

The impact of Brand Equity and Consumer Hope on Consumer's Re-Patronage Intention – A study on Online Travel

*A Doctoral Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

MANAGEMENT

BY

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Under the supervision of

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DECLARATION

I, Salahuddin, hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**The impact of Brand Equity and Consumer Hope on Consumer Re-patronage intention: A Study on online travel**” in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Management Studies, is the outcome of an original study, free of plagiarism, undertaken by me, under the supervision of Dr, Sapna Singh, Associate Professor, School of Management Studies, University of Hyderabad.

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Below are the details of Publications, Conferences & Coursework pursued during PhD.

A. Journal and Book Chapters Published

- a. Ahmed, S., & Singh, S. (2020). ‘Examining the Role of HR Practice and Employee Engagement on Employee’s Loyalty—The Sustainability Dimensions of Textile Industry in Bangladesh’ In *Sustainable Human Resource Management* (pp. 259-272). Springer, Singapore.
- b. Ahmed, S., Singh, S., Samala, N., (2021). “What Do Online Reviews Communicate? An Evidence from Emerging Economy”. *International Journal of Emerging Markets* – [Scopus, ABDC – (B)]

B. Conferences and Workshops

- a. Presented paper entitled "*Experience of Green Products: Satisfaction among Bangladeshi Consumers*", in Sixth Biennial Conference of the Indian Academy of Management (INDAM 2020) from January 2-4, 2020 at Indian Institute of Management Tiruchirappalli.
- b. Presented paper entitled "*Does brand communication and Credible online reviews increases Brand loyalty? The role of brand trust in booking Brand Oyo*" at 8th IBS conference on Marketing & Business strategy (ICOMBS 2019) held at ICFAI Business School, Hyderabad on November 15 & 16, 2019.
- c. Participated in five-day workshop on, 'Mediation, Moderation and Conditional Process Analysis', organized by the School of Management Studies, University of Hyderabad from 17-21st April, 2017.
- d. Attended in Five-day online workshop on "Analytics using R" organized by ISBR Business School, Bangalore, India, 13-17th July, 2020.

Further, the student has passed the following courses towards fulfilment of the coursework requirement for PhD:

Course Code	Name	Credits	Pass / Fail
1. BA-802	Statistics for Business Analytics	3	Pass
2. BA-804	Marketing of Services	3	Pass
3. BA-807	Predictive Analytics	3	Pass
4. BA-810	Essentials of Business Analytics	3	Pass

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DEDICATION

.....to my parents, for making me who I am today!

.....to my Wife, Humayra for her love & support!

*.....to my kids Zayan & Zunairah for being bundles of
joy!*

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the current research is to explore brand equity through the lens of Affect Theory of Social Exchange, Hope Theory and Technology Acceptance Model and examine its impact on customer Re-patronage intention in the context of online travel business. The proposed conceptual model also incorporates consumer hope, customer satisfaction and customer commitment as a mediator and examine their influence in relationship between brand equity and customer re-patronage intention. Moreover, the study also examines the moderating role of self-efficacy on the relationship between consumer hope and customer satisfaction and consumer hope and customer commitment. Data was acquired both in-person and online mode through survey method using structured questionnaire. Data was subjected to demographic analysis and analyzed through SPSS. Study's proposed hypotheses was tested using structural equation modeling through SMARTPLS. Further Mediation and Moderation analysis was also performed through the same. Results revealed that, Brand Equity for online companies has a significant relationship on customer re-patronage intention while consumer hope has a notable impact in association between the two. The study further indicates that, customer satisfaction commitment has a considerable on the relationship between on relationship between consumer hope and customer re-patronage intention. The results also reflect that self-efficacy moderated the relationship between consumer hope and satisfaction but does not exert any influence on consumer hope and customer re-patronage intention. The current research adds on to the literature by enhancing Affect theory of social exchange, Hope theory and TAM model in a novel context while also encompasses some practical and viable solutions for improved consumer-brand relationship in online travel business.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BT	Brand Trust
CA	Cronbach Alpha
CB-SEM	Covariance-based Structural
CC	Customer Commitment
CH	Consumer Hope
CMB	Common Method Bias
CR	Composite Reliability
CS	Customer Satisfaction
CV	Convergent Validity
DV	Discriminant Validity
EC	Emotional Connection
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait
IM	Indicator Multicollinearity
IT	Information Technology
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
OE	Online Experience
OF	Order Fulfillment
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Square
RI	Re-Patronage Intention
RSV	Responsive Service Nature
SE	Self-Efficacy
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Square

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The present chapter gives a glimpse of the scenario behind the evolution of the online travel market in India. The chapter focuses on the emergence of the online travel market in India with a brief discussion of major forms of tourism. The chapter further gives an insight into the role of ICT in the online travel business followed by scenario during the recent pandemic and a brief on circuit tourism. In addition, the chapter also highlights the development of the thesis and subsequently the framework governing this thesis.

1.1 Background: Evolution of E-Commerce

In simple words, E-Commerce is performing business activities on an online platform. But it's not only purchasing and disposing of required goods and services online rather includes several related and trivial activities starting from creating superior products and services, uploading, marketing, selling, providing faster services through a secured payment gateway, and ensuring prompt service through responsive customer service. In the words of (Chanana and Goel, 2012) E-Commerce is "Utilizing the computerized infrastructure and automated information processing gateway in business exchanges to generate, alter or reexamining the association for crafting values between two or more organizations or between firms and individuals". Backed by the power of ICT, it has empowered the business to strengthen their operational efficiencies to step in their footprints globally.

