

Chapter 1:

A Review on Change in Consumer Behaviour in Tourism and Hospitality Industry

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In this chapter, the change in consumer behaviour has been discussed with reference to hospitality and tourism industry. The main Purpose of the chapter is to observe the changes in the consumer behaviour due to pandemic, Paper also discusses the various factors which influence the tourist behaviour or the tourist decision. Literature review has been performed to identify important theories. For the study, secondary data collection methods have been used. The travel decisions are made based on the safety or hygiene measures in place. It also reveals that e-reviews or peer reviews play an important role in consumer's decision making.

1 Introduction

Consumer in the tourism sector is highly diverse (i.e., Heterogeneous) groups of tourists, which are constantly changing in terms of personal features, personality traits and behavioural characteristics. (Juvan, Omerzel & Maravic, 2017) The consumer decision making, and behaviour is fast changing within the tourism industry. The consumer behaviour involves ideas, activities or experiences which satisfies the needs and demands of the consumers. Consumer behaviour is one of the most studied topics in hospitality and tourism. (Cohen, Prayag & Moital 2014) From past four decades understanding of traveller's decision-making study has attracted considerable attention of academicians. (Tang, Hongrun Wu, Ramos & Sriboonchitta, 2021)

The tourist behaviour is influenced by several factors such as their social status, choice or preferences, motivation, opinion, activities, needs, peer reviews, etc. (Gharibi, 2020). The more the disposable income of an individual the wider is their choice of tourist destinations. The individual taste or preferences also influence consumer decision making. In addition, peer reviews also excise a significant control on consumer decision making. The growth of social media has made online reviews readily available. Consumers often place a relative amount of importance on information collected from social media and other online resources for making important decisions. The choice of a restaurant is often influenced by the number of stars collected online.

In this chapter, the change in consumer behaviour has been discussed with reference to hospitality and tourism industry. A literature review has been performed to identify important theories. For the study, secondary data collection methods have been used. The future research implications have also been discussed over here.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Tourism as a product

Tourism is the movement of people from one location to another outside their own community (Dixit, 2017). The satisfaction of a tourist is determined by a range of experiences and activities. In this respect, either a positive or negative impact is created based on the different motivations and needs of tourists. The



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tourism industry contributes significantly to boosting economy of a country or region. The revenue earned from international tourism helps in strengthening the economy. In the recent decade tourism has emerged as a profitable industry. The agents try to market or sell their product to the consumers, which in this case is the travel plan. However, unless experienced it is difficult for the consumers to find value in a particular tourist plan. The experiences of a tourist are often influenced by their personal choice or preferences. It is difficult for the tour organizer to anticipate the consumer needs. In this respect, tourism and hospitality is often seen as a product. It further increases manifold times. For example, customers may find the services of a hotel or restaurant better than others. As mentioned by (Harris and Prideaux, 2017), customers emphasis on value-based services. Therefore, the hospitality industry needs to ensure that best services are provided to the consumers at standard rated and prices. As argued by (Horner, 2017), tourism is an intangible and perishable product. That is the restaurants and tour planners need to constantly keep adding value to their services. The changing preferences of the customers create more pressure on a brand or an organization.

2.2 Tourist behaviour

The tourist behaviour is influenced by a number of factors. Some of these factors include education, peer reviews and social status. The tourist behaviour can be understood with the help of theories and models. One such model has been used over here which helps to understand consumer decision making. As mentioned by Smit and Melissen (2018), the decision making of a tourist is influenced by their intrinsic motivation, individual learning and cognition. The motivation to visit a place is often developed based on peer reviews and individual knowledge. Consumer education plays a vital role over here. As mentioned by Sigala & Gretzel (2017), social media helps in developing sufficient knowledge regarding a place. In addition, factors such as individual income and family preference also plays major role in tourist decision making. The tourist behaviour can be divided into three stages such as *pre-visit*, *onsite* and *post visit*.

The *pre visit* stage is filled with anticipation or excitement. At this stage, planning is done based on the collected information or data. Consumers are prone to change their decisions during the pre-visit stage. As mentioned by (Sotiriadis ,2017) the positive and negative information collected during the pre-visit stage plays a major role in decision making.

