


What Determines Tourist Adoption of Hotel Websites for Online Hotel Bookings?

An Empirical Analysis by Taking E-Trust as a Mediator

Suman Lata, Amity Institute of Tourism and Travel, Amity University, Noida, India

Anil Kumar, School of Business and Economics, Westminster International University in Tashkent, Uzbekistan*

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9057-6043>

ABSTRACT

The online purchase through web channels regarding travel-related product services have undergone unprecedented growth. The objective of the study is to determine how information quality available on the websites of the hotels influences the intentions of customers of online bookings. Furthermore, the study also seeks to analyze how etrust as a mediator influences the customer online booking intention. A simple random sampling technique is used to collect the data with help of a questionnaire as the data collection tool to survey the customers in Delhi. The total valid sample size was 400. The framework and hypotheses were tested using PLS-SEM empirically. The paper found a significant and positive relation between information quality and online hotel booking intentions of users whereas the relation between source credibility and online hotel booking intentions were found to be insignificant. In addition, etrust partially mediates between information quality and online booking intentions through hotel websites with no mediation between source credibility and online hotel booking intentions.

KEYWORDS

E-Trust, Hotel Websites, Information Quality, Online Hotel Booking Intentions, Source Credibility

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, consumers highly rely on peer review opinions (Diana Gavilan, Maria Avello & Gema Martinez-Navarro, 2018). Information published by experienced customers on online platforms facilitates novice consumers in their purchasing decision (Kumar and Sharma, 2020; Ambilee & Bui, 2011; Kumar, 2019; Gavilan et al., 2018). The information published by experienced consumers on the official website makes a imperative influence on tourism businesses and therefore tourism managers are making policies to respond these consumers' intervention (Casado-Diaz et al., 2018; De Pelsmacker et al., 2018; Kumar & Lata, 2021; Gosseling et al., 2018). Internet has made a unprecedented growth and also act as marketing tool in the hospitality industry also (Ip et al., 2012). The unique characteristics of service industry are separation and intangibility, in which it becomes crucial to make customer's satisfy (McCole, 2002). Due to rising in competition between private

players, online platform is considered as most effective tool to make promotion of product and make healthy relationship with customers.

In this era of competition, most of the hotels have online presence through their own websites (Law and Hsu, 2006). Hotel firms persuade their potential consumers to do reservation by using online method through hotel's website and it would minimize and control the price (Morosan and Jeong, 2008). Thousands of travelers do hotel booking every year but due to the intangibility of product they consider it as high risk decision as you are not sure about the quality of product (Lin et al., 2009). Thus, the tourists avoid risk through booking only official websites of those hotels established by official bodies and regularly assessed by authorities (Ekinci, 2008). The present generation is quite intelligent to grab the opportunities provided in online bookings of the hotel (Buhalis and Law, 2008) because a well-designed website lure customers to book hotel rooms online (Schmidt et al., 2008). Some hotels published edited testimonials of previous consumers on their hotel websites which influence novice consumer's intention for hotel booking. Various studies in the past literature have been done on online hotel booking intentions (Danish et al. 2019; Gavilan et al. 2018; Hu & Yang, 2019; Hunold et al. 2018). However, many customers online experience is not satisfactory (Luo et al. 2012). Moreover, the study regarding published information on websites and online booking intention considering trust as mediator is very limited and travel products complexity hinders the customer for online booking (Dickinger & Mazanec, 2008). Therefore, the study tries to determine how customers perceive the available information on websites and its impact on their online booking intention. Second, to see how trust as mediator influence the online booking intention. The figure 1 shows the research study flowchart.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Information Quality

It is "*the persuasive strength of arguments entrenched in an informational message*" (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006), and assist consumers to explore and make decision about the buying of products and services (Fadhillah., Zebua., & Prayoga, 2021). There are various determinants like message quality, message comprehensiveness and its reliability also impacts on the intention of consumer and push them to make buying decision (Salehi-Esfahani, 2016).

