Yugesh Dharel

ONLINE REVIEWS AND THEIR IMPACT IN TOURISM BUSINESS

Need for strategic handling of consumer feedbacks

Thesis
CENTRIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
International Business
December 2020
ABSTRACT

The thesis is about online reviews and their impact on tourism. Feedbacks in online platforms can make a huge impact on the tourism business. The present time is the age of the Internet and electronic devices. Almost all the sectors in business are affected by the Internet and electronic gadgets. The thesis revolves around tourism, the Internet, online consumer reviews, and its handling.

Online reviews and their strategic handling are influential factors for successful business operation in the tourism industry. Feedbacks are a guideline and can act as a ladder for growth and success. Whether it is negative or positive, reviews are always beneficial for companies if appropriately handled, and if business firms should show proactiveness in responding and solving consumer issues. The dominance of the Internet and booking platforms is growing year by year.

The thesis aims to determine the impact of online reviews on the tourism business and suggest strategic handling of online reviews for growth and survival. The objective is to understand the need for online reviews and strategic handling. The theoretical part is based on the book and online portals. The research process was done with quantitative analysis with the help of a questionnaire. The survey was conducted online.

Key words
Feedback, Himalayan Hub Adventure Pvt.Ltd, online reviews, online travel agencies, tourism, tourists travel agencies, travel
CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNTWO</td>
<td>The World Tourism Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F &amp; B</td>
<td>Food and Beverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTA</td>
<td>Online Travel Agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTTC</td>
<td>World Travel &amp; Tourism Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION..............................................................................................................................................1

2 TOURISM .........................................................................................................................................................3
   2.1 Trends and technologies in tourism ..........................................................................................................4
   2.2 Sectors within the tourism business .........................................................................................................6
      2.2.1 Transportation ..................................................................................................................................6
      2.2.2 Accommodation .................................................................................................................................7
      2.2.3 F & B service ......................................................................................................................................8
      2.2.4 Recreation .........................................................................................................................................9
      2.2.5 Travel Service ..................................................................................................................................10

3 ONLINE REVIEWS AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR ..........................................................................................12
   3.1 TripAdvisor .............................................................................................................................................16
   3.2 Booking.com ............................................................................................................................................16
   3.3 Google ......................................................................................................................................................17
   3.4 Facebook ................................................................................................................................................17
   3.5 Instagram ................................................................................................................................................18

4 HIMALAYAN HUB ADVENTURE PVT: LTD .....................................................................................................19

5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .......................................................................................................................21
   5.1 Quantitative Research ..............................................................................................................................21
   5.2 Validity and Reliability .............................................................................................................................22

6 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION ..................................................................................................24
   6.1 Chart Representation and Analysis .........................................................................................................24
   6.2 Findings ..................................................................................................................................................33

7 CONCLUSION ..................................................................................................................................................35

REFERENCES ....................................................................................................................................................37

FIGURES

FIGURE 1. Sectors of tourism ............................................................................................................................9
FIGURE 2. Booking of travel packages online ..................................................................................................24
FIGURE 3. Purchase of travel packages online .................................................................................................25
FIGURE 4. Going through online reviews before booking travel packages online .....................................26
FIGURE 5. Reviews being influential on making purchase decisions ............................................................26
FIGURE 6. Were respondents asked to write reviews? ..................................................................................27
FIGURE 7. Writing online reviews ................................................................................................................27
FIGURE 8. The experience of respondents on getting a response from sellers ...........................................28
FIGURE 9. Respondents trust widely used booking and review platforms and booking sites ..................28
FIGURE 10. Whether consumers should/should not share their experience on review platforms……29
FIGURE 11. The dependency of tourism on the Internet…………………………………………30
FIGURE 12. The growing dependency of the tourism industry………………………………………30
FIGURE 13. Positive reviews help in building trust towards travel and tourism companies…………31
FIGURE 14. Reviews are helpful in the fight against online scams and frauds……………………32
FIGURE 15. Reviews make business firms transparent and competitive…………………………32
FIGURE 16. Reviews make business firms transparent and competitive……………………………33
1 INTRODUCTION

The impact of online reviews on the tourism industry is analyzed in this thesis. Online reviews these days influence a lot in any industry and make a difference in consumers' purchasing decisions. Online reviews include reviews made on Google reviews, reviews on the company's web page, Booking.com, TripAdvisor reviews, thoughts on companies' Facebook and Instagram pages, and many other online platforms. As with any other industry, the tourism industry is also highly influenced by the Internet and technology. The growth of the dominance of the Internet on travel and tourism is undeniable. There will be more niche based tourism and more individual booking than mass-based tourism, and most of these bookings will be made online.

The thesis aims to know the impact of online reviews on the tourism industry, online reviews influence on the tourism business. The objective is to understand the need for online reviews in the tourism industry. A positive response is likely to raise sales, and negative reviews could help for correction and growth. Finding out the level of impact can help the tourism business stakeholders decide their need for online involvement. If reviews are analyzed and handled carefully, it could be the key to companies' growth and expansion. If ignored, then it can also be disastrous to a company.

This thesis's theoretical part includes the importance of feedback made on various booking platforms, social media, websites, and google reviews. The growing dependency of the tourism industry on the Internet and technology is highlighted. The general tourism history and sectors within tourism businesses are also presented. The need and importance of the Internet in the tourism industry are highlighted. The various tourism accommodations, transportations, food and beverage, travel service, and recreation are discussed. The current trends and technological advancement in tourism are presented. The theoretical part also includes consumers' buying behavior and factors that can be influential in their buying decisions. The need for online reviews is discussed. The review platforms that are mostly used by Himalayan Hub Adventure Pvt.Ltd that are booking.com, Instagram, Facebook, google.com, TripAdvisor is also presented.

The research part consists of the research process. To complete this part, the quantitative research method has been used. A questionnaire will be prepared, and the online survey will be collected from random participants involved with the tourism business or who have studied tourism. The research will
be based on a survey taken using Google forms, and findings will be presented via bar diagrams and pie charts. The survey was taken among 40 respondents with the help of a questionnaire from Google forms.

The commissioner of the thesis is Mr. Pursottam Rimal. Mr. Pursottam Rimal is Chief Executive Officer and founder of Himalayan Hub Adventure Pvt. Ltd. He is a young enthusiastic and person with the ambition of being one of Kathmandu's most successful travel company owners. Having worked in the trekking and tourism field at the young age of 17, he has enough experience in this field and aware of the mountain trails. Starting as a porter to a trekking guide to a successful entrepreneur, he is an inspiration for all those who want to start from scrap and develop as a tourism entrepreneur.
2 TOURISM

UNWTO has categorized tourists into three categories domestic tourists, inbound and outbound tourists. Domestic tourists are tourism done by inhabitants of a country within that country, inbound tourists are foreigners traveling to a host country, and outbound tourists are citizens traveling abroad. (UNWTO 2019.) The North American industry classification system has classified tourism business in accommodation, food, and beverage services (F&B), recreation and entertainment, transportation, travel services. In the 21st century, tourism is for everybody, unlike in its beginning days where it used to be only for rich peoples. There has been a significant shift in the trend. People have been traveling from ancient times as a pilgrimage. Tour is derived from Latin words circle and turn, and tourism and tourists can be referred to as circling away from home and returning. Cox and kings 1758 are the first travel agency in records established as Richard Cox was officially appointed travel agent of British Royal Armed Forces. After a century, Thomas Cook established a travel agency for leisure travel. And in 1845, he organized his first commercial tour. With the development of transportation facilities, travel has become more comfortable, and people started traveling to different world corners. Travel and tourism have kept growing since then. The decade of the 1960s had strong growth in the tourism industry; there was the introduction of many new travel companies and mass tourism trends on the scene. In the 2000s introduction of the Internet was seen in the tourism industry and was an influential force in the tourism industry. Booking travel via the Internet started, and it soared. (Wescott 2015a.)