The *onsite experience* is influenced by the quality of hospitality extended to the consumers. The value attached with a place also contributes to tourist experience gathered by an individual. The hospitality industry faces stiff competition due to changing customer preferences. As mentioned by Ivanov *et al.* (2019), customer loyalty plays an important role over here. Consumer loyalty towards a brand over others can provide them with a competitive advantage (Lane and Kastenholtz 2015). However, the loyalty of customers towards a particular brand or organization is easily influenced by peer reviews. As supported by Marasco *et al.* (2018), online reviews or e-review plays a major role in customer decision making.

The *post visit* stage plays a critical role over here. It is based on this stage that the customer will re-visit a tourist spot or destination. As mentioned by Sotiriadis, (2017), the experiences gathered during the pre-visit and onsite stage influences the decision of a consumer to revisit a place. Hence, it takes into consideration a number of factors such as the overall tourist experience including the hospitality services. The activity in which the consumer participates alongside the value at which the services are offered plays a major role in shaping the decisions of consumers (Robinson and Novelli,2005).

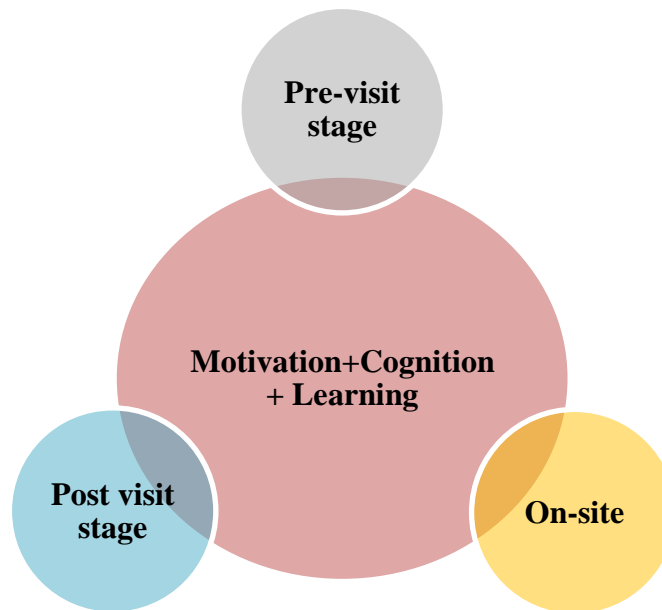


Figure 1: *Tourist decision making stages (Moutinho, 1987)*

For predicating behavioral intention, the theory of planned behavior (TPB) is one of the most widely researched Frameworks. (Mohammad Soliman, 2019). The tourist behaviour can be further explained by the *theory of planned behaviour*. The theory of planned behaviour states that the intentional behaviour of an individual is guided by their own *attitude or belief, societal norms* and *attainable objectives*. For instance, a customer will prefer visiting a place if it fits their personal choice as well as they receive positive reviews about the place from their friends and social circle. In addition, the decision to visit a place is also guided by other factors such as distance and income (Hibbert *et al.* 2013). For instance, budget often plays a major role over here. As mentioned by Smit and Melissen (2018), cultural heritage also plays a major role in attracting tourists to a place.