There are many earlier authors who have done their study on information quality in various contexts including travel websites (Tseng & Wang, 2016), online review adoption (Shen, Zhang & Zhao, 2016), online customer communities (Cheung et al., 2008; Watts & Zhang, 2008), restaurant user generated content (Salehi-efshani, 2016), electronic word of mouth (Erkans & Evans, 2016; Hussain, Ahmed, Jafar, Rabnawaz & Jianzhou, 2017; Filieri, 2015), social media (Chung, Han & Koo, 2015), adoption of eGovernment websites (Wangpipatwong & Chutimaskul, 2005), Knowledge Management System (KMS) adoption, (Kuo & Lee, 2009). It can be drawn from above literature that the availability of information on hotel websites impact the customer intention in online hotel booking. Thus we propose as:

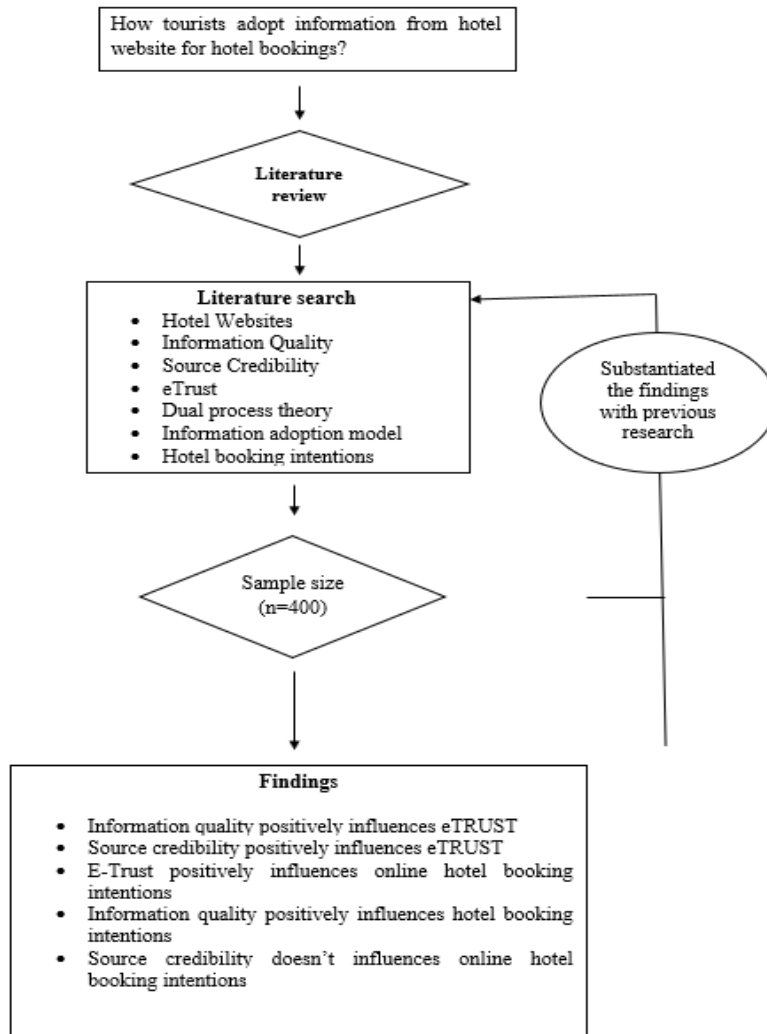
H1: *Information quality is positively associated with online hotel booking intentions.*

H4: Information quality positively associated consumer's trust.

2.2. SOURCE CREDIBILITY

It refers as "*the level to which recipients perceive the information source to be believable, competent, and trustworthy*" (Nekmat, Gower & Zhu, 2019). The trusted source of information is viable for consumers to receive it while less interested in receiving it when the source is not trustworthy (Book et al., 2018; Jang & Moutinho, 2019). Various studies that have studied source credibility in

Figure 1. Research Flowchart of the Study



various contexts including travel websites (Tseng & Wang, 2016), online review adoption (Luo, Luo, Schatzberg & Sia, 2013; Shen, Zhang & Zhao, 2016), online customer communities (Cheung et al., 2008; Watts & Zhang, 2008), restaurant user generated content (Salehi-efshani, 2016), electronic word of mouth (Ayeh, 2015; Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Hussain, Ahmed, Jafar, Rabnawaz & Jianzhou, 2017; Filieri, 2015; Rayes-Manendes et al., 2019), social media (Chung, Han & Koo, 2015), online environment (Rabjohn, Cheung and Lee, 2008), tweets sharing behavior (Ha & Ahn, 2011), purchasing decision (Erkans & Evans, 2016; Kang & Namkung, 2019), hotel review adoption (Lo & Yao, 2019). Therefore, it is assumed that we predict that reliability of information source influences the consumer's online hotel booking intention. Thus we hypothesize:

H2: *Source Credibility is positively associated online hotel booking intentions.*

H5: *Source Credibility is positively associated consumer's etrust for online hotel booking intentions.*

2.3. eTrust

The concept of trust was initiated by psychologists in the 1950s, and then applied in various fields, e.g sociology (Zucker, 1986), management (Hosmer, 1995) and marketing (Anderson & Weitz, 1989). Kumar et al. (1995) focused that trust is the most integral part that build a strong relationship in service marketing. After making purchasing decision consumers pay online before consuming the services (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991), this is quite riskier and vulnerable for consumer when their expectations for services are not met. The vulnerable outcomes represent the risk of contingency disguised in customer trust (Wang et al., 2014a). However, the service providers can still maintain and build the trust of consumers by responding and resolving their queries (DeWitt et al., 2008).

The hospitality industry have risk and uncertainty associated with it as there is no surety that how many of their hotel tickets will be sold. Consumers trust is majority depend on the information reflected on hotel website. Morgan and Hunt (1994) define trust as “when a person is confident to exchange partner’s reliability and integrity”. Reliability and integrity, the both dimensions of trust are vastly studied in hospitality context (Wang et al., 2014b). In past literature, it is mentioned by some researchers that integrity of and benevolence of product triggers consumer to trust service providers and buy it (McKnight et al., 2002). Various studies have also confirmed trust as a significant factor for hotel bookings intentions (Gavilan et al., 2018; Laldhari & Michaud, 2015; Leong et al., 2019; Lien et al, 2015; Park et al., 2019; Sparks et al., 2016; Sparks & Browning, 2011; Wang et al. 2014a). Therefore we hypothesis:

H3: etrust is positively associated to online hotel booking intentions of consumers.

2.4 Online Hotel Booking Intentions

It is imperative to predict and know the intentions of consumers towards product and services. The actual behavior of a customer is predicted through purchase intention and it is an important determinant to measure customer loyalty (Dick and Basu, 1994). There is extensive research on loyalty in marketing literature because of its ability to predict the actual behavior of consumers (Zeithaml et al., 2002; Fishbein et al., 1980). Since consumer’s actual behavior influenced through the offers provided by sellers measuring customer intention become quite difficult (Day, 1969). Numerous scholars presented the work on purchase intention in previous literature (Ajzen and Driver, 1992; Buttle and Bok, 1996; Danish et al., 2019; Filieri & McLeay 2014; Hu & Yang, 2019; Hunold et al., 2018; Manes & Techetchik et al., 2018; Mariani & Borghi, 2018). The previous study in context of wine tourism suggest that travelers prefer to visit eco-friendly destinations and even ready to higher pay for it (Barber et al., 2010). Similar to this, other scholars have examined the impact on purchase intention through website quality (Brewer & Sebby, 2021), information satisfaction (Torres & Zhang, 2021; Jeong et al., 2003), online reviews (Sun, Chen, Tian & Yang, 2021; Erkan & Evans, 2016). Since the higher risk is involved with online booking than offline purchase, the trust played a key role and even required more (Heijden et al., 2003; Tan and Thoen, 2001). The table 1 provides the recent literature summary on online booking intention.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Instrument

The objectives of the study were twofold: first, to examine the impact of information quality and source credibility on e-trust and online booking intentions and second, to examine the mediating effect of e-trust between information quality & source credibility and online hotel booking intentions. For conducting the research, a well-designed structured questionnaire was constructed using four constructs: Information quality, source credibility, eTrust and Online hotel booking intentions. The

Table 1. Various Connation of online hotel booking from literature review

Authors	Kind of Study	Approach	Tools	Country	Analytic unit
Danish et al. (2019)	Survey	Quantitative	SPSS & AMOS	Pakistan	Domestic Tourist
Hu & Yang (2019)	Theoretical-Conceptual	Quantitative	Experimental	US	Domestic Tourist
Hunold et al. (2018)	Theoretical-Conceptual	Quantitative	Cross Sectional study		International Tourists
Gavilan et al. (2018)	Theoretical–conceptual	Quantitative	Experimantal		International Tourist
Manes & Tchetchik (2018)	Theoretical	Quantitative	Experimantal		International Tourists
Mariani & Borghi (2018)	Theoretical	Quantitative	Data Science Approach	London, UK	International Tourists
Park et al. (2019)	Observation & Survey	Qualitative & Quantitative	Interview	Paris, France	Domestic tourists
Leong et al. (2019)	Survey	Quantitative	ANN	Malaysia	Domestic Tourist

construct and their items were taken from information quality (Erkans and Evans, 2016), source credibility (Tseng & Wang, 2016), e-trust(Wang et al., 2014b) and online hotel booking intentions (Wang et al., 2014b). The items of this study were measured on five point likert scale, ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