Tourism has a significant influence on different aspects of society mainly economic and cultural. Tourism is a broad phenomenon. The economy has significant increment service-based industries rather than the traditional production-based economy. Many nations increased time for paid leave and leisure time. Tourism is a global phenomenon, and some destinations are valued much by tourists than others. Some countries have immense religious influence, some with historical structures and monuments, some with modern structures and luxury lifestyle, and some offer nature and remoteness. All the countries have their significance and are visited by tourists from other countries. Tourism is an excellent source to earn foreign currency that helps in maintaining a positive balance of payment. Terrorism, war, economic crisis, and pandemics can be a significant threat to international tourism. (Arionesei, Morsan, & Stanciu 2004.)

Tourism has been increasing, and the trend seems to rise higher in the coming years. Europe dominated the international tourism with having more than half of global tourists and second followed by Asia
Pacific and America until 2010. There has been an increment in leisure time and the reduction of working hours globally. Economic wellbeing is significant for the growth of tourism and tourists. People with slightly higher income and urban are likely to travel more than lower-income people. The cultural influence on society due to tourism cannot be ignored. The person traveling experiences culture, traditions, and lifestyle that is different from his domicile and can develop a new perspective towards his values and way of living. There is a big challenge faced by holiday destinations is maintaining ecological standards. The environment has been facing adverse effects due to the overflow of tourism. The degradation of the Himalayas, beaches of Indonesia, Thailand can be examples of this. (Arionesei, Morsan, & Stanciu 2004.)

2.1 Trends and technologies in tourism

The Internet is a dominant force in today's tourism; it has affected our way of making holiday selections. The need for the physical visit of travel agencies has been replaced. People can connect to these agencies via their websites and make deals online. Online booking is gaining trust among tourists. The doubts consumers previously were facing are fading away. The review option the booking platforms provide has helped to get a clear idea about the service provider. The widely used review sites are TripAdvisor.com, virtualtourist.com, and other social media. These days, tourists can select several travel agencies and pick the most suitable travel package for them. In today's era, there exists an online community along with the real-world community. There are travel-based mobile applications, websites, and many more. People can connect, share their experiences, and guide other travelers on choosing their destinations. Some examples of these sites are 43.places.com, tripmates.com, gusto.com. People share photos, stories, videos on these sites. The business now is aware of these communities and approaching them. And these communities are growing larger and larger with the constant emergence of new sites. (Carson 2006.)

Mobile phones and the Internet are significant influence on various dimensions of tourism globally. People can share daily happenings, and people can stay connected. Internet-based social media platforms Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and travel rating sites TripAdvisor, Booking.com, etc., created new trends and sensations in the travel and tourism business. With smartphones' development, mobile applications, various platforms, and internet-based bookings, the tourism business saw different dimensions. Travel-related apps and cell phones, and the Internet are becoming the dominant force in the tourism
industry; now, the trend is that people can make instant bookings and purchases and rate different service providers. Comparing several service providers is much more comfortable now, and people can select their best preference. Internet and mobile phones gave rise to destination-based marketing, offering tourism-based service providers advertising when travelers are there. Wireless technology has also given rise to location-based advertising, allowing product or service providers to market themselves when travelers are in the general area. Attraction alerts and special offers, often triggered by applications, provoke the user's attention to elicit an immediate response. Staying connected with the Internet has been a must requirement for accommodations. The practice of mass tourism has been less. People can make their travel packages and make the best selection from a wide variety of service providers. Mobile devices will likely be a more dominant force in tourism. (Dickinson, Ghali, Cherrett, Speed, Davies & Norgate 2014.)

Globalization refers to the movement of humans, along with values and ideas. It also consists of goods and services. Even though divided as separate countries with their self-interests, the development in communication, transportation, economy, and knowledge has made this world a global village. Integration and mutual dependence can bring several benefits. People's flow is safer, more comfortable, faster, and relatively cheaper. The development of the banking system, internet banking, and international banking has also contributed to making international tourism much easier. The use of mobile phones and the Internet also has made travel more comfortable. Navigation, selection, interaction has been more comfortable with the development of the Internet and communication. There are several companies in the Travel and Tourism industries that are multinational. (Bird & Thomilson 2015.)

Technological advancement, rapid growth in transportation and communication, and consumers' ever-growing desire for luxury and convenience make the hospitality business a hub for changing trends. The service industry has a significant shift towards the experience industry and customers are likely to care about significant experiences. These industries should also be able to deliver themselves online to draw consumers. People look for environment friendly and technologically advanced hotels. Internet’s dominance, online sales and booking, social media significance, and the introduction of robots and artificial intelligence would grow and prevail in the future. (SiteMinder 2020.)

Travel and tourism have made significant contributions to the global economy. In 2017 8.3 trillion USD, 10.4 % of global GDP was earned from direct, indirect, and induced tourism and travel-related activities.
Tourism was able to offer 313 million jobs that covered 10% of jobs around the world. The investment of 882 billion USD was 4.5% of the total investment was made on tourism. In 2017 tourism soared to its peak and it saw rocketing growth of 4.6% more than the whole economy, which was 3%. Tourism brought a boost in economic well-being as 7 million new jobs were created in 2017. Travel and tourism are significant forces in economic growth and employment generation. Travel and tourism have contributed to creating 119 million jobs. In 2017 a total of USD 4.2 trillion was spent by travelers, of which 77% of spenders were leisure travelers, and the rest were business travelers. The year 2018 continued its growth. (Lock 2109b.)

2.2 Sectors within the tourism business

Tourism has a broad scope and includes various sectors in it. Here are a few significant sectors that have had an immense influence on the tourism industry.

![Sectors of tourism](image)

FIGURE 1. Sectors of tourism

2.2.1 Transportation
We all know it is impossible to move from one place to another without transportation. Thus, transportation is very significant to the tourism industry. People can travel by air, land, and water. Transportation connects tourism destinations. Transportation brings a boost to tourism activity. It is the backbone of tourism development. Countries with natural, cultural attractions cannot attract as many tourists as they are supposed to due to underdevelopment in transportation. Tourists desire safe, reliable transportation. Advancement in the transportation of all kinds' air/water/road is critical in tourism development. Technological advancement in transportation has soared tourism activity in the present decade. A good transportation experience adds up for a better tourism experience. Just like accommodations, food transportation is also an essential element of travel. Variations and time used during transportation can be an influential factor on the level of excitement consumer experiences. Security, comfort, cost are also important factors. There has been rapid advancement in air transportation, and it has made travel easy and made the world narrower. (Wescott 2015b.)

Transportation facilitates the movement of people from place to place. Tourism at today's level cannot be imagined without transportation. Airplanes mostly commercial planes scheduled and chartered; helicopters are the most common means used for air transportation. They are the dominant force in international tourism. Likewise, buses, cars, taxis, rental cars, and motorbikes are commonly used in road transportation. Rail is also a cheaper and faster means of transportation. Ships and boats come to underwater transportation. Now tourism has expanded beyond the globe, and people have started exploring space, so space crafts are also used for tourism, and there could be more space travelers in the future. Various firms are working to make transportation happen, from cabin crews to big multinational firms and ticketing agencies. (Hayes 2021.)