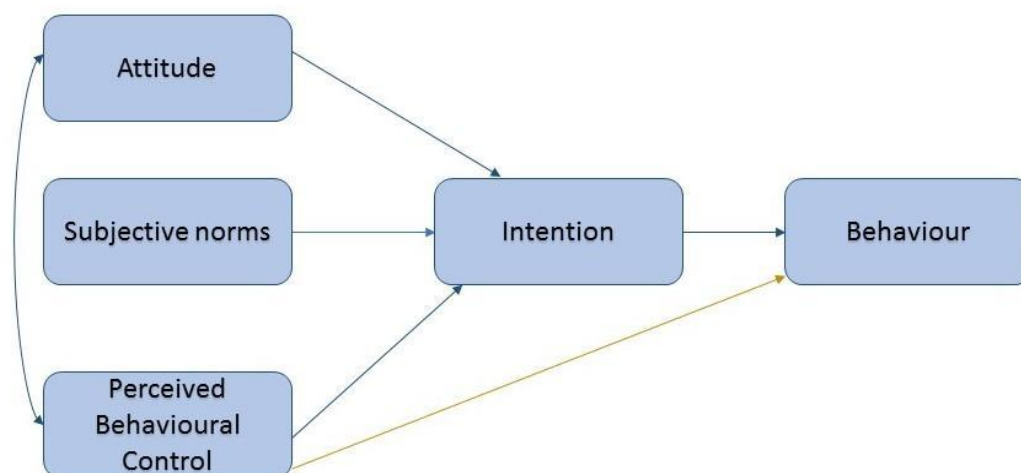


Figure 2: *Theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)*

The consumer preferences and decision making can be understood with the help of the *theory of buyer behaviour*. The buyer behaviour is influenced by a number of factors. The various factors have been discussed in detail over here. The buying behaviour is influenced by the potential of a buyer to make the purchase. Therefore, tourists with higher disposable income are more likely to spend exorbitantly on a trip. The normative beliefs also play an instrumental role in customer decision making. The purchase behavior is influenced by an amalgam of factors such as attitude of the buyer towards the brand, buyer knowledge regarding the brand, attention to stimulus received from the environment and the ultimate buying behaviour. In this context, the stimulus received from the environment acts as the input, whereas the customer purchase decision is the response or output. As mentioned by (Senbeto and Hon, 2020), social media can be used to educate consumers regarding a brand. In this respect, social media campaigns could be used to inform the consumers regarding special discounts and offers provided by tourist destinations or hotel groups. The offers and discounts can act as an impetus for motivating consumers to make a purchase.

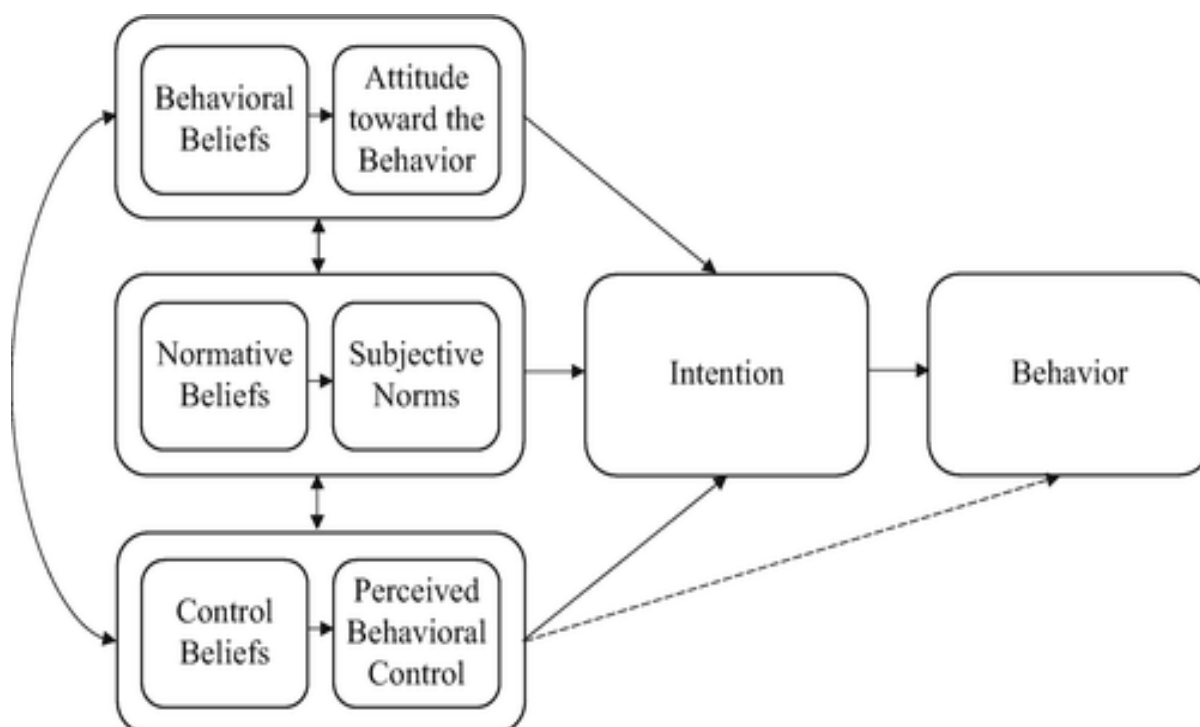


Figure 3: Theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, I. 2016)