3.2 Sample and Data collection

The study sample comprises all those people residing in Delhi and explored any hotel websites in the last one year. The questionnaire was developed as a survey instrument to know the information quality available on websites influenced their online booking intentions. The survey was carried out in the month of March 2019. With the help of simple random sampling technique, the respondents were selected. The respondents are taken from delhi who have visited to hotel in last 12 months. Before giving questionnaire it was orally asked that have they visited to some hotel in past 12 months. So the respondents with answer yes were selected to proceed for questionnaire. Out of total 600 questionnaires circulated among targeted respondents, 429 were received out of which 29 incomplete questionnaires were removed because of missing values. Thus the valid sample size of the study was 400 with a response rate of 66.6%. The respondent’s profile is shown in table 2.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The model and hypotheses were tested using partial least squares structured equation modeling (PLS-SEM) using PLS 3.0 software (Ringle *et al.*, 2005). PLS-SEM is employed in the study because it works on non-normal distributed data and low sample size (Hair *et al.*, 2013). The algorithms in PLS were run to check the loadings and path coefficients before testing the validity, reliability and hypotheses.

4.1 Measurement Model

Convergent validity: Convergent validity indicates the degree to which the items of a scale are related on their constructs and not the other. Three parameters factor loadings, composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) were used to test the convergent validity as Hair et al.,(2016) recommendations. The cutoff value for item loadings 0.5, composite reliability 0.7 and Average

Table 2.

	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	221	55.4%
	Female	179	44.6%
Age	Below 20	46	11.4%
	21-35	169	42.3%
	36-50	134	33.6%
	51-65	35	8.7%
	Above 65	16	4%
Employment Status	Employed	227	56.8%
	Self-Employed	74	18.3%
	Student	45	11.3%
	Others	54	13.6%

variance extracted (AVE) 0.5 or above were taken as per the suggestions in previous literature (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The table 3 shows the convergent validity.

Discriminant Validity: The discriminant validity of the model was assessed by Hetrotrait-Monotrait ratio which suggest the threshold value 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). For the good discriminant value, all values should be lesser than 0.85. The table 4 confirms the good discriminant validity. The results show that all the validity and reliability criteria were met and for these constructs can be used to test the structural model and the hypotheses.

4.2 Structural Model

The structural model used to examine the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The smart-PLS 3.0 software is used for model validation and hypotheses testing (Ringle, et al., 2005). The bootstrapping with 5000 sample was performed to test the statistical significance and path coefficient (Chin *et al.*, 2008). The goodness of fit (GoF) was examined following Tenenhaus *et al.* (2005) criteria. It is calculated as “the geometric mean of the average communality and the average R^2 (for endogenous constructs)”. The threshold values for GoF analysis were $GoF_{small} = 0.1$; $GoF_{medium} = 0.25$; and $GoF_{large} = 0.36$. (Hoffmann and Birnbrich, 2012). The GoF values of model are 0.375 and 0.554 which shows the model has a good fit (Table 5).

Further the Figure 3 refers to the explanatory power of the predictor variables on the respective construct. Information Quality on eTrust ($\beta=0.521$, $p<0.05$), Source Credibility ($\beta=0.279$, $p<0.05$), eTrust ($\beta=0.267$, $p<0.05$) and Information Quality on Hotel Booking ($\beta=0.184$, $p<0.05$) were found to be significantly explaining the booking intentions. Further, source credibility on online hotel booking intentions ($\beta=0.090$, $p>0.05$) was found insignificant. The standardized coefficient was found 0.184 for information quality on online hotel booking intentions and through the mediation of eTrust it shows the standardized coefficient of 0.242. So the mediation found in this study between information quality and online hotel booking intentions is partial. Further, standardized coefficient was found 0.09 for source credibility on online hotel booking intentions and through the mediation of eTrust it shows the standardized coefficient of 0.001. So, there is no impact of source credibility was found either through etrust or direct. The model is considered substantial, moderate and weak on the basis of R^2 value. The recommended values for R^2 for substantial, moderate and weak model are

Table 3.