2.2.2 Accommodation

Accommodation is an integral part of tourism. People need a place to rest when they travel. The accommodation industry facilitates tourists for lodging and rest. Accommodation in today's world is versatile, and consumers can make selections from a wide range of accommodations based on their budget and preferences. Hotels, motels, hostels, resorts are the most used accommodations facilities by tourists. The most used accommodations service is hotels, now there has been a quiet improvement in hotel services. Modern-day hotels offer gyms, swimming, Internet, bars, and many more. There are different types of
hotels. One of the types is star category hotel ranging from one to five and five being the best. It offers high-quality service and various facilities such as a conference hall, multicuisine restaurants, health clubs, etc. hotels dominate the accommodations industry. There are different categories of hotels based on their structure, location, and features. Hotels that have under 50 rooms to hotels with more than 600 rooms, and hotels can also be categorized as airport hotels, casino hotels, city center hotels, etc., based upon their physical location. They can be of budget or luxury hotels service they provide. (Wilson-Mah 2015.)

Despite being versatile when it comes to accommodation services, the hotel business is most dominant. Along with accommodation, hotels also offer food and beverages and various other services of travel and wellness. Several multinational corporations are operating globally. Wyndham Hotel Group, Marriot International, and Hilton Worldwide are the largest multinational hotel chains. The hotel business was valued at 600.49 billion U.S. dollars in 2018. The rate of sold-out rooms was highest in Europe, resulting in 72.4% occupancy, followed by the Asia Pacific with 70.6% occupancy in 2018. As compared with Asia, Europe, and America, accommodations were more expensive in the Middle East and Africa. (Lock 2015.a)

2.2.3 F & B service

As people started traveling, they had to eat and drink outside of their homes at the beginning of the food and beverage industry. The food and beverage industry can be classified into commercial and noncommercial food services in a broader sense. The commercial foodservice includes quick-service restaurants that drive-through location, standalone locations, retail stores, kiosk locations, and highway commuter routes. The commercial foodservice also includes full-service restaurants that include fine dining restaurants, casual family restaurants, ethnic restaurants, upscale casual restaurants. Fine dining restaurants included service from qualified chefs offering complex cuisines and high-quality service. Family restaurants are designed to serve a larger group of people. Ethnic restaurants serve ethnic cuisines. Catering and banqueting are also an essential part of commercial foodservice. Commercial food service also includes beverage sectors. There are several drinking places. Some are offering only beverages, and some
offer mixed service of Food and drinking. The food services offered at flights, terminals, cruise, hospitals, schools and universities, prisons are noncommercial or institutional food service. (Briscoe & Tripp 2015.)

Arrangements and serving of foods and beverages outside the home give a general sense of food and beverage service. Food and beverage is one of the vital branches of the hospitality industry and it’s inseparable. This industry is versatile and varies from small privately-owned facilities to multinational chains. From catering services to luxury restaurants F&B industry is diverse. Food and beverage play an important role in making a better tourism experience. Food represents the culture and tradition of the traveled destination. The food and beverage industry has soared in recent years. This sector is used by accommodations as an amenity to attract tourists or to show their service. F& B is growing and changing year by year. The big hotel chains have started to deliver local food by working with local chefs. There’s the use of locally available ingredients and a blend of local culture. This trend is desired by eco-friendly tourists and it enhances sustainability. From the old trend of having a mini bar in a hotel room, the modern-day tourists want to experience luxury and seek more. Along with the inclusion of amenities of the internet, Smart Tv, voice-activated technology food and beverage has also seen technological inclusion. The inclusion of Nespresso is seen in modern-day hotels. Grab and go is also a key trend in the F&B industry and it is growing. Consumers can grab packaged food and have it when and how they want. It can be a time-saving approach for some travelers. Technology has now become an integral part of the F&B industry. The ordering of food and beverages has become much easier with the menu being displayed on digital screens and making orders from voice-assisted devices and mobile applications. (Tshimuken 2019.)

2.2.4 Recreation

Recreation is an integral part of human life. It comes within humans' biological and psychological needs. Humans involve themselves in various activities for recreation and tourism is also one of those activities. People get recreation from adventurous activities or visit of cultural sites or by simply getting lost in the wilderness of nature. There are theme parks, casinos, various sports activities, concerts that facilitates recreational activities. Recreation in the economy has been a key player globally. Some of the cities across the globe can attract millions of tourists by offering recreational activities. Bangkok, Las Vegas Macau are some examples of this. From listening to music at home to adrenaline-boosting activities of skydiving all come within the recreation. The main objective of a tourist would be recreation. And this
recreation can come from active and passive recreational activities. Adventure tourism that includes rafting, mountaineering, hiking, surfing, rock climbing, skiing, etc. also comes under active recreation, observational activities such as sightseeing come under passive recreation. (Nordberg 2017.)

Recreation includes a wide range of activities. It is hard to define recreation. It includes activities of indoor recreation, sports, adventure tourism, nature tourism, and many more. It includes activities such as mountaineering, climbing, skiing, kayaking, rafting, golfing, snowboarding, and many more. Recreation is activities done in free time in pursuit of happiness. (Atkins 2020.)

2.2.5 Travel Service

Travel services comprise transportation, accommodation, rentals of vehicles, tickets related to events or visits. These services are bought in advance by consumers and can also be purchased jointly from various service providers. The services that facilitate the travel of tourists are travel services. (Finnish competition and consumer authority 2020.)

Online travel agencies are internet-based service providers that facilitate customers in exploring and selecting travel products. Customers can purchase a wide variety of products or services online. Millions of customers are relied on online travel agencies to make travel-related purchases. OTA offers to book accommodations, tickets on transportations, and different activities related to tourism. Online travel agencies are fast and reliable and are transparent when making travel purchases. With increased internet penetration and mobile devices, online travel agencies have engaged more and more people. Almost half of the tourists use OTAs one way or other. OTA is a crucial factor in travel supply. Online travel Agencies do free marketing that is viewed by millions of travelers around the globe. Online travel agencies help the travel providers to reach the target customers as customers make selections based on their preference and budget for a wide variety. Easy access to the market and support from market experts gives the business more chance to make market penetration. OTA uses customer booking trends to make offers and can gain more customers. (Expedia 2020.)

Many online travel agencies run travel services, but some have attracted millions of customers and impact the tourism industry globally. Booking.com, TripAdvisor, Expedia, Skyscanner are online agencies ahead of others in revenue and customers. (Macdonald 2019.)
Thomas Cook established the first travel agency in 1845. But travel trade was in existence before that in human history. Travel agencies sell tourism services to consumers and earn a commission. They sell packaged tourism activities, and profit is drawn from there. Retail travel agencies are responsible for planning, costing, ticketing, making bookings, making currency exchanges, setting insurance of customers, managing travel-related documents, etc. Travel Agencies connects leading supplier and tourists and helps in building trust among them. Travel agencies provide information about various things related to travel, such as details of travel, accommodations, insurance and permits, and other activities. Travel agencies also prepare an itinerary and make cost management. Travel agents can sell several products and activities of adventures like rafting or mountaineering. Small firms or large firms can privately own travel agencies. (Knowles & Westcott 2019.)

The person or company designing, planning, arranging holidays are tour operators. These tour operators prepare itineraries, transportation, tour leader, guides. Tour operators either gets their customer from travel agents or sell their service directly to tourists. Tour operators sell their product as they are the tour creator and are also responsible for tour failure. Tour operator organizes the entire tourist components and sells it to the tourists or through travel agencies. They closely monitor and guide accommodations, transportation, and other activities. They offer packaged activities at reliable cost and make touring convenient. (Knowles & Westcott 2019.)
Online reviews are responsible for 10% of your website is ranked by search engines. Online reviews are digital feedbacks on the Internet. Reviews are healthy discussions made on various platforms that can influence, motivate someone's perception about an organization, brand, or event. A negative review in the hospitality industry can harm the sales of the organization. Online reviews are not the advertisement but they genuine opinion that a consumer shares about their experience. Consumers’ written feedbacks on companies' commercial sites can influence the purchase decisions of people. A large proportion of independent travel-related bookings are made online. People go through online reviews before buying any product or service. Whether on buying a cell phone, a mobile app, flying ticket or booking a hotel, people go through online reviews and ratings from that product or service supplier. Similarly, suppliers also use these platforms for getting feedback and marketing to attract more consumers. Consumers share their experience with that supplier. Good reviews work as advertisements and encourage other consumers to buy that service or product. The negative reviews provide them a chance for correction. (Schuckert, Wei & Law 2015.)