The flourishing e-commerce industry has changed the scenario of business by adding the super dynamic aspects in business for augmenting the business worldwide. This has established itself as a key to the new and emerging economy and a superior way to exchange

business across the globe. The business environment that prevails in developing countries like India equipped with booming technology and infrastructure is in favor of accelerating growth of the e-commerce Industry. After an initial booming in Mid-90s, the e-commerce activities in India were muted for several years due to the novice and over-ambitious entrepreneurs and the "adamant" nature of customers (Mahipal & Shankaraiah (2018). It took a U-turn around 2007 when it regained its momentum with the emergence of the online travel market. Beginning of the post-muted phase, e-commerce related to online travel-related activities continued to dominate the business as Pwc, 2014 reflected that it shared a significant amount of revenue i.e. 87% and 79% in 2011 and 2013 specifically. In 2013, Online retailing began to step up and started to grip the portion of e-commerce business. At the end of 2015, e-tailing grew significantly to place itself as a major contributor to the e-commerce business besides an online travel market. Eventually, there was a substantial addition from across the businesses like fashion and luxury products, Mobile/DTH recharges, grocery, education, and many more.

Several factors have lightened up the faster growth of e-commerce in recent years like rapid technological transformation, improved data connectivity, affordability, growth in consumer's consumption, financial support, and accessibility, e-commerce market is set to reach a newer height across the business segments be in e-tailing, travel and accommodation, customer services, education, financial services, etc. Apart from constantly meeting the customer's basic demands like the low price, quality and on-time delivery (Arora, & Soral, 2017) companies are thriving for "Information" as this is the key differentiating factor for business. In 2017, the total valuation of e-commerce was worth the US \$ 38.5 billion and appeared as a rapidly evolved industry in India. It is estimated that it will surpass the US and be the 2nd largest business market by 2034 (IBEF 2020).

India is a major potential business hub in the region and across the globe. According to the IBEF report 2020, India marked the largest growth in the E-commerce business when it

was grown by 51% annually between the period of 2017 to 2020 (Raised by USD 80 billion from 2017 to 2020). Backed by the massive internet access and aggressive digitalization in payments E-Commerce is going to be a pivotal factor in achieving a digital economy worth trillion-dollar by 2025. Several initiatives taken by the Govt. like E-Markets, Skill India, Digital India, and the uplifting of UPI (Unified payment Interface) across the national platforms are signaling the advancement towards making India a digital empowered country.

1.2 Growth of the Travel and Tourism industry in India:

Among the other industries, the Travel and Tourism industry is amongst the largest industries in India. The travel and tourism sector in India has been moved forward since its inception with digitization when there was a low level of internet penetration and the success of Central Reservation System (CRS) and Global Distribution Systems (GDS) have opened the way for the internet allowing travel and tourism industry to cash in its underlying strength to become a huge and remarkable high-tech user. Jafari 1977:8 refers Tourism as the “Survey of a person apart from his routine haunt, of the sector which acknowledge to the person’s requirements, and of the effects that both the person and the sector have on the provider’s economic, socio-cultural, and tangible environments” According to Wikipedia, "Tourism" is travel-related activities carried out for the motive of leisure, recreation, or business.

Tourism business and related activities have increased exponentially across the globe and are considered a rapidly evolving sector that generates more income. It has secured as one of the top-ranked industries in the world. In developing countries like India, Tourism has turned out to be a strong pillar and laid the foundation for the financial boom. It has a weighty addition to its national economy along with creating larger employment opportunities (KPMG report, 2017).

The industry has generated around USD 121.9 billion in 2020 (4.7%) and is expected to double the figure in the coming years. Moreover, it also created 26,148,000 jobs (5.0% of overall employment) in 2017 which had a substantial increase in 2018 (IBEF 2020).

The rapid increase in consumer's disposable income and changing lifestyle inclining toward well-designed services and supports are the major drivers that boost the traffic in domestic tourism (Mordor Intelligence, 2021). Apart from that, economic growth, augmenting per capita income and faster urbanization also imposes a substantial influence on the growth of the industry. Also, convenience of faster transportability due to the remarkable advancements of domestic flights, and trains along with wider connectivity of roads to the majority of tourist locations in the country has fueled the growth (Mordor Intelligence, 2021).

Several initiatives taken by Govt. of India have marked further advancement in the travel and tourism sector. Campaigns to foster " Incredible India" across the corners of the country helped accelerate tourism activities. UDAN – RCS (Regional connectivity scheme) inaugurated in 2016 has widened the air travel accessibility across the economic group yielded in remarkable development in increasing domestic travelers. Introducing E-Visas and Visa on arrival along with major infrastructural developments is another crucial step of Govt. of India to increase the number of international tourists which is favorable to uplift the further growth in the sector.

1.3 Major Forms of Tourism:

1.3.1 Ecotourism:

Ecotourism is becoming a popular and emerging concept among tourists in India. Ecotourism is one of the best options for tourists to relax and refresh. It refers to traveling to the places that are popular and attractive for their usual enchantress and rich social culture.

1.3.2 Heritage Tourism:

India's acclaimed past, royalty, cultural diversity, and bravery of people of ancient times constitute an ideal fusion. Various sculptures like forts, monuments, and palaces that stand as a symbol of heritage are found across the country and attract a huge number of tourists each year.

1.3.3 Pilgrimage Tourism:

India is an exclusively desired destination for all sorts of pilgrimage due to its secured arrangements across the globe. Despite diversified culture, the majority of people share common values and religious faith which are mingled with the air, soil, and water of India because all religions like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism are an indispensable part of the country's heritage and culture.

1.3.4 Adventure Tourism:

Adventure Tourism is a newly emerged form of Tourism in India. This indicates exploring distant places and remote inhabitants and involving in thrilling activities.

1.3.5 Wildlife Tourism:

India has preserved its natural resources as a religion. Many forests are rich with exotic and gorgeous wildlife creatures – some of which are very uncommon and threatening to make an example of India's wildlife tourism.

1.3.6 Medical Tourism:

Healthcare is a pivotal issue that is a greater concern of every person specifically older people. India has set-up a cutting-edge health care facility to provide superior treatment in the category of surgical supplies and general medical necessities at reasonable /affordable costs. It extends sublime chance to avail the world-class treatment followed by visiting attractive spots in the region.

