? **No**

7. Does the proposed activity involve the administration of any drug, food substance or placebos to human or animal subjects? **No**

8. Does the proposed activity involve exposing human or animal participants to any abnormal or painful physical or sensory stimuli (including auditory, visual and olfactory stimuli)? **No**

9. Does the proposed activity require human or animal participants undergoing abnormal physical, psychological or emotional stress (including dehydration, exercise, sensory deprivation, confinement or sleeplessness)? **No**

10. Does the proposed activity involve exposure to topics or issues that might cause offence (including exposure to controversial, offensive or illegal material or ideologies)? **No**

11. Does the proposed activity involve deceiving participants? **No**

12. Does the proposed activity require the disclosure of private or confidential information without the informed consent of participants? **No**

13. Is the proposed activity likely to lead to the potential disclosure of illegal activity or incriminating information from participants? **No**

14. Does the proposed activity involve staff, clients, premises, facilities, material or data derived from NHS, Social Care or Local Authority Education Services? **No**

15. Does the proposed activity involve participants who are potentially vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (including children under the age of 16, people with learning difficulties, people with cognitive disorders and people with debilitating illnesses)? **No**

16. Does the proposed activity require the staff and/or students involved to have undergone a Criminal Records Bureau check? **No**

You need to submit a signed copy of this form with your research proposal (in the appendices)

If it is thought necessary, your tutor/supervisor will forward the proposal to the Faculty's Ethics Review Panel for agreement prior to starting the study

Student signature:
_____Umang Bajaj_____ Date: ____14/01/2020____

FOR FACULTY USE ONLY

Recommendation by Chair/vice-Chair Ethics Review Panel: (circle appropriate response)
Ethical clearance approved based on information provided in the Ethics Review Checklist.
Ethical clearance approved based on information provided in the Ethics Review Checklist and subsequent clarification of the potential ethical concerns identified in the Ethics Review Checklist through email correspondence with the member of staff responsible for the proposed activity (email correspondence attached). The proposed activity requires a formal ethics application to the Ethics Review Panel **before** it can proceed. The proposed activity requires a formal ethics application to an external Research Ethics Committee **before** it can proceed.

9.3.   Questionnaire

Thank you for taking part in the research entitled: "Effectiveness of online travel agencies in Nepal". This survey is conducted for the dissertation purpose of BBA. This survey will help understand the different factors affecting people while using online travel agency services. This survey would take around 15 minutes to complete. I also do assure that all answers provided by you will be kept strictly confidential.

This survey consists of two sections. The first section includes your general information to understand the demographic profile of the respondents. The second section includes the dimension of online website functionality, information content and quality, fulfillment and responsiveness, safety and security, appearance and presentation and customer relationship., where your sincere opinions on those items will be filled in with a score between 1 to 7.

Any queries regarding this research study will be kindly appreciated and resolved by me under the following contact: Mr. Umang Bajaj, BBA in International Business, Islington College. Email: np01ba4a170007@islingtoncollege.edu.np.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

1) Gender

      a. Male   b. Female

2) Age Group

      a. 18-25   b. 26-35
      c. 36-45   d. 46-55
      e. 56 or above

3) Education Level

      a. Primary school or below
      b. Secondary School
      c. College / University
      d. Postgraduate Degree

4) Monthly Income

      a. Below 50,000
      b. 50,000 – 1,00,000
      c. 1,00,000 – 2,00,000
      d. 2,00,000 and above

5) Frequency of internet usage

      a. Less than 1 hour
      b. 1 – 3 hours
      c. 4 - 6 hours
      d. 6 hours and above

6) Length of Internet Use

      a. Less than a year
      b. 1- 5 Years
      c. 5 – 10 Years
      d. 10 Years and above

7) Have you use the online travel services of travel agencies for travelling?

      a) Yes

VARIABLE ANALYSIS

(Rate the following in the scale of 1 to 7 where

1 = Strongly Disagree	*2 = Disagree*	*3 = Slightly Disagree*	*4 = Neutral*
5 = Slightly Agree	*6 = Agree*	*7 = Strongly Agree)*	

Variable 1: Website Functionality

Online travel agencies have well-arranged categories. _____

It is easy to make or cancel reservations. _____

I can go to exactly what I want quickly. _____

It is easy to maneuver and browse better and find what I want on online travel agencies. _____

Online travel agencies always work correctly _____

Online travel agencies do not waste my time. _____

The search functions on online travel agencies are helpful. _____

It is quick and easy to complete a transaction on online travel agencies _____

Variable 2: Information Content and Quality

On online travel agencies, I have the full information at hand. _____

Online travel agencies provide in-depth information. _____

Online travel agencies provide updated information. _____

Online travel agencies are very good sources of information. _____

Online travel agencies provide concise (not ambiguous) information. _____

Online travel agencies give me enough information so that I can identify the item

to the same degree as offline. _____

Variable 3: Fulfillment and Responsiveness

When I have problems, online travel agencies show a sincere interest in solving them. _____

Online travel agencies get bookings correct. _____

Online travel agencies are ready and willing to respond to customer needs.   ____

I get what I booked from online travel agencies.   ____

Online travel agencies' customer service personnel are always willing to help me.   ____

Inquiries are answered promptly.   ____

Variable 4: Safety and Security

I trust online travel agencies will not misuse my personal information.   ____

Online travel agencies have adequate security features.   ____

I trust online travel agencies will not give my information to other

sites without my permission.   ____

I feel like my privacy is protected at online travel agencies.   ____

I feel safe in my transactions with online travel agencies.   ____

Variable 5: Appearance and Presentation

Online travel agencies look attractive   ____

Online travel agencies use fonts properly   ____

Online travel agencies look organized   ____

Online travel agencies use colors properly   ____

Online travel agencies use multimedia features properly.   ____

Variable 6: Customer Relationship

It is easy to track the items I purchase through online travel agencies.   ____

Online travel agencies develop a platform for users to exchange travel experiences.   ____

Online travel agencies have features personalized to users.   ____

The survey is over. Your responses will be recorded and be strictly for the research purposes

only. Thank you for your coordination.