The online purchasers from Amazon, Ali Baba, E-bay, and other sites depend on consumer reviews to make buying decisions. The decade where social media has much influence on the brands should respect the voice of people. (Lipschultz 2014.)

Online reviews are platforms for consumers to share their product experience. Online reviews began with amazon, providing buyers the opportunity to publish their website's views in 1995. Now, Amazon.com is one of the most valued brands worldwide. It has a revenue of 232 billion U.S. $. E online sellers offer users to publish post product evaluations on the seller's webpage. A study by Forrester reviews showed that 50% of the consumers acclaimed that viewing other consumers' reviews had influenced their purchase decisions. (Clement 2019.)

Consumers are always right, and it is mandatory to listen to them. The supplier should always tend to make product service development as per the consumers' taste and preferences. Since the beginning, customers feel they are always right. These feelings had grown much more prominent today because customers believe they have done some research on the Internet and read some reviews. Business firms need to adjust accordingly or be facing a struggling future. Consumers today can quickly obtain information on anything the seller offers. They want this information beforehand and believe in the reviews
more than the seller's information. People are skeptical about what the seller has promised them or what has been advertised. They are always comparing and negotiating. (Pindivic 2019.)

Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning. (Bill Gates).

Customers that give feedback help in the growth and survival of the business. It is a cheaper and convenient way of gaining more customers than through marketing. The business needs to know what customers think of the product or service they are provided. Loyal customers should be kept happy, and the facts showed that it is 5 to 25 times costlier to get a new customer than keeping the old ones. The first source of new ideas is customer feedback. Frequent buyers are supposed to spend 60% more on a single purchase. Companies should ask for feedback, collect them, categorize them as per its importance, and fix the issues as soon as possible, and it should be followed up. Knowing how the customer feels about the product or service is the first and foremost step to be carried out when it comes to strategic handling of customer feedback, and it should be asked to the customer. It is more likely that the customers also suggest the solution. These feedbacks received from the customers should be collected and categorized as per the need of the organization. (Tousley 2020.)

The sole purpose of running the business would be making a profit, which comes from the customer. With having more satisfied customers, business firms have more chance for survival and growth. And feedback is the only source from where companies know the level of customer satisfaction and improvement. Feedback helps in knowing market trends and estimation of future production or expansion. It shows that where the firms' money and efforts are to be invested. Feedback helps in the improvement of the quality of goods or services delivered by business firms. Asking customers for feedback signifies that customers' opinions are valued and taken care of and help on building brand loyalty. Customer feedback helps in improving customer experience (Startquestion 2016.)

Satisfying consumers' demands and desires is critical for marketers. Consumer behavior has a broader scope that includes the purchase, utility, and disposal of products and services. Understanding consumer behavior is a must. Socio-cultural, individual, and emotional forces are vital in understanding consumer behavior. Social forces also have a significant impact on consumers' buying behavior. Social forces include friends, families, and society. Persons' attributes define consumer buying behavior, and these attributes vary with the life cycle. Jobs income and savings impact the buying decisions of the consumer. Behavior, education, values, and perception influence buying decisions. Maslow's hierarchy, Herzberg's Theory, and Freud's Theory justify a difference in person mindset influences buying decisions. Through
senses, consumers perceive a product or service, and marketers need to consider that perception is also as important as the product’s real value. The right purchase generates better learning. Belief is consumers' preconceived opinion towards the brand. (Juneja 2019.)

Maslow's theory at the bottom of his theory of the hierarchy of needs fulfilling basic needs is foremost, and consumers purchase things to fulfill their need for food and shelter. Convenience is also a key factor influencing consumer buying. Consumers are likely to make the safest, fastest, and most straightforward purchases. Consumers make purchases for the replacement to replace old things with new ones. The scarcity of products is directly proportional to their demand, and its demand is likely to soar if consumers perceive that a product is likely to be scarce shortly. Some products are purchased for self-satisfaction, like luxury goods or ornaments. Consumers also make purchases to fulfill the emotional vacuum. Sudden lowering on the price of a product also attracts the consumer for purchase. The brand also influences consumer's decision on a purchase. (Eisenberg 2011.)

Big firms like Ford and Apple spend billions on understanding consumer behavior. They are aware of the need for understanding consumer purchasing decisions and their influential factors. Either small or big customers should be the critical factor and understanding consumer behavior opens the door for success. It makes companies able to attracts consumers and target correct consumers and increase sales volume. Smart and creative analysis is essential. Knowing consumers' behavior is essential because consumer behavior includes a chain of the behavioral pattern followed by consumers on making buying decisions, starting from the need for product/service and ending on purchase. Companies can make future decisions based on consumer preferences. Consumers are an asset, and it is essential to know about their behavior. Consumers' social and individual behavior must be analyzed. It is essential to understand consumer behavior patterns vary with the kinds of product/service they buy, the time they make a purchase, their perception towards products at the time of purchase, obstructions on buying decisions. (Kajabi 2019.)

The need for research on understanding consumer behavior cannot be ignored. The appropriate data is needed for making an effective decision on creating, marketing, and selling products. It is essential to do detailed research about their interest and recent purchases of similar products as offered, motivational factors, consumers' ability to pay, and consumers' doubts. Consumers' behavior in marketing is the target market's reaction to the product. Understanding consumer's behavior is equally important as marketing and advertisements. All the marketing strategies and advertisements and time, effort, money might be lost in vain if the marketer is unable to understand the target market. Knowing consumers makes it
Various factors drive consumers to make purchase decisions with intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. The consumers' level of need, choices, offers available, availability, and presentation of product/service are influential in making purchase decisions. Purchase depends on the state of mind before, on making, and after making the purchase. Psychological factors emotions determine the choices consumers make. Personality is also an influential factor in the buying process brand concern, religious-political beliefs, moral values, cultural background, support for the cause, and social awareness impacting a purchase decision. External motivators such as peer pressure, friend circle, following celebrities can also make a difference in buying decisions. (Kajabi 2019.)

Consumer behavior can also be analyzed from the types of buyers. The income level of a person is directly proportional to his expenditure and level of saving. High-income earners are apparent to make more purchases and can make more comprehensive selections when purchasing. But one's level of desire also plays a role in making purchases. Buyers can be analyzed on three types that is unconflicted buyer, tightwads, spendthrifts. It is challenging to make a perception of the unconflicted buyer. Their purchase depends on their thinking, wants, and timing. Their buyers are hard to be influenced. Detailed research must be done on these types of buyers responsive to psychological, social, and personality traits. Based on spending habits, consumers can be separated into two different categories a tightwad person and a spendthrift person. Tightwad person only spends on things that are a must. The products must offer something special to be of acceptable quality to persuade these consumers. They value their money and spend wisely. Spendthrifts are the opposite of tightwads. They spend money fast. The psychological factor is vital for this kind of buyer. They do not do detailed research before purchases. They buy to fill their need. Knowing the motivations and buyers' kinds is essential, but this does not ensure that target consumers make purchases a. Detailed research must be done. Product quality and uniqueness must be identified. (Kajabi 2019.)