1.3.7 Wellness Tourism:

India has been rich in Yoga, Naturopathy, and Ayurveda therapies and medication which is a natural tonic and refreshing for the people. These methods of medication and natural therapy promote wellness tourism. Travel for this purpose encourages to keep fit and maintain stress-free lives of the individuals.

The travel and Tourism industry in India is the seventh-highest contributor with a significant share of its GDP. During the last decade, the country's economic growth has been propelled and was highest among the other leading nations in the world. The emergence of economic fronts and significant developments are the keys to accelerating the travel and tourism industry since a substantial number of Indians with increased disposable incomes lead to a larger number of domestic and international trips.

1.4 Role of ICT in the Travel & Tourism Industry:

The intensive utilization of ICT (Information Communication & Technology) in the travel & tourism sector has significantly changed the business framework and has brought a dramatic revolution which is also changed the tourist's general perception and experience (Sinarta, & Buhalis, 2019); (Su et.al., 2017). The role of ICT became instrumental in augmenting and growing sales in the tourism sector (Adil, 2021; Cui et al., 2018). By the year

2025 majority of tourism product sales are likely to transact online and there will be a significant jump in the revenue growth at about 13.9% annually (CAGR 2021-2025) which will add to industry volume worth the US \$ 909.235 million by 2025 (Statista, 2019).

Central Reservation Systems (CRS) and Global Distribution Systems (GDS) – World span and Abacus, Galileo, Amadeus, and Sabra are some of the tools that play a key role in travel and tourism industry functioning and efficiently operating its day-to-day business. These technological systems were initially introduced by various airlines which were later adopted by hotel chains to warrant the online travel portals/agencies and related other businesses to gain access to price and schedule information to enable them to reserve services for customers (Sigala & Gretzel, 2017). With the faster transmission of data and information, customers can now access information at a lower cost. Moreover, tourists can now access exhaustive, prompt, and pertinent information in an online environment to facilitate their decision-making.

With the emergence of widespread technological uses over the last two decades, there has been remarkable progress marked in the industry through the proliferation of high-speed internet and the surge in smartphone usage (Mordor & Intelligence Report, 2020). This technological up gradation has inspired travelers to schedule their complete travel trip online starting from booking tickets, accommodation, insurance for the trip, and other associated services. As a matter of fact, online travel portals are now standing as "One Stop Shop" to fulfill all the requirements of existing as well as prospective customers. These online travel agencies (OTC's) not only act as providing a comprehensive arrangement for personalized deals, assured payment platform, easy cancelation, planning & networking but also paved the way for relative pricing and gained access to lucrative deals at an economical price, which also saves their time and costs for the tourists.

Technology has become part and parcel of a traveler's essentials irrespective of personal or business travel. It plays a key role in the journey that begins with planning for

booking, VISA, payment, currency exchange, during travel, claim submission, and reimbursement if any for Business Travelers). Specifically, mobile applications have made a revolutionary impact in reforming the travel business. The dynamism of mobile applications has changed the total experience of travelers in availing of the services. i.e. Mobile Tickets/E-boarding pass, check-in for hotel accommodation through mobile apps, cab hire, etc. apart from some primary aspects like search, reservation, payment, and customer service.

Indian travelers are found to be the most tech-savvy travelers in the world in a global survey conducted by a travel association forum. (The survey was conducted on 11,000 respondents from 19 countries who availed of at least one return flight in the preceding year). The survey further revealed that the majority of the travelers (77%) chose online for booking, out of which 71% prefer to book with voice search while planning the trip. Besides, 74% have used smartphones while searching and booking their desired services (KPMG Report, 2020). Indian Travelers seem highly cognizant of using technology that will only get better subject to the further development of tech-enabled aspects in the sector.

The growing digitization in this sector has prompted the major industry players like hotels, hotel aggregators, and OTAs, to adopt tools and technologies over the last few years. The major tools and techniques that the digital platforms are equipped with are multiple applications i.e. Big Data Analytics, VR, AI and machine learning, AR and social media, etc. These applications spur growth and brought about immense opportunities and impose sheer responsibilities upon the industry players.

With the rapid increase of accommodation booking online, the budget, mid-scale and high and luxury hotels are significantly contributing to the fast-paced development of the overall financial sector. The surge of smartphone usage and rapid penetration of the internet has expedited the higher hotel bookings via online gateways as well as other applications in the recent past (Mordor Intelligence, 2020). In 2018, expenditure on accommodation was about 26% of

that made through online bookings in India, which is expected to grow 33% in 2021 (Mordor Intelligence, 2020). The various initiatives and measures taken by major players have opened many avenues for this online accommodation booking market segment, which is projected to grow remarkably over the years.

1.5 Overview of Online Travel Market:

Online travel as an industry has survived, emerged, and prospered after the initial struggle of e-commerce. The gross booking online is reckoning to gear up at a faster pace and this will likely surpass the entire travel market. With the proliferation of the internet and the rapid evolution of artificial reality, online travel is growing at a faster pace. The rise of online services provided by various companies has warranted the growth of online travel agents who have been transformed strongly over the last decade. OTA (Online travel agencies) are online firms whose website(s)/Apps assist consumers in reserving services corresponding to travel directly through the internet.

In the urban areas traveling is becoming a more regular phenomenon as customers undertake travel for various purposes. This has also accelerated the number of times they travel during one calendar year. The online travel market's growth is fueled by relatively low but seemingly faster-growing internet denizens which were 420 million in 2017 (KPMG Report, 2020), which is a predictor of the market's tremendous development prospect in India. A considerable number of travelers are turning out to the websites for booking for convenience and to get better deals in terms of price and accommodation. Several other factors that trigger the online travel market growth include expanding the tourism industry, greater perforation of internet operation, and increased smartphone users in India as well as in other countries (KPMG Report, 2020).

Flight and hotel bookings are remarkably increasing with a substantial increase in booking for bus and car rentals as travelers often prefer to travel and complete holiday packages together, especially among the millennial who travels frequently. The combination of travel

and transportation offers which includes airport transfers and holiday packages is significantly demanded by travelers which makes them turn towards providers who can customize the packages efficiently.