Construct	Scale Item	Loadings	Composite Reliability	AVE	Cronbach Alpha
Information Quality (IQ)	IQ1	0.794	0.862	0.610	0.788
	IQ2	0.810			
	IQ3	0.698			
	IQ4	0.815			
Source Credibility (SC)	SC1	0.797	0.864	0.618	0.788
	SC2	0.771			
	SC3	0.646			
	SC4	0.906			
etrust(eT)	AB	0.817	0.875	0.701	0.787
	BN	0.799			
	IN	0.893			
	HB1	0.894			
Hotel Booking Intentions (HBI)	HB2	0.895	0.921	0.796	0.872
	HB3	0.888			

Table 4.

	HBI	IQ	SC	e-Trust
HBI	0.000			
IQ	0.449	0.000		
SC	0.328	0.461	0.000	
e-Trust	0.501	0.763	0.586	0.000

0.67, 0.33 or 0.19, respectively (Chin *et al.*, 2008). Thus the study model is substantial ($R^2 = 0.453$) for eTrust and moderate for hotel booking intentions ($R^2 = 0.208$).

4.5 Importance-Performance Method Analysis

The Importance-Performance method analysis is one of the method in Smart PLS to gain the original results. Reserachers use basic PLS to analyse the impact of construct on dependent variable and as well as it derive the path coefficients. IPMA analysis helps to know the importance and performance of construct. It brings more insight when it gives in detail how much a construct is important and while performing how much it is performing. Many times it happen that construct have high importance but low performance and vice versa. The importance and performance of IQ found high which shows that information quality has importance and significance to build etrust for online hotel booking intentions. The importance and performance for SC was found low which shows that this construct

Figure 2. The Ratio of Discriminant value by Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

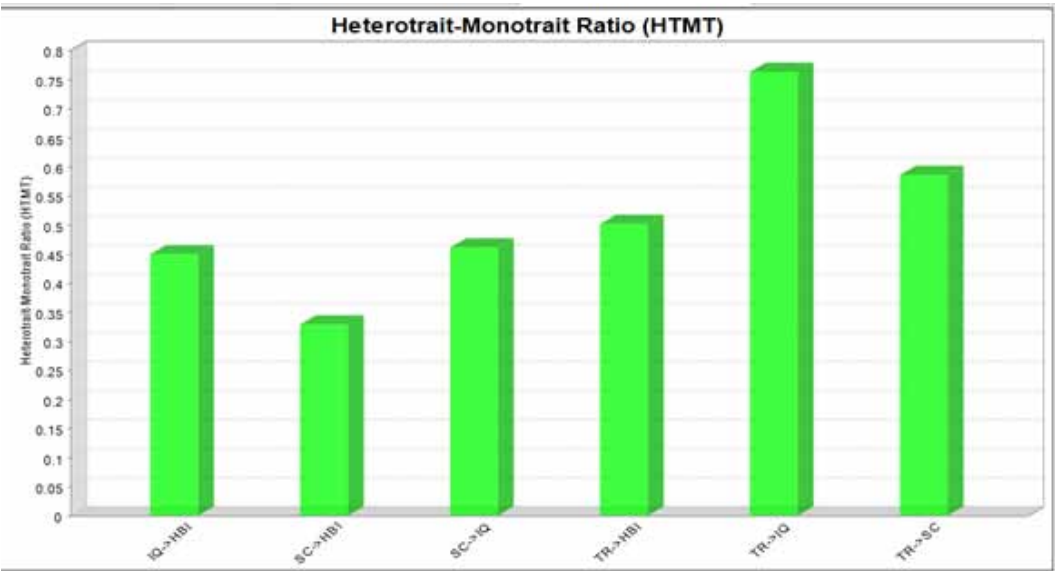


Table 5.