Knowing reviews made by consumers can also help to understand the consumer. Online sellers such as eBay, Amazon show reviews to win the trust of other consumers. Analyzing their own and competitors' reviews can help businesses understand the consumer and make better plans for the future. Question and Answer sites also help to understand consumer behavior. The questions asked about, and their answers help to understand consumers' preference. The most used sites are Yahoo! and Quora. Surveys are a reliable tool to know consumer behavior. Shorter surveys are convenient and can attract more consumers to answer. Interaction with a group of consumers gives an idea of consumer wants, likes, and dislikes. Keyword research is a cheap way to dig into consumer behavior. Information on people can be known
based on their searches. Google Analytics can be used to gain information on target consumers. Analyzing competitors analyzing their SWOT helps to gain information on consumers. Google trends, social media, and government data are valuable in understanding consumer behavior. (Kajabi 2019.)

3.1 TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor is one of the leading travel sites that allow travelers to compare a wide range of service providers in the travel industry and make appropriate bookings. It is a platform where consumers can rate various hotels, airlines, restaurants, service providers. TripAdvisor has over 5 million reviews that cover 7.3 million service providers. It facilitates travelers in making a wider selection on planning a trip. (TripAdvisor 2020.)

TripAdvisor is a large online platform for travel and tourism, having over 300 million users. Stephen Kaufer founded TripAdvisor. Their headquarter is located in Needham Massachusetts, in 2000. It has 490 million visitors. They send 90 million emails in a week. TripAdvisor is an internet-based American travel company. It provides forums for interactions for consumers and service providers. It provides travel reference digitally to its users. There are 1.3 million hotel listings on TripAdvisor. TripAdvisor was able to make a revenue of 1.62 billion U. S dollars in 2018. (Lock 2019 c.)

3.2 Booking.com

There are several booking sites available. Booking.com is also a popular booking site with 1.5 million hotel listings. Booking of hotels, apartments, flights, trains, buses, etc., is possible from this site. Being a Priceline (Priceline is online travel agency) group member, booking.com is like priceline.com. (Jet 2017.)

Booking.com is a convenient website and mobile application that provides comprehensive options for hotel and flight bookings. It also provides old consumer ratings, which can be helpful for new consumers in making purchasing decisions. The reviews make it easier to find more excellent hotels at a lower price. Booking.com is simple to use and provides more comprehensive options. Booking.com starts with booking, followed by the trip, and finally ends with a review. Booking.com ensures memorable travel
experience and connects millions of travelers and service. Booking.com is available in 43 different lan-
guages. It offers above 28 million accommodation listings. Booking.com provides 24/7 customer sup-
port. (Booking.com 2020.)

3.3 Google

The most viewed website in the world also provides a platform for people to provide reviews. Google is
a trustable source. Google handles more than one billion search requests. Google made a revenue of
136.22 billion U.S. dollars in the year 2018. Google offers digital tools, applications, and services. The
parent company Alphabets market capitalization in 2018 was 793 billion. Its headquarter is in California,
USA. Most of the income Google makes from advertising through Google sites or networks. Google
offers various apps and services, even though it began with an online search. The acquisition of YouTube
was made by Google. Google also branched out the Android mobile operating system, and many other
Gmail, YouTube, and Google maps are the popular ones. (Clement 2018.)

Google is the platform where the searching for any business begins. When the consumer searches for
tavel companies, they are likely to select the company with the highest user ratings. It can be an influ-
encing factor on consumers buying decisions. Google is most visited website in the world. Google is
most searched term in Bing. (BBC 2019.)

3.4 Facebook

One of the most used social media platforms in the world of this decade is Facebook. Facebook was founded
by Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes. Facebook is USA based
company. By 2012 it was the largest social networking platform. It offers users various functions from
creating profiles, pages, groups, uploading photos, chatting, and approving their preferences through
likes. (Hall 2019.)

About 2.23 billion people log into this platform every month. Facebook is used both by companies and
buyers. Facebook is the third most popular website globally after Google and YouTube. The Facebook
mobile app is gaining popularity. Facebook messenger is one of the most downloaded mobile apps.
Facebook focuses on connectivity and user engagement has made Facebook able to generate more income. Facebook generated revenue of 13.2 billion, which was 42% higher than the previous year. 1.47 billion users are logged in to Facebook every day. Over 80 million small and medium business has Facebook pages. Facebook advertises 6 million business firms. 30% of marketers think Facebook makes the highest ROI. (Newberry 2020.)

3.5 Instagram

Founded in October 2010, Instagram has been growing ever since. It gained its popularity over a short time, now having millions of everyday users. It allows users to post photos and videos and media sharing it makes it unique from other apps. Instagram comes from the term 'instant camera' and 'telegram'. Facebook bought it in 2012. From the beach, brunch to business, everything is Instagrammable. It has been favorite for vacationers to influencers, advertisers, and brands. In the present day, most consumers are likely Instagram users, and so are the competitors. Instagram has one billion monthly active users, and 500 million are everyday users. Instagram reached 1 billion user benchmarks as of June 2018. Instagram is after Facebook and YouTube in terms of worldwide users. Being the second most engaged network after Facebook, Instagram is influential. The photo and video sharing app with captions written in it influence tourism. The attractive destinations shared by the visitors can be the best recommendations for interested visitors. Business firms can use this platform for social media marketing. It is cost-effective and has interactive and interested audiences. This function of Instagram stories launched in August 2016 has been a game-changer. Five hundred million Instagram users use Instagram stories daily. If we consider business-related Instagram stories, then 1 out of 3 of them is business-related. (Sawe 2019.)

Two third of 18-34 years old people believe that ‘instagrammability’ of a location as most influential factor in booking a holiday. Virtual image can create the desire among consumers for booking holidays. The images shared on Instagram can inspire people to do things. Influences on Instagram can influence large number of fan followers. Travel companies need to publish varied contents consistently. (Bullock 2020.)
4 Himalayan Hub Adventure Pvt: Ltd

Among many trekking and tour companies in Thamel Kathmandu, Himalaya Hub Adventure is one of the fast-growing companies owned by a young business enthusiast. Being owned by a person who previously has experience working as a trekking guide for many years makes them able to offer the best itineraries for the trekkers. They are aware of sustainability and ecotourism. They offer relatively cheaper and more adventurous journeys for travelers. Customer satisfaction has tremendous importance for the team of Himalayan Hub adventures. They are one of the best travels and tour operators in the town. They offer the best service and work their best to provide a tremendous Himalayan experience to travelers worldwide. They are the Nepal government registered company and the Trekking Association of Nepal, and the Nepal Mountaineering Association. They are also affiliated with Nepal Tourism Board. Now they also own Hotel Himalaya Hub. The team of Himalayan Hub is working their best to ensure consumer satisfaction and knowledge about customers' experience. They ask all customers for feedback about their experience and they also ask consumers to post feedback online. They are highly involved in TripAdvisor and booking.com, they are interactive in their website, Facebook, and Instagram pages. Being service-based industry customers' value and happiness has always been their utmost priority. Online involvement and the internet have great importance in their business operation. Transparency and detailed packages, quick information sharing, quality service, experienced guides, versatility in packages offered, and continued effort towards quality service delivery and customer satisfaction have made them grow year by year.