Online travel is a competitive industry as travel plans are tough to fix with multiple options of destination, packages, hotels, air tickets, transfers, etc., and with much on the card. This makes the OTA, a distinctive category since they are scratching on the info/data regarding numerous destinations, spots, money exchange, weather, places to explore, and a lot more to design standard and customized offers for the travelers. This requires distinctly trained staff and involves additional costs. Scrutinizing and coming up with an attractive deal is a challenging task since alluring offers attract more customers and work as a major motivation for them. To simplify the design, The OTA's are advancing by serving differentiated and customized offerings.

1.6 Major Players in Online Travel Market:

1.6.1 Make my Trip:

Make my Trip is the pioneer in the online travel business. Beginning its journey in the year 2000 MMT has placed itself as one of the leading service providers. This online travel company is serving with great offers, exclusive deals and discounts, competitive airfares, and a flawless booking experience for the majority of its travelers. The company started its journey with its operation in US and Indian travel market.

1.6.2 Yatra:

Yatra Online Inc. is the parent company of Yatra Online Pvt. Limited, stationed in Gurugram, India. It is one of the main corporate travel service providers with more than 700 corporate customers under its umbrella and this distinctly leading online travel company

operates under the website yatra.com. Yatra secures concurrent bookings for over 103,000 hotels in India and more than 1, 50,000 hotels around the globe.

1.6.3 Clear Trip:

Clear trip is a global online travel company with its head office in Bangalore. Starting its journey in the year 2006, the company operates an online travel aggregator website for hotel bookings, flight booking, train ticket reservations, and other related services in India and across middle east countries.

1.6.4 Ease My Trip:

Ease my trip is an Indian-based online travel company, which started its operation in the year 2008 The Delhi-based travel company has been founded by Nishant Pitti and Rikant Pitti. The company is becoming the top online travel company with its lucrative deals in Air ticket bookings, hotel bookings, holiday packages, bus booking, etc.

1.6.5 Ixigo:

Ixigo is an Indian AI-based online travel portal. Its main office is situated in Gurgaon, India. This travel portal compares and aggregates instant travel information and checks the prices and availability for hotel rooms, flights, trains, and busses, and facilitates ticket bookings, through its websites.

1.7 The setback of Online Travel Market business in the recent pandemic:

Covid-19 has profoundly affected the political and socio-economic scenario worldwide. International tourist flows have been significantly reduced across the regions during this downturn from 76.3% to 30.8% (Fotiadis, Polyzos & Huan, 2021). Economically developed countries had endured a drop in GDP (Gross Domestic Product) -895.6 bn US\$, in North-East Asia, -1.1 trillion US \$ in the Asia Pacific, -853 bn US\$ in the Americas (Skare, Soriano &

Porada – Rochon, 2021). This downturn has caused many industries to face deep trouble leading to an economic reversal, travel and tourism industry is the one that plunged into a major crisis during this period. The worldwide tourism sector has noticed a drastic slowdown in business because of the concern over lockdown, quarantine, and isolation which were mandated by respective authorities. Generally, the adverse impact of a crisis like a pandemic hit badly to the tourism industry which takes a longer period to retrieve its losses as compared to other industries (Srivastava, Sengupta, Kumar, Biswas, & Ishizaka, 2021). World travel and tourism council's 2021 report indicates that contribution towards travel and tourism industry to GDP, has reduced drastically which is 49.1% and about 62 million job holders lost their jobs globally. In comparison to this scenario worldwide, the KPMG India report, 2020 hinted that the Indian tourism and hospitality sector has seen huge unemployment which was worth 38 million close to 70% of the overall workforce.

The covid-19 endemic has made a tremendous effect on business through international tourism. Due to the imposing of travel restrictions, the number of foreign travelers was significantly reduced and was nil in most months in 2020. This drastic decline in the sector has adversely affected the online travel business in India and many players in the tourism industry faced immense losses due to this crisis. The continuation of the lockdown had hit the hotel businesses too. The major indicators like occupancy ratio, average daily room rent, or earnings per room have dramatically fallen during the 2nd and 3rd quarters of 2020 due to covid-19. Although the Travel and Tourism industry gained some momentum during the festive season at the end of 2020, the surge of 2nd wave of covid-19 pandemic halted the initial journey after the prolonged lockdown.

After the ease of the lockdown, undeniably travel restrictions were functional and social distancing has been advised for some time. As a consequence, the business had to cope with

their operational course of action to conform to the regulatory compliances and all business operations are conducted in a contactless manner with safety measures.

The new normal is facilitating a quicker shift towards online travel as travelers prefer to ignore on-ground bookings and are turning towards online travel portals to plan their trips and book and make a contactless payment in recent times. Moreover, by infusing multiple packages (i.e. liquidity, policy support, or deferred debt payments to firms) into the economy, the Govt. is corroborating to raise the gross economic situation specifically in the tourism industry. This changing scenario and assistance are becoming a productive platform for the online travel market to turn around and raise rapidly in the post-covid-19 situation.

1.8 Circuit Tourism: A Unique initiative to enrich tourist's experience:

Rich culture, religious, historical, and natural heritage constitute a tremendous potential for the burgeoning of tourism and employment opportunities in the country. "Tourists Circuits" is a unique concept based on the specifically developed themes by the ministry of tourism, Govt. of India in 2015 places a great scope to appeal to the tourists who are keen on visiting those places. This is a huge task that can only be achieved through unified effort and approach by ensuing an appealing experience for domestic as well as international tourists. Several themes are idiosyncratic and appealing and related to the scheme including culture, beaches, wildlife, heritage, etc. These aspects individually or collectively can create an utmost appeal to the tourists having the interest to visit them. A tourist circuit has been defined as an avenue through which a minimum of three vital destinations are located at a shorter distance. The circuit should have flexible gateways for smooth thoroughfare. A tourist should have enough motivation to visit all the selected places of the circuit and should have smooth exit points. The purpose of building such tourist circuits is to raise the tourist traffic to all the destinations and to bestow the charm of all the destinations to the tourists. These theme-oriented tourist circuits

should be nurtured and evolved in such a manner that, it assists in the community's socio-economic development, opening up employment opportunities and promoting social integration without compromising the natural concerns and imparting an appealing and solitary experience to the tourists.