2.3 Changes in consumer behaviour in tourism and hospitality

There has been vast change in consumer behaviour since COVID. The hospitality industry has suffered huge losses due to the COVID -19 pandemic. Some of the top leisure destinations such as Hong Kong, Phuket, Singapore, Seoul, Bali were worst affected due to the pandemic. As mentioned by (He and Harris,2020), the tourism and hospitality industry was back to normal only after a year since the outbreak of the pandemic. As per the world economic forum, there was a drastic drop in international travel rates due to the pandemic (weforum.org 2020). The airlines experienced almost 30% reduction in demand due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (statista.com 2020). A multitude of changes were made by the hospitality industry to attract customers post-pandemic. Some of these include heightened safety, enhancing existing safety measures, introducing more tech –enabled systems to provide real time support to the consumers. Customers are more prone to make informed decisions and avoid places which normally have a heavy tourist traffic post pandemic (Rahimzhan and Irani 2020). The hotels should clearly communicate the safety measures undertaken by them in their websites. In addition, the hotel authorities should ensure

that frequent sanitisation and disinfection is done on the hotel premises. Contactless check -in /check- out is other important features demanded by the guests during and post pandemic. Therefore, technology could help in implementing such measures. Consumers visiting hotel or tourist destinations also enquire regarding the medical facilities available. For instance, a guest suddenly feels sick after check in, the hotelier should immediately arrange for a doctor. In this respect, certain tourist resorts and hotels have also tied up with nearest medical facilities. However, such details should be clearly mentioned on the website. In the absence of such details, the customers may lose faith in the hotel brand. The safety standards should also be followed by the hotel staff. They should wear mask at all times and frequently sanitize their hands. The lack of sufficient safety measures increases the risk of virus contraction for both the staff and the guests (Sigala, 2020). Due to the pandemic, most guests prefer to disinfect their rooms themselves. Thus, limiting the entry of housekeeping can reduce the risk of the spread of the virus. Therefore, the hotelier should ensure that clear instructions are provided to the guests regarding cleaning and disinfection. There has been an increase in demand for proximity sensors in entry and exists. It can help reduce contact with surfaces. However, many hotels lack such infrastructure. Therefore, some of the hotel businesses have suffered drastically in the wake of the pandemic. As mentioned by Sharma *et al.* (2020, p.19), the pandemic has resulted in the hospitality and tourism industry make maximum use of digital resources. Many reputed hotels and resorts are offering the feature of keyless entry to their guests. Due to social distancing measures and increased caution less number of people has been dining outside. By January 2021, there was a staggering decline of 50.85 percent in seated diners in restaurants (statista.com 2020).