Himalayan Hub offers tourists the exploration of the mystic mountains and adventurous journeys through the Himalayan trails. They can provide a memorable Himalayan experience to travelers. Tourists can select among various offers made by them according to their budget and choices. They offer group as well as individual travel packages. They are transparent and highly professional. Their best-sellers are Langtang Gosaikunda Helambu Trek 16 days, Lower Manaslu Trek 16 days. Being primarily focused on trekking around Nepal's Himalayan trails, they also offer touring and adventure sports, rafting, booking services, jungle safari, mountaineering, etc. They are the Nepal government registered company and the Trekking Association of Nepal, and the Nepal Mountaineering Association. They are also affiliated with Nepal Tourism Board. Now they also own Hotel Himalaya Hub. They also offer travel offers to other countries such as India, Bhutan, and China Tibet.
The Himalayan Hub Adventure has been able to receive tourists from all over the world thanks to the internet and growing online booking platforms. The young, enthusiastic yet experienced team runs this company. Mr. Prakash Lamichhane is the managing director and co-founder of the company. Being grown in the Himalayan region he is aware of the trains and he knows the importance of nature and sustainability. He is working his best to provide tourists with a memorable user experience. The company has a qualified team to handle the trip to the Himalayas to ensure tourists encounter the adventure and wilderness of the Himalayas in safety. Mr. Purushottam Rimal is the Chief Executive Officer and co-founder of the company. He is a young enthusiastic and person with the ambition of being one of Kathmandu's most successful travel company owners. Having worked in the trekking and tourism field since the young age of 17, he has enough experience in this field and aware of the mountain trails. Starting as a porter to a trekking guide to a successful entrepreneur, he is an inspiration for all those who want to start from scrap and develop as a tourism entrepreneur. Himalayan Hub does the activities of booking travels and tours, hotels. They help with ticketing, managing trips, adventure tourism, tours to Bhutan and Tibet.

The adventure activities offered by Himalayan Hub Adventure are an expedition, mountaineering, trekking, jungle safari, rafting, canyoning, paragliding, bungee jumping in Nepal. The chills and thrills tourist gets from adventure activities brings refreshment and adrenaline boost like no other activities. The wild Himalayas its wilderness, shining mountains and high altitudes, remoteness, and welcoming attitude of people has made Nepal one of the favorite destinations for tourists. Himalayan Hub also offers activities of touring around the cities. The small country of Nepal has great ethnic and geographical diversity that has led to diverse cultures, lifestyles, food habits which can be experienced by tourists within the travel of short distance. The valley of Kathmandu is full of cultural heritages with ancient temples and palaces of great religious and historical importance. The stupas, monuments, and diversity of people have helped tourism flourish in Nepal. Out of the 10 highest peaks in the world, 8 of them are in Nepal including the top of the world Mount Everest. Lumbini the birthplace of Gautam Buddha has been a popular tourist attraction in Nepal for Buddhist people from all over the world. Buddha has a great contribution to spreading peace and love all over Asia. The major trekking destinations in Nepal are Everest region trekking, Annapurna Region trekking, Langtang region trekking, Manaslu region trekking, Dolpo region trekking, and Mustang region trekking. The major tours offered by Himalayan Hub adventure are the Kathmandu valley tour, Pokhara day tour, Chitwan day tour, and Nagarkot day tour.
5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted based on quantitative analysis to know the importance of online reviews in the tourism business. An online survey will be taken with the help of a questionnaire. The results and findings are presented in the form of a pie chart. The survey was answered by 40 participants.

Research means to seek knowledge or find out facts. It is a science that guides towards truth through the structured and specified path. Research is defined as a journey of findings. In general, the efforts carried out to know what is not known is research. Research involves identifying issues, going through them, hypothesis formulation, and problem-solving. It also comprises data collection, organization, evaluation, and concluding. The research adds to the existing knowledge in the field of knowledge that research has been carried out (Kothari 2009.)

5.1 Quantitative Research

The technique involving statistical tools and mathematics to identify the solution of a problem is termed quantitative research. Quantitative research presents findings that are of numerical values. Quantitative analysis has a broader scope and is based on facts and numbers. It can be used in various fields of research. Quantitative analysis is used in the field of economics, science finance. Aggregate data can be obtained through the use of quantitative analysis. (Kenton 2018.)

Quantitative analysis objectifies the use of statistics, math, numerical values obtained from surveys, questionnaires, polls, or the pre-available data. When doing quantitative research, an independent variable and other dependent variables are measured and tested using quantitative tools and techniques. Quantitative methods involve data collection using various techniques of sampling, questionnaires, polls. Data collection is made on a large scale and focuses on aggregate outcomes rather than the individual. Tools like questionnaires or software are used for data collection, and it is done on a structured procedure. The research questions are pre-determined and should be concise and clear. The collected variables should be in the numerical format in quantitative analysis. (University of Southern California 2020.)
Quantitative analysis is a structured process of data collection, and its numerical conversion for interpreting the desired outcome follows several procedures and techniques. The steps carried on in making quantitative analysis are mentioned below. It involves data collection, data analysis, results or findings, and the conclusion drawn from the research. Quantitative analysis is based on numbers, and these data can be collected from various approaches. The data must be interpreted in numerical values. The standard approach is structured questionnaires. They are collected to objectify numerical values and are processed to find results using mathematical and statistical tools and techniques and later represented through figures and graphs. There happen to be various methods of collecting data, and it is all about quantity. Data can be collected via probability sampling, questionnaires, interviews, observation, previous records or data, survey. (Bhatia 2018.)

5.2 Validity and Reliability

In quantitative analysis, the research must be valid and reliable, and there can be situations where reliable research is invalid and valid research is not reliable. The quality and validity objectify the standard of the research. It represents consistency and accuracy. Reliable research is supposed to lead to similar findings if done under similar conditions in the future, whereas research validity is about fulfilling the research's objective. Reliable research is consistent and valid research should show an outcome that justifies established practices and theories. Valid research is mostly reliable, but reliable research might not always be valid. These are accessed based on consistency over time, observers, and internal consistency. And validity is also accessed based on how it supports existing theories and practices, its scope, and its correlation with another similar research. The validity and reliability of research can be improved with proper research design. It must be done in the beginning, selecting correct methods of data collection and implication of proper technique. (Middleton 2020.)

Validity is tested by comparing it with its relevance to the achievement of the desired goal of research. Good research should fulfil the need of the research. Reliable research might not be valid unless it finds out what the researcher intends to find in research. Research validity can be internal and external. (Dudovisky 2017.). Reliability refers to how consistent result research produces. Reliable research should produce similar results, even if it is carried out by different researchers over different time frames if the research criteria are similar. (Heale & Twycross 2015.)
The research was done through an online survey with the help of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was made concerning the objective of the thesis. The confidentiality on the identity of responders is ensured in order to get accurate information. The results are analyzed carefully in this thesis. It would ensure the validity of a thesis. This thesis's reliability can be ensured as data collection was made systematically using questionnaires via an online survey using google forms. Approximately 40 responders answered to survey, and all the responders are aware of tourism and online reviews, being involved in the tourism business, or studying tourism.
6 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The research findings have been presented in a pie chart the research was conducted with the help of google forms. The conclusion is derived from the findings.

6.1 Chart Representation and Analysis

An online survey was taken using Google forms with the help of a questionnaire. It was a random survey, and most of the participants were either the owners or the workers from the tourism industry. The survey was taken online. The questionnaire was sent to 200 persons, some of whom have been working in the field of tourism in Kathmandu, and some were students studying at Centria University of Applied Sciences. The questionnaire was sent through email and Facebook messenger. It was taken in September 2020. Forty answered the questionnaire. Based on the replies to the survey, the figures were created by Google forms. The outcome of the survey is discussed in this chapter. The questions asked, and their response will be discussed separately to draw a holistic conclusion.