Various initiatives undertaken by Govt. of India like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Make in India, and Skill India will facilitate an establishment of such tourist's circuits which will also amplify in positioning the tourism sector as a major platform for job hunts, incentives for economic development and collaborating with different sectors to enhance tourism to grasp its potential.

India's diversity and depth of its culture can be found in its landscapes, religions, art, food festivals, and tourist places. Every state in India has something distinctive and mystifying that allures people from around the globe. Among the circuits, The Golden Triangle (Delhi-Jaipur-Agra), The Desert Circuit (Jodhpur-Bikaner-Jaisalmer), and The Himachal Circuit (Shimla –Kullu-Manali-Dalhousie-DharmShala) are most appealing and charming circuits among other circuits for its scenic beauty, ancient and mighty forts, and grand palaces.

1.9 Rational of the study:

The inducement propelled this study ensued from individual observation and experience. Circumstances that motivate me to take up this study are that the ongoing technological boom has made travel more convenient, easy, and exciting. Travelling is mostly integral part and parcel of everyone's daily life that people from all walks of life undertake travel for several purposes. With the ever-increasing service coverage of online travel companies, the majority of consumers prefer to book their desired service through these online portals. It's been a matter of discussion how these online travel agencies being distant from the customers and only exist and connect through their website are effectively ensuring delivering

the desired service sought by the people. Within the framework of the consumer-brand relationship, these service promises arouse hope for consumers and this relationship is influenced by the level of satisfaction that consumers have after receiving the services which also determines their commitment level and is a key factor to patronize these online brands. Online Brand Equity is a relatively newer notion in the literature of marketing and with a view to explore this area from a consumer behavior stance, the expedition to know the aspects related to this field and explore newer procedures began.

1.10 Problem Statement

The fast-paced usage and various applications of the internet and e-commerce have helped OTA evolve and played an enormous role in bringing dramatic changes in consumer behavior and overall travel industry practice (Chen et. al., 2015) To achieve excellence in its operation and performance the OTA's should explore more dynamic features to add up in their service pool and that best suit their needs. Quality, low price, and timely delivery (Arora, 2017) are the most commonly sought aspects by the customers in service which have also remained constant. The information aspect has become a new differentiating factor in business. Compared to any other time, today's consumers are more information hungry and thriving for updated and effective information. One of the ubiquitous things in the Customer-organization relationship is that customers can hardly identify their needs on the contrary whether online companies can realize their particular needs very clearly and provide suitable packages to fulfill their requirements. Sometimes additional and comprehensive information is required which may be missing from their portal that customers need to get by calling their customer support or either through online assistance which may take additional time.

Due to technological advancement, designing and offering lucrative packages is the need of the hour. Coming up with some combo packages like Air tickets, hotel booking, tour packages, transfers, etc. is a complex task and designing it is a timely solution for different customer groups. But to retain them for the long run and achieving their long-term patronage is a big challenge for OTA.

1.11 Research Gap:

1. The majority of the studies regarding online travel business have been done in only the western world i.e. in the US and Europe. However, there is not much research done on consumers' re- patronage intention in the Indian online travel context. In India, it is in a nascent stage and the present study aims to look at the changing preferences of consumers in pre-consumption and subsequent loyalty through the different brands (OTCs) in the Indian context.
2. Although there are several studies relating to age and gender differences in technology adoption through smartphone apps in hospitality settings Kim *et al.* (2011), studies relating to consumer's efficacy level across age groups in using, intention for booking, and closing the deal online travel context has not been extensively explored. As Vijay et al. 2019, suggested using other kinds of moderators to elucidate the interactive impact of brand equity upon consumer loyalty, the study proposes self-efficacy as a moderator as this is useful and limited in the literature.
3. Researchers have spotted the strong association of hope with promotion and product assessment and selection aftermath in tangible goods such as medicines, cosmetics, and healthcare brands (Poels and Dewitte, 2008; Macinnis and De Mello, 2005) however the role of hope in describing the impacts of the customer behavior after purchase

experience such as satisfaction, commitment in online settings have rarely been addressed (Kim et al., 2012; Fazal-E-Hasan et al., 2020).

4. Atulkar et al. 2017 & Zhou, Kim, Okumus, & Cobanoglu, 2021 suggested more research needs to be done on purchasing patterns and re-patronage anticipations of online consumer behavior.

1.12 Research Questions

To inscribe the identified problem of research, the following research queries need to be answered:

1. Is there any influence of Brand Equity on customer Re-patronage intention in the online travel context.
2. Whether Brand Equity has an impact on customer's re-patronage intention through consumer hope, satisfaction, and commitment.
3. Whether the effect of Brand Equity on customers' re-patronage intention changes with their self-efficacy.

1.13 Purpose of the Research

1.13.1 Broad Aim: The major objective of the study is to analyze re-patronage intention of consumers in the online travel context.

1.13.2 Specific purposes: The main research purposes are:

1. To identify the association between Brand equity and consumer re-patronage intention in online travel context.
2. To examine the association between brand equity and consumer hope.
3. To scrutinize the mediating influence of hope, satisfaction and commitment between brand Equity and re-patronage intention.
4. To analyze the mediating effect of satisfaction and commitment in relationship between consumer hope and re-patronage intention.

5. To check the moderating effect of self-efficacy on the link in connection with consumer hope and satisfaction and consumer hope and commitment towards re-patronage intention.

1.14 Scope of the Study

It is critical that any research in academia can clearly define its scope due to the enormously increasing number of research addressing a host of related and a divergent number of constructs being published on a very high regularity. The subject of this thesis i.e. Brand Equity too has qualified to be in the book of research and got recognition as a potential and interesting research area in respect not only in its depth i.e. comprehending the various aspects of a single construct but also in its breadth i.e. connections with the other constructs. This has ensued in the latest growth in the volume of studies being earned a place in journals indicating the area hence warranting its significance for academicians to state impartially the scope of research being carried out by those scholars.