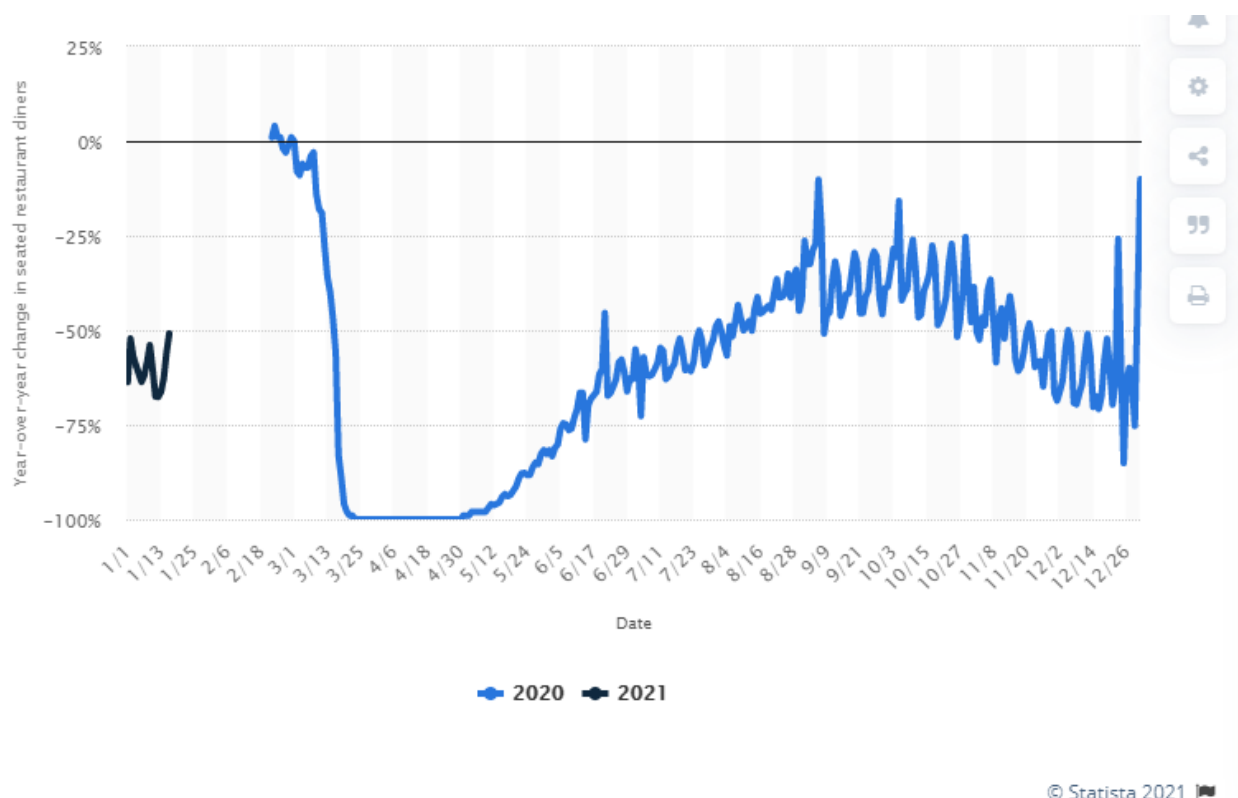


Figure 4: Decrease in the percentage of seat-out dining over a year

The COVID pandemic also affected the travel plans of people worldwide. Based on certain studies and survey, it was found that 31% of Indians did not make any travel bookings and waited for the situation to get better (statista.com 2020). The country went into a lockdown since March 25th 2020 and has a population of around 1.3 billion people.