Constructs	AVE	R ²
Information Quality	0.610	
Source Credibility	0.618	
<u>eTrust</u>	0.701	
Online Hotel Booking Intentions	0.796	
Average Score	0.681	
AVE *R ² (HBI)	0.141	0.208
AVE*R ² (Etrust)	0.308	0.453
<i>(GOF = AVE*R²)(HBI)</i>		0.375
<i>(GOF = AVE*R²)(Etrust)</i>		0.554

is weak to built etrust of consumers. The importance of etrust is found higher whereas the value of performance was little lower so which indicates that the construct has more importance as compared to its performance.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose behind this study is to examine the impact of information quality and source credibility on online hotel booking intentions and to know the role eTrust as mediator as well. The findings of this study examine the partial mediation of eTrust between information quality and online hotel booking intentions and no mediation between source credibility and online hotel booking intentions.

These results are found similar like the earlier studies (Bai et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2015). Few of the studies which are conducted including the other aspects of hotel industry have also found similar

Figure 3. The Structural Model

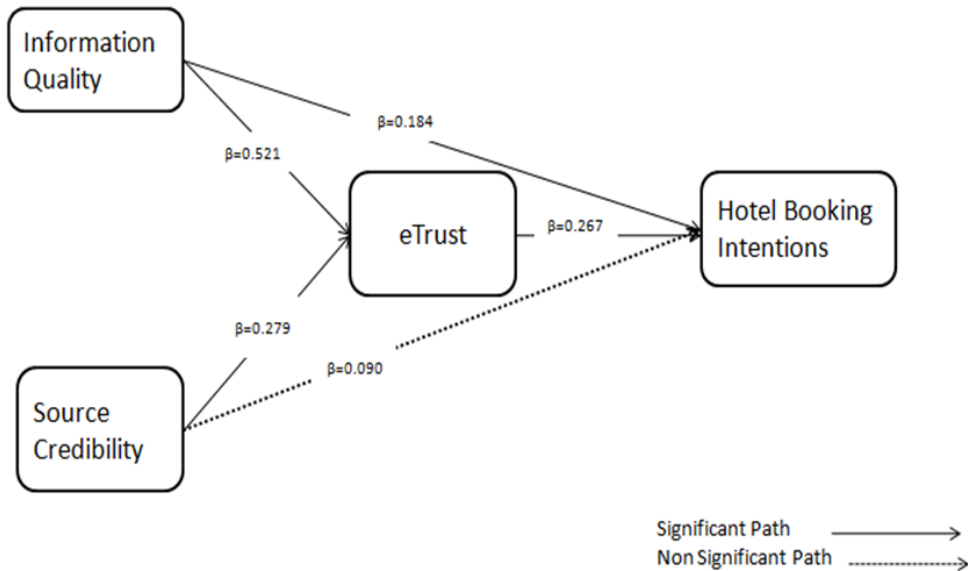


Table 6.

Hypotheses	Path	Standardized Coefficient	P value	Supported	Constructs	R-Squared
H1	IQ-eTRUST	0.521	0.000	Yes	ETRUST	0.453
H2	SC-eTRUST	0.279	0.000	Yes		0.208
H3	ETRUST-HBI	0.267	0.000	Yes	Hotel booking intentions	
H4	IQ-HBI	0.184	0.003	Yes		
H5	SC-HBI	0.09	0.090	No		

results. For instance, in a study conducted by (Kim et al., 2009) based on technology acceptance model (TAM) presented that e-trust and online purchase intention associated positively in the context of e-commerce. Other studies presented different dimensions with different results. Consumers perceived trust moderate among value, satisfaction and online service quality (Lee and Wu, 2011). In a recent study it was found that e-trust moderates the relationship of hotel website quality and online hotel booking intentions (Wang, Law, Guillet, Hung, & Fong, 2015). The website quality depends on the

available information on website thus, information quality is considered as an important indicator measure the website quality. The service industry is intangible in nature and services as a product has no physical existence thus this dimension become more significant while selling the services on the Internet. Thus ensure the availability of clear and specific information on websites because customers required relevant, up to date and accurate information regarding products/services before to make purchase decisions. Thus hotels should try to regularly update the websites to enhance the customer trust in online transactions.

The previous report shows that in a short period of two years an international hotel made more than US\$1 billion in gross sales through its online booking system (Clabaugh, 2003). Therefore, owners of the hotel business attempt to delight their customers to generate more revenue and convert e-browsers into e-buyers. The results of source credibility were found insignificant which reflect that consumer doesn't look for source but only see the quality of content.