The sphere of the current study is demonstrated concerning its constructs, content, and context. The constructs undertaken and investigated in the present thesis about Brand Equity are drawn from Brand Equity for online companies developed in an online retail context with five distinct dimensions i.e. emotional connection, online experience, responsive service nature, trust, and fulfillment as it was deemed appropriate to evaluate the marketability of online travel agents based on these dimensions and also customer's re-patronage intention about those OTA's.

1.15 Proposed Hypotheses:

Brand Equity of online brands (Online travel companies) is dissimilar to Brand Equity of Product. Online brand equity comprises of aspects like Online Experience, Emotional connection, Trust, Fulfillment and Responsive Service Nature which differ from the brand equity of the product. Therefore, the study of brand equity of online companies will differ from

the brand equity of products. Likewise, the relationship between brand equity of online companies and customer re-patronage intention will also diverge from brand equity of product. Although studies have suggested that brand equity of tangible goods have an influence on Customer re-patronage intention, there is a limited study on the connection between Brand equity of online companies and customer re-patronage intention. Hence the study hypothesizes: H1: Brand equity of online companies has a significant influence on customer re-patronage intention.

(Berry,2007, P.230) postulated that, the measure and model of customer-based brand equity for online companies are different than packaged goods brands because online businesses are principally services, and it's all about positioning the brand which generates experience. Hope is a regularly occurring emotion in day-to-day life. Hope is one of the sensual mechanisms that accompany both motivation (will) and action plan (way) elements in consumer buying behavior more appropriately in online settings. Prior research suggested that customers' perceived brand value that enhances customers' general well-being may positively drive their satisfaction level and likely affect their brand-choosing behavior (Feeney and Noller, 1990; Bowlby, 1977; Bretherton, 1985). Studies are limited relating to the association between Brand equity and consumer hope and particularly no studies have explored the relationship between the two in online settings. Therefore, the study hypothesizes:

H2: Brand equity has a significant impact on consumer hope.

Ever-increasing and rapidly spreading technological boom has made a tremendous impact on customers buying behavior and this also made online buying more convenient, easy, and quick (Rosqvist and Hiselius, 2016). In any buying situation, the major goal of the brand (s) is to make customers satisfied (Thirumalai and Sinha, 2009). Factors that drive the benefits specified in online settings include comprehensive product information, comfort, and positive feelings. Positive emotions can assist in a consumer's psychological evaluation where the

projected benefits surpass the associated costs involved in their buying (Buck, 2004), which may ensure a greater level of satisfaction. So, the study postulates:

H3: Consumer hope has a significant influence on customer satisfaction

Customers' affective commitment has more impact on generating positive attitudes and behavior than the other two forms of commitment (i.e. normative or continuance commitment) (Evanschitzky et.al., 2006). To gain benefits from a brand, a self-aroused feeling and disposition are being created in customers to respond to that benefits, which activate a feelings of hope to carry on a valuable association with the brand (Eisenberger and Rhoades, 2002). This resulting beneficial relationship will likely generate an affective commitment and encourage subsequent purchases (Buch, 2015; Dipietro et al., 2008; Raggio and Folse, 2006). Hence the study proposes:

H4: Consumer hope has a significant influence on customer commitment

In an online context, satisfaction indicates customers' extreme positive feedback which has been created through the experience they gained from the brand(s) they select from a particular online vendor (Zhu et.al, 2015; Oliver, 1993). Recognizing the service benefits easily and conveniently can make customers satisfied which also influences them to take the service again. Satisfaction is the key to framing future behavior. Although various research has established a pragmatic association between customer satisfaction and re-purchase intention but studies are scarce as to test their relationship between the two in online settings: Therefore, the study postulates:

H5: Customer satisfaction has a significant influence on customer re-patronage intention in an online context.

Customer commitment, precisely mentioned as a wish to continue an esteemed association (Moorman et.al., 1992) has been in a study specifically in buyer-seller relationship context (Wilson, 1995) and also in agency tie-up (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). From a consumer

behavior perspective, Mascio & Fatima (2020) asserted that commitment is the basis of brand loyalty. If the buyer-seller relationship is to advance, customers should feel that they are being adequately considered for their patronage. The psychological association has a profound influence on carrying out the association (Wiener, 1982). Put simply, because the parties like and trust the partner, they can continue their relationship, therefore customers who are effectively committed to the service provider are more likely to contemplate the same service provider for their future buying. Hence the study postulates:

H6: Customer commitment has a significant influence on customers' re-patronage intention.

Hope is among the critical and perceptual-engaged passionate mechanisms that consist of both motivation (will) and plans (ways) elements in explaining consumers' online buying and re-purchase behavior. The concept of hope is important when consumers do an online purchase. According to several cognitive research, hope is a logical personality attribute that draws the person's intrinsic tendency of being affirmative about the future (Hanson, Day, Maltby, Wood, & Proctor, 2010). When consumers fulfill the desires that they encounter from goal achievement from the earlier transaction they are more likely to wish for positive results in future transactions. Therefore, the study proposes:

H7: Consumer hope has a significant influence on customers' re- patronage intention.

Building brand equity is a key factor for gaining competitive success for online brands. Brand equity for online brands developed by Christodoulides et.al., in the Online Retail Sales (ORS) context has five dimensions namely Online experience, Emotional connection, Responsive service nature, Fulfillment and Trust. All of the dimensions can add value to the brand and constitute a reliable and quality brand. Some scholars have argued that Brand value (quality) may exert an influence on a customer's attitude to a brand in an online transaction (Kim et al., 2004). Customers come across positive outcomes in the post-purchase situation in

online deals and may contemplate that, brand quality may develop their situation and likely engender hope for a long-lasting relationship with the brands. Hence the study postulates:

H8: Consumer hope mediates the association between brand equity and customer re patronage intention.