![Pie chart](image)

FIGURE 2. Booking of travel packages online

When they were asked about their booking travel packages experience, 75% of respondents have had previous booking travel services experience. The rest 25% of the respondents did not have experience in booking travel services online. It implies that a large group of responders have previous experience of online involvement in purchasing tourism products. People go through the Internet and several travel platforms and make travel bookings online.
When they were asked about the regularity of travel services online, 57.5% of responders have had purchased travel services online a few times. 20% of the responders mostly use online platforms to purchase travel services, and 15% of respondents claimed that they always purchase travel services online. 7.5% of the respondents denied purchasing travel services online. The answers to this question suggest that many responders who purchase travel services are not always purchasing it online or not purchasing online. Companies still need to increase online involvement to increase online sales.

FIGURE 3. Purchase of travel packages online

FIGURE 4. Going through online reviews before booking travel packages online
When asked if they go through online reviews before booking travel packages online, 42% claimed that they mostly go through online reviews on booking travel packages online. Similarly, 30% of the respondents went through online reviews on making online purchases on travel packages. 17.5% of respondents claimed to have always checked online reviews before booking travel packages online, and 10% of the consumers have never been through online reviews before booking travel packages online. The chart shows that a vast majority of 90% of the responders go through online reviews before making travel purchases online. The response to this questionnaire justifies the significance of online reviews on making travel bookings online.

FIGURE 5. Reviews being influential on making purchase decisions

When asked about if they were influenced by reviews on purchasing decisions, 10% of respondents claimed that online reviews have always influenced their buying decisions and half of the respondents claimed that online reviews had mostly been an influential factor to them when it comes to making a purchasing decision, and 35% respondents revealed that online reviews have sometimes been influential on making travel purchases. A negligible portion of the chart is covered by respondents accounting for 5% of total respondents to whom online reviews haven't made any influence on making travel-related purchases but 95% of the respondents believe online reviews have been an influencer, implying that the impact of online reviews in tourism sector is vital and can alternate company's sales.
Have you been asked to write reviews about the travel service/hotel you have been customer of?
40 responses

- 20% said sometimes
- 7.5% said mostly
- 22.5% said mostly
- 50% said never

FIGURE 6. Were respondents asked to write reviews?

When asked if they were asked to write reviews about travel service/hotel, the respondents have been customers for half of the total respondent claimed that they have sometimes been asked to write reviews by their service provider. 20% of respondents claimed to have mostly been asked to write reviews by their service provider. 22.5% claimed that they have never been asked to write reviews by their service providers. 7.5% claim to have always been asked. The respondents suggest that travel services or hotels do ask for reviews but not always. Asking for feedback is an essential factor for companies’ growth and survival.

Have you written reviews on booking sites or social media pages of travel service provider?
39 responses

- 53.8% said never
- 12.8% said sometimes
- 30.8% said mostly
- 2.5% said always

FIGURE 7. Writing online reviews

When asked about their experience about writing reviews on booking sites, about 70% of the respondents have had written reviews. Out of which 12.8% people have frequently written reviews on reviews on review sites and 53.8% people have written reviews fewer times, and 30.8% claim they have never
written reviews on review platforms. This questionnaire's answer indicates that many people these days write reviews and tourism companies should be careful about the quality and pricing. They will get good reviews only if they deliver quality service.

![Pie chart showing respondents' experience in getting a response from sellers on online issues.](image)

**FIGURE 8.** The experience of respondents on getting a response from sellers

The pie chart shows the respondents' experience in getting a response from sellers on online issues. 7% of the respondents claimed that their feedbacks had been responded to and fixed. 20.5% of the respondents claimed their issues are mostly solved, and 33.3% claimed that their issues have sometimes been solved and responded to. A large portion of respondents, 38.5%, claim that their issues have never been responded to or solved, which is a severe issue. Business firms need to respond and solve the issues raised by consumers proactively.

![Pie chart showing which review platforms respondents trust most.](image)

**FIGURE 9.** Respondents trust widely used booking and review platforms and booking sites
This question was about respondents' trust in widely used booking and review platforms and booking sites. TripAdvisor was trusted by 32.4% of respondents. Booking.com was trusted by 29.7% of respondents and companies' websites, and 21.8% of respondents trusted social media pages. Surprisingly google was less prevalent, and only 16.2% of respondents trusted google more than other mentioned platforms.

When asked about their views on whether consumers should/should not share their experience on review platforms, 35.5% responded consumers should sometimes, 33.3% responded consumers should always, 28.2% responded consumers should mostly share their experience on online review platforms. 5% of respondents answered that they should never share their experience on online platforms. This highlights the need for business firms to be more transparent and competitive, so all their customers get satisfaction for what they paid for. Some respondents considered people should share their experience online and some denied it.
This question was about the dependency of today's travel and tourism on the Internet. All of the respondents agree that today's travel and tourism industry is highly dependent on the Internet. 51.3% respondents agree, 43.6% respondents strongly agree, 2.6% respondents disagree, and the same 2.6% of respondents strongly disagree. This suggests a higher dependency on the Internet in today's world as people can make various selections, bookings, and payments online. This shows the dominance of the Internet in the travel and tourism industry.

47.5% of respondents agree, and 47.5% strongly agree that there will be a growing dependency on the tourism industry on the Internet and booking sites. 2.5% and 2.5% of responders disagreed and strongly disagreed.
disagreed that there will be a growing dependency on tourism on the Internet. This indicates that responders are optimistic that there will be a growing dependency on the Internet to conduct tourism-related activities. This reveals the growing need for tourism-related businesses to work on online platforms and make themselves available and active on the internet and booking platforms.

![Pie chart showing responses to the question: Do positive reviews build trust towards travel and tourism companies?]

**FIGURE 13.** Positive reviews help in building trust towards travel and tourism companies

In response to positive reviews building trust towards tourism companies, a large portion of respondents, 80% of them, believe that positive reviews build trust toward travel and tourism companies. 17.5% believe it could be a factor in building trust. 2.5% of the responders answered no on being asked if the online reviews help build trust towards travel companies. This shows the importance of online reviews. A firm can only achieve positive reviews if they deliver reliable and quality service and make customers happy. Positive reviews help build trust. With that being said, negative reviews can also be beneficial for companies. They show the companies' flaws to fix their weaknesses, which is crucial for their growth and development.
When asked if reviews help in the fight against online frauds, most respondents, 60% of respondents, believe online reviews help fight against online scams and fraud. 22.2% believe it may help fight against online scams and frauds, and 1.5% believe reviews do not help fight against online scams and frauds. This shows that reviews can act as a counterforce against online scams and frauds.

In response to questions asked for reviews making business firms transparent and competitive large portion, 72.5% of respondents believe that online reviews make business firms more competitive and transparent. And 17.5% of respondents believe that online reviews might help business firms be more competitive and transparent. 7.5% of respondents answered that online reviews do not help make business firms transparent and competitive, 2.5% don't have any idea whether online reviews make
business firms’ more competitive and transparent. This shows that business firms need to be more transparent and cost-effective as their price, and consumers’ experience is shared online.

![Online reviews show true performance of the company?](image)

**FIGURE 16.** Online reviews show the correct performance of a company

When they were asked if online reviews reveal the company's proper performance, 57.5% of respondents agree that online reviews show companies' actual performance. 20% strongly agree with the statement asked. And 17.5% do not agree that online reviews show the actual performance of the company. 5% of responders strongly disagree that online reviews show the actual performance of the company. This shows that the responders believe that business firms can also be judged based on their feedback on various online platforms.