The relationship of information quality and hotel booking intention done by travelers by using online platform found positive. It reflects that it is really important for hoteliers to upload the accurate information on their website. The intentions of potential travelers are influenced by comprehensive information provided on website. It is really a challenge for hotel companies to maintain the information quality of websites to maintain the customers' loyalty. Law and Bai, (2006) stated that different hotels follow different approaches to maintain the standard of their website but there is no uniform industrial layout for websites development.

Implications

The result of this study has provided great insights in the literature of hotel booking. This study has information adoption model by extended it by taking eTrust as mediator in hotel booking contexts. It provides implications for hotel practitioners, and marketers. Hotel managers should focus on the content published on their official websites as it plays a prominent role in attracting customers. The content uploaded shouldn't contain any vague information and as well as fake reviews must be avoided as it tarnishes the image of hotels.

The focus should also be given on website designing by using new technologies that could gain the attention of consumers. The study suggests to the managers in the field of hotel industry to be updated with accurate information on websites to improve the quality of websites. This way websites will serve as a platform for relationship marketing (Bai et al., 2006; Gan et al., 2007) because currently most of the websites designing are at nascent level. The websites should be designed in such a manner so that a customer can navigate it easily, search required information easily and fully secured towards privacy to enhance the trust of a customer. The relevance of old saying that "*customer is a king*" also implemented here. More effective the website is, more the revenue generated in hotel's business (Zafiroopoulos and Vrana, 2006). The present generation is very much sound in technology so they prefer online hotel booking with customized online demand in hotels. Therefore, it should be a regular practice from business houses to allocate the budget for investing in development and maintenance of relevant information on websites to meet consumers' demand for acquiring information.

As previous studies state positive reviews are taken more favorable by the consumers for booking decisions (Poon et al., 2014). So the hotel managers should provide best facilities and services which will encourage consumers to upload positive reviews for hotel. Consumers also believe that hotels with only positive reviews only have fake reviews or hotel managers have removed negative reviews from their websites. Hotel managers should always notice that experienced consumers' comments shed a light on their weakness so instead of removing it they must focus on their service quality. As well as hotel managers should continuously monitor the reviews and make strategies to overcome negative reviews. The responses given by hotels are visible to all readers, so the efficient handling of negative reviews by hotels will be noticed and appreciated which might further satisfy and pacify the dissatisfied guest too and motivate him to write positive for their genuine service recovery (Lo

& Yao, 2019). Hotels and online travel channels should always avoid fraudulent reviews as it can tarnish their image.

The study well established that online booking intention highly influenced by the information quality of the websites. It also affirmed that e-trust could be a mediator between information quality of the websites and online booking of the hotel. The study suggest that the quality of available information on websites affect the trust of customer's and influence the online booking intention of the customers. Furthermore, the study contributes to the existing literature through the proposed model and its validation that the online presence through own websites with requisite and quality information could be used as a marketing tool.

Limitations and Future Research

The data for current study has taken from Indian travelers so the findings of this study can't be generalized in other countries. The travelers who adopt information from hotel websites in other countries might have a different perception, culture and intentions. This paper has taken only two determinants of information adoption and produce variance of 20% and 45% only which reflects that there are some other important variables which are not included. Further studies can include other variables such as information consistency, information sidedness, information quantity, website usability, website functionability etc. This study has examined the mediation but not moderation of any variable so further studies can study their work by taking moderator as age, gender, consumer skepticism, personal involvement.

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Suman Lata is currently working as Assistant Professor in Amity Institute of Tourism and Travel at Amity University, Noida, India. Her research interests include social media, destination marketing and sustainable development. She has published papers in many refereed journals and presented her work in several international conferences.

Anil Kumar is presently working as Senior Lecturer with Business Management and Marketing Department, School of Business and Economics, Westminster International University in Tashkent (WIUT). He has done his PhD from Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology (an institute of national importance) Bhopal India and MBA from Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology (an institute of national importance) Allahabad India. He has qualified UGC-NET in management also. He has over 12 years of teaching experiences and has taught courses on Brand Management, Retail Management, Consumer Behavior, Marketing Management, and Marketing of Services. Dr. Kumar has published and presented his research work in national and international journals and conferences. His research interest lies in Marketing, Supply Chain Management, Green Marketing, Retail Management, Consumer Behavior, Entrepreneurship, E-Commerce, etc.