Emotional brand attachment is an important concept in marketing literature because it denotes the greater association between brands and consumers. Studies have indicated that customer satisfaction consist of emotional aspects (Liljander and Strandvik, 1997; Oliver and Westbrook, 1993; Martin et al., 2008; Yu and Dean, 2001). In addition, online experience and trust all have a notable influence on customer satisfaction. Business Firms' websites that furnish classy online experience led to higher satisfaction levels in a positive manner. Customers who trust the serviceability of the provider are apparently satisfied with the same service provider. Studies have claimed that satisfaction is crucial in framing a customer's future behavioral intention. When customers feel satisfied with the product they buy or service they receive, they tend to exhibit repeat buying from the same seller or service provider. Hence the study postulates:

H9: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between brand equity and customer re patronage intention.

Affective conditions are reflected by feelings and emotions (Hadaya, Talbot, Ethier, & Cadieux, 2006; Enz & Mattila, 2002). In the online context, commitment becomes imperative as customers have the option to shift to other service providers with a single click of the mouse (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003). Research finds that social interactions can raise an individual's emotions and expressive shows which in succession can impact on consumer's behavior. When customers feel pleasant exchanging in an online transaction, they are possibly develop trust (Cheng et.al., 2005). Morgan (1994) assumes that commitment motivates buyers to continue their relationship with the brand in the future. Therefore, the study proposes that:

H10: Customer commitment mediates the relationship between brand equity and customer Re patronage intention.

Hope is a regularly occurring emotion in day-to-day life. Positive emotions are emotions that are capable of bringing favorable feelings to the individuals due to the experience for example satisfaction, joy, pleasure admiration, etc. Positive emotions are likely to be more linked to customer satisfaction. Positive emotions which are a predictor of satisfaction are more likely to impact customer behavioral intentions through satisfaction as total satisfaction obtained through a product or service is usually understood as indispensable for customers to re-purchase, criticize or endorse. Hence the study posits that:

H11: There is a significant influence on satisfaction between the relationship of consumer hope and re-patronage intention.

Hope indicates that customers are aware about their goals, propel to buy a product/service, and spot the ways to get pleasant experience out of the purchase. It presupposes that emotions are impacted by person-environment interaction (i.e. pleasantness) and goal-directed inspirations (i.e. goal relevance, goal congruence,) (Moors, Ellsworth, Scherer, & Frijda, 2013). Emotional attachment is mirrored in a consumer's affective commitment, which motivates them to continue a reciprocal trust as well as association with service providers and proffer the array of services that consumer desires (Sashi, 2012; Jones, Reynolds, Mothersbaugh, & Beatty, 2007). Jones et al. (2007) have suggested that affective commitment is crucially linked to a person's repurchase intention. Hence the study hypothesizes:

H12: Customer Commitment mediates the relationship between consumer hope and Re patronage intention.

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's faith that they have the capability and expedient to thrive over a particular task. It indicates the trust regarding a person's ability to efficiently

and effectively carry out a certain activity (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy and hope constructs are connected but not alike. Self-efficacy is primarily concerned with the eagerness that one can carry out actions while hope involves the desire that can achieve goals. Perceptions of self-efficacy increase with hope. Positive emotions are a predictor of satisfaction and it is supported that, pathway and agency elements of hope have a significant influence on customer satisfaction. Hence the study postulates:

H13: Self-Efficacy moderates the relationship between consumer hope and satisfaction.:

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's faith that they have the capability and expedient to thrive over a particular task. It indicates the trust regarding a person's ability to efficiently and effectively perform a certain activity (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy and hope constructs are connected but not alike. Self-efficacy is primarily concerned with the eagerness that one can carry out actions while hope involves the desire that can achieve goals. Perceptions of self-efficacy increase with hope. The emotional response of hope to purchase products or services and get benefits from the online brand encourages customers to do good for the brand (McCullough et.al., 2004). Online customers are allowed to receive product or service-related queries information and knowledge from sellers as well as from other customers. This unanimous favorable association is disposed to yield affective commitment and stimulate subsequent purchases (Buch, 2015; Dipietro et al., 2008; Raggio and Folse, 2006). Hence the study postulates:

Self-Efficacy moderates the association between consumer hope and consumer commitment.

1.14 Structure of the study

This study embraces five chapters, portrayed in Figure 1.1. The framework of the thesis is appended below:

Chapter 1 (Introduction): Being an introductory section, it delineates the major aspects encompasses in the study. It represents the study context, adhere to the impetus behind the

study, purview of the study, statement of problem, research purposes, and practical & theoretical contributions pertaining to this study. It ends with an overview of the framework of thesis.

Chapter 2 (Literature Review and Hypotheses Development): This segment details on the theoretical basis upon which the ascertained research gaps will be conveyed and talk about distinct theories selected in this study. Additionally, this chapter will successively precipitate and consolidate proof to draws up research queries and hypotheses by offering the research model. Eventually, the chapter builds corresponding hypotheses to examine the associations suggested in conceptual model. This chapter lays the theoretical underpinning based on which the study is embedded.

Chapter 3 (Methodology): This chapter presents an outline of the methodology employed for the study. A short discussion on the philosophy of research (epistemology, ontology, methodological and axiological assumptions) governing the conformity between the research questions conveyed and the methodology endorsed is provided. Moreover, the segment includes the pursuance of each variable incorporated in the research, a discussion on the sampling composition, the research tools utilized for the survey, data collection methods, and techniques of data analysis exerted. The section ends with a brief on moral considerations observed all through the research procedure like instructed consent, participant's obscurity, as well as data secrecy.

Chapter 4 (Data Analysis & Results): This chapter furnishes a detail description of analytical tools and techniques applied to perform analysis as well as endow the outcome of analytical results and their explanations.

Chapter 5 (Discussion & Conclusion): This is a finishing chapter and discusses the findings of the current study. This includes implications, study limitations, and future research indications.