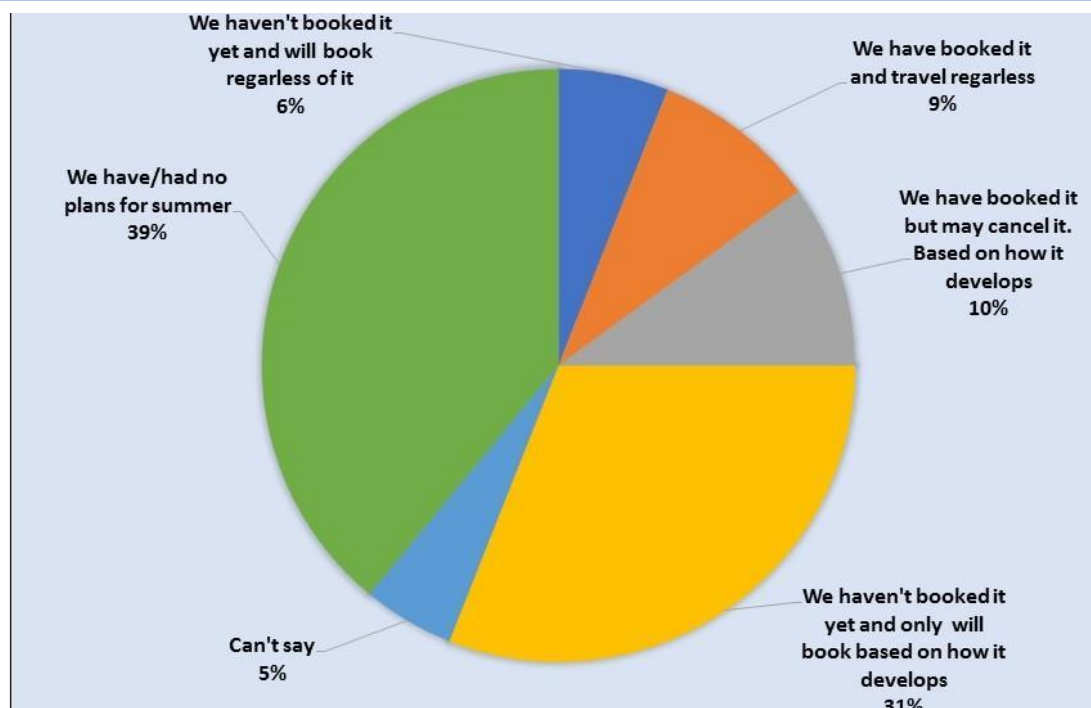


Figure 5: Impact of Coronavirus on travel plans of Indians (statista.com, 2020)

3 Discussion and findings

The tourism and hospitality industry have been significantly hit due to the COVID -19 pandemic. In order to contain the spread of the virus many countries-imposed lockdown. As reported by (Manthiou 2020), the lockdown measures resulted in huge losses for the tourism and hospitality industry. As mentioned by (Verma and Saini ,2020), pandemic created fear and anxiety within people. It resulted in a huge decline in tourist bookings. The social distancing measures affected the travel decision of the consumers (Le, D. and Phi 2020). The revenue from the tourism and hospitality industry is estimated at 396.37 billion US dollars (statista.com 2020). There was a decrease of 42.1 percent in the revenue collected from tourism due to the pandemic (Kock *et al.* 2020, p.325). It could be attributed to lockdown and bans imposed on travel. There was a complete stand still in tourism and hospitality operations during the second quarter of 2020. It resulted in negative revenue generation for the hospitality industry. In order to cope up with the loss many employees were removed from services. As mentioned by Kock *et al.* (2020), most consumers placed emphasis on hygiene and sanitation measures. The COVID pandemic has resulted in a major setback to the hospitality industry. Restaurants, malls were shut for indefinite period of time. Though, the lockdown measures were eased gradually. It led to a paradigm shift within the hospitality industry. The social distancing measures had led more emphasis online travel bookings and management. In addition, the customers should be ensured that sufficient hygiene measures are in place to stop the spread of the virus. Cash management is another important aspect. The tourism and hospitality industry have shifted to digital and cashless transactions. It helps to reduce the risk of the transmission of the COVID -19 viruses. Many tourism and travel companies are organizing virtual tours through social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, etc. Some of these methods have been used by the tourist groups to recover the financial losses suffered by them due to the COVID -19 pandemic. As mentioned by Verma & Saini (2020), the pandemic has severely impacted the supply chain and logistics. Therefore, disruption in the supply chain could affect the steady supply of inbound materials. Compliance with risk management has become very important post pandemic. The tourism and hospitality industry should ensure that sufficient PPEs are provided to the staff.

In addition, regular health inspection of the staff and administration can help prevent the transmission of the virus.

Based on the discussion, it has been found that consumer behaviour is a dynamic quality and changes over time based upon a few factors. Tourism in this respect is seen as an intangible product. The travel plans of an individual are influenced upon intrinsic motivation, learning and cognition. The socio-demographic factors also play a very important role over here. For instance, the higher the disposable income of an individual, the higher is the desire in to visit exotic locations. However, some of factors such as age and present health condition also play a major role in influencing travel decision of an individual. Peer reviews also play a very important role in tourist decision making. In this respect, the review collected from online and social media sites plays a great role in influencing or inspiring individual travel plans. E-reviews have a major role in shaping consumer decision making. In this respect, the personalised experiences shared by peers often influences tourist behaviour and decision making.