### 6.2 Findings

The thesis aimed to know the impact of online reviews on the tourism business. The research shows that online reviews have an enormous impact on the tourism business and are crucial for the tourism business. The online survey was carried among various respondents working in tourism sectors and others being a student of tourism. The respondents suggested that around 80% of them have booked travel services online, and most of them go through online reviews before making travel purchases. Companies should make themselves available on online platforms. A large portion of customers goes through online reviews before making travel bookings. The positive reviews tourism company gets, helps to build trust. Online reviews are also helpful in the fight against scams and frauds. Online reviews push companies to be more transparent and competitive. And respondents agreed that online reviews could be an influential
factor for purchase decisions. The majority of them also have experience of being asked to write reviews on their service providers. Most of them have previous experience of writing online reviews. Surprisingly about 40% of this feedback is found to be neglected by service providers. TripAdvisor was the most trusted online review platform among various online review platforms booking.com, Facebook, Instagram, companies' webpages. The responders believe that online involvement in the tourism business will grow in the future, and the Internet would be a dominating force.

Online reviews are crucial for the growth and development of the company. It is an excellent way to get self-evaluated, so companies should always ask for feedback. Companies should try to solve the things that make consumers unhappy and keep continuing what consumers are happy about. Travel agencies should be more cost-effective and transparent. The competition will be rising, and it will be growing. Asking for feedback from all the consumers and improving on it would help the company's growth and survival. They should be proactively participating in various booking and review platforms. Today internet and booking sites and reviews online do most of these travel agencies' job, which connects tourists and tourism products. People can select transportation, accommodation, adventure, make their itineraries, selects travel guides, etc., by themselves. Being an intermediary travel agent could be difficult as the internet does majority of their work. They should shift their investment in other sectors of tourism like hotels, transportations, and Food and Beverage. The Internet seems to do what travel agencies have been doing, and that will keep growing. So, the Himalayan hub adventure should shift their investments in sectors of transportation, food and beverage, and hotels rather than just being travel agencies. Himalayan hub adventure Pvt.Ltd should proactively participate in various online platforms to respond and solve issues raised by their consumers.
7 CONCLUSION

The present era is the era of the Internet and technology, and it has been a dominant force in the tourism business. The Internet offers platforms for business firms and consumers. A significant amount of travel bookings is booked online, and a significant number of online feedbacks appear on several booking sites and review platforms every day. The thesis aimed to know the impact of online reviews in the tourism business and the significance of online reviews in companies' survival and growth. The world has become a global village; people use holidays for traveling. The tourism industry is vast and has a wide scope. Tourism carries a broad scope. It comprises various sectors: accommodations, food and beverage, transportation, travel service, and recreation. The Internet has been a dominating force in the tourism business, and online involvement in performing tourism transactions/marketing is growing. People share their experiences on the Internet. People write reviews good/bad they experience. Reviews are a mirror of a company's performance. It shows a company's success in delivering quality service. The use of various booking sites for booking travel services and writing reviews is growing. The trend of using a cell phone, social media, and the Internet has made online reviews more potent than ever. The impact of online reviews on tourism is enormous.

The objective was to understand the need for online reviews in the tourism business. To understand the impact so that the suggestion could be made to the commissioner, online handling of online reviews is crucial for the companies' growth and development. A survey was carried out among people mostly related to the tourism industry. Some of them were owners of tourism-related organizations, some of them were working in tourism sectors, and some were students of tourism. The research suggests that online reviews are a crucial factor for the tourism business's growth and survival. Reviews reflect the performance of the company and how it helps to know the satisfaction level of consumers. The flaws are pointed out, and good things are appreciated. Things posted online have many viewers, so these review platforms give business firms opportunities to express themselves to many consumers. Unlike, companies' claims in their advertisement reviews are made by consumers and are trusted by consumers, revealing the truth, so reviews should not be ignored. Companies must work to get good reviews through transparency, cost-effectiveness, and quality service. Companies should be proactive prompt in handling the issues pointed out by consumers and fixing them. A large number of people go through online reviews before booking travel services. The use of the Internet is growing day by day, and it is likely to grow further. Technology, social media have been game-changer in the tourism business. Positive reviews and online involvement would bring growth, and negative reviews would also influence making
needed corrections if handled correctly. There is large importance of online reviews in the tourism business. If appropriately handled, online reviews can be a ladder for the company's growth.

Companies must be proactive when it comes to the handling of consumer feedbacks, mostly online feedbacks/reviews. The Internet's dominance will keep on increasing. So will the trend of online booking and online purchases of travel/accommodations. People will make various bookings online. The companies that get positive reviews online are likely to get trusted by more consumers. It seems that companies should increase their online involvement in the future.
REFERENCES


Lipschultz, J. 2014.Consumer review credibility brand marketing and social media. Available on https://www.huffpost.com/entry/consumer-review-credibili_b_4634447?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuYmluZy5jb20vc2VhcmNoP3E9amVyZW15K2hhcnJpcytodWZmcG9zdCtvbivbmxpbmUremV2aWV3cyZxcz1uJmZvcm09UUJRSRSZzcD0tMSZwcT1qZXJlbXkraG-FvcmlzK2h1ZmZwb3N0KYyZy0wLTIzJnNrPSZjdmlkPTMzNUVERjZMEQ0RTRBN0JCNzc2RDNCQjE2MjZFRThB&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAJ8YiyYCF75liBuMhfIu4GzbbeP8bVMUnsUaqdJaacpY9niQ-_vFHszVNmHsp28qxuvrVWcDh5HIq5x2qKm0025u45kogI1pi_Ukxoq-1-IXyw-WhASzO2AGuOaAsY2V-BDqtvzlxwDcNpwcAz7Ca1pDtFRRJJjTGWM8Ov_4wb Accessed on 9/25/2019


Startquestion. 7 reasons consumer feedbacks are important to your business. Available on https://blog.startquestion.com/7-reasons-why-customer-feedback-is-important-to-your-business-28e99c00eba7 Accessed on 6/2/2020

Tourism tribe. 2019. Why Facebook and Google reviews are important. Available on https://www.tourismtribe.com/facebook-google-reviews-important/ Accessed on 10/14/2019


The survey, "Impact of online reviews in the tourism business."

The purpose of the survey is to know the influence of online reviews on consumers' buying behavior. And know the importance of reviews made on various review platforms. The answers to the survey will be confidential.

1. Have you ever booked travel packages online?
   a. Yes  b. no

2. How often do you purchase travel services online?
   a. never  b. sometimes  c. mostly  d. Always

3. Do you go through online reviews before booking travel packages online?
   a. No  b. Sometimes  c. Mostly  d. Always

4. Have reviews made an influence on your purchase decisions that are related to travel and tourism?
   a. No  b. Sometimes  c. Mostly  d. Always

5. Have you written reviews on booking sites or social media pages of a travel service provider?
   a. No  b. Sometimes  c. Mostly  d. Always

6. When writing online reviews, have the sellers responded to your review and fixed that issue?

7. Have you been asked to write reviews about the travel service /hotel you have been a customer of?
   a. No  b. Sometimes  c. Mostly  d. Always
8 Which review platform do you trust most?

9 Should customers share their experience on online review platforms?

10 Do you believe today's travel and tourism is highly dependent on the Internet?
   a. Strongly agree  b. Agree  c. Disagree  d. Strongly Disagree

11 Do you agree there will be a growing dependency on the tourism industry on the internet and booking sites?
   a. Strongly agree  b. Agree  c. Disagree  d. Strongly Disagree

12 Do positive reviews build trust towards travel and tourism companies
   a. Yes  b. No  c. Might  d. Do not know

13 Are reviews helpful in the fight against online scams and frauds?
   b. Yes  b. No  c. Might  d. Do not Know

14 Do you believe online reviews make business firms more competitive and transparent?
   a. Yes  b. No  c. May  d. Do not know

15 Online reviews show the true performance of the company
   a. Strongly agree  b. Agree  c. Disagree  d. Strongly Disagree

   Thank you