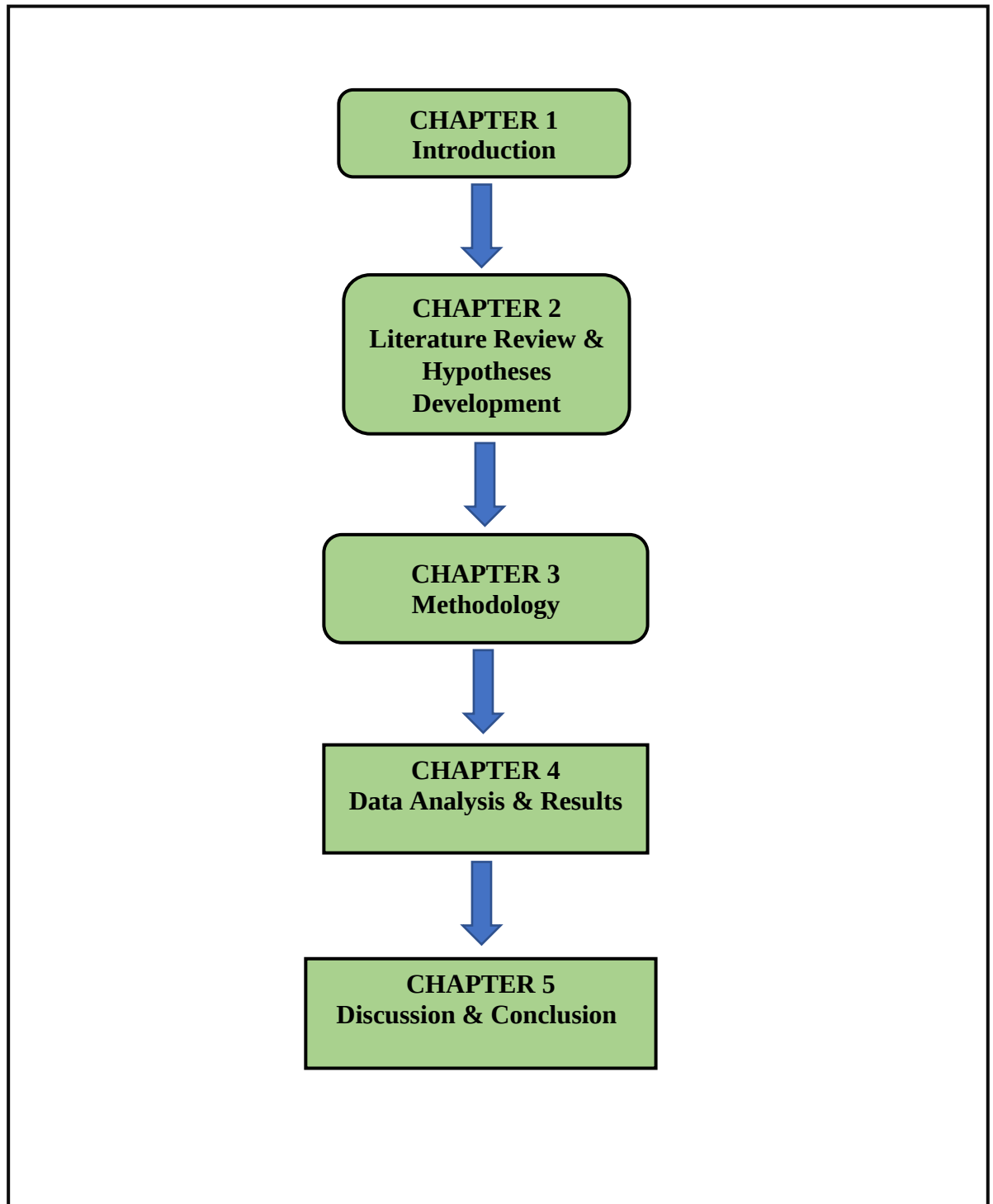


Figure 1.1: Structure of the Thesis

LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

This chapter presents the literature review relating to Travel & Tourism industry, Brand, Service, Brand Equity etc. and hypotheses development. The chapter sheds light on an overall review of literature on the six proposed construct(s), and concepts, discusses the relevant theories and how the study conceptualizes the relationship among constructs and subsequently study's proposed hypotheses are presented.

2.1 Travel and Tourism Industry:

During the 20th century, globalization and rapid flourishing of private ownership in various sectors, massive progress in transportation and ICT (Information communication and technology) had helped develop and laid a solid platform for travel and tourism and transformed it into one of the largest industries in the world (Mordor Intelligence, 2021). UNWTO (2014) defined Tourism as: "Travel indicates the pursuit of travelers whereas Tourism points out the visitor's affairs. A visitor is necessarily a traveler who intends to avail a trip to the desired places usually outside of his/her accustomed circumstances for a shorter period (not more than a year), for any specific purpose (i.e. personal, leisure or business) baring an intention to pursue any work in the country or the place stayed in"

Tourism has always contended as a significant driving force behind globalization, on the contrary, the growth of this sector is accompanied by the impact of expanding affiliation around the world. (Song & Li, 2018); Jelev, 2016, observed that tourism is largely associated with culture and civilization which is continually evolving through linking affinity worldwide.

Tourism is a century-old activity and has been well practiced and customary in various societies. Additionally, there is very little variance in the way the various aspects of tourism are experienced today than that of the features that were exploited two millennia before

(Cavagnaro, Staffieri, & Postma, 2018). Obviously, due to the technological advancements and modernization of infrastructure and improved support systems, the scale and the involvement of the people in tourism have increased remarkably and the areas covered by the tourists have been expanded, but the fundamental motivation and tourist behavior hardly differs now and then. Even though technological support has made our enjoyment of leisure time more pleasurable, the actual task(s) we do or activities we are involved in have not been altered to that extent throughout the century. However, for attracting tourists and accelerating the business, designing an attractive package and offer is crucial along with the availability of sufficient facilities and services (Marques, 2017). This in turn ensures tourism promotes economic growth. As a part of the strategy for growth in the economy, the focus of tourism was always to generate and increase employment, promotion of economic