Based upon the theory of planned behaviour, it has been found that the decision making of consumers is influenced by own attitude and belief. In addition, the societal norms also play a major role over here. For instance, some of the tourist spots or destinations are more popularised compared to the rest over social media. Hence, it might increase the motivation within tourists to visit such places or destinations. In addition, the kind of stimulus provided to the tourists also plays a major role in influencing their decision. For example, any kind of discounts and offers acts as an impetus for the tourists. Therefore, consumers are more likely to book the tickets when cost waivers are applied. In this respect, the processing of stimulus is based on internal characteristics and personal preferences. The external variables such as socio-economic factors, opinion of family and social groups also modulate the purchase decision of an individual. The customers can become loyal to a hotel group based on their extent of satisfaction with the services offered by the hotel groups. Based on the past satisfaction or dissatisfaction levels, a consumer is mostly likely to change their perception towards a brand.

Table 1: *Comparison of evolution in consumer behavior*

Previous studies	Current studies	Antecedents of behavioral change
<p>Customer decision making is influenced by socio-demographic factors and peer reviews.</p> <p>The buying behaviour of customers is based in information processing which is based on first-hand experiences as well as peer reviews (Gharibi 2020, p.127).</p> <p>The likelihood of consumers repeating brand/services is based on the quality of services.</p> <p>The attitude, choice and preferences of the customers also influence their satisfaction levels with certain products and services (Tavakoli and Wijesinghe 2019, p.54).</p>	<p>Developing a strong online presence for tourism or travel companies can help in attracting more number of consumers.</p> <p>Peer opinions alongside e-reviews have a strong influence on customer decision making (Senbeto and Hon 2020, p.751).</p> <p>More number of tourism and hospitality services is focusing on providing customised services to consumers.</p> <p>Reduced use of use of manual services and more use of technology enabled services (Tavakoli and Wijesinghe 2019, p.50).</p> <p>More importance laid on hygiene and sanitation measures.</p>	<p>Changing times have placed more importance in hygiene and sanitation measures.</p> <p>There is a need for technology enabled services to reduce contact with surfaces and personnel. Therefore, the tourist and hospitality industry should be supported with the help of strong infrastructure (Singh 2020, p.9).</p> <p>The increased pressure and demand on tourism industry makes it difficult to engage huge number of consumers in real time resulting in service delays (Zgolli and Zaiem 2018, p.170). Therefore, digital resources can further strengthen the tourism and hospitality industry.</p>

However, a number of changes have been found in tourist behaviour since pandemic. For instance, most tourists prefer in room dining rather than eating in crowded or open places. Based upon survey, it has been found that many people are anxious to make travel plans. The tourism and hospitality industry has undergone a paradigm shift. There is increased focus on sanitation and hygiene measures. In addition, there is an urgent need for tech enabled infrastructure to reduce the chances of contact with the virus. The changes in customer/tourist behaviour have been grouped into three different factors based upon the prevalent socio-demographic factors.

4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the changes or evolution in consumer behaviour within the tourism and hospitality sector has been discussed. There are a number of factors which influence consumer decision making or travel behaviour. For instance, e-reviews or peer reviews play an important role over here. In addition, the socio-demographic factors such as age and income of an individual also affect their travel behaviour. The consumer perceptions are influenced based on their entire travel experience. It could be divided into three stages such as pre-visit, onsite and post-visit. There has been a paradigm shift in tourism and hospitality since the outbreak of the pandemic. It has also affected the behaviour of the people. The travel decisions are made based on the safety or hygiene measures in place. In addition, the hospitality and tourism industry are shifting towards the use digital resources. Some of the digital resources such as keyless entries and cashless/online transactions can help in controlling the spread of the virus.

5 Declarations

5.1 Limitations and future research directions

A few limitations were faced while performing the study. The lack of time and sufficient resources also led to research gaps. Some of the articles were paid or available in languages other than English. It is difficult to predict the change in consumer behaviour or psychology. Consumer behaviour is dynamic in nature and could be shifted due to a multitude of factors (Telfer 2002, p.67). However, there is very little literature available on the influence of COVID on the travel intentions of people. The actual behaviour of people is also influenced by factors such as peer reviews, online/e-reviews. Hence, it is difficult to determine the actual causes behind the changed behaviour. For more reliable results, survey questionnaire could be used by the researcher. Tourist behaviour is also determined by social and demographic factors. For the current study, a multitude of factors have been considered by the researcher. It could therefore lead to over representation and underrepresentation of certain demographics.

5.2 Competing Interests

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

5.3 Publisher's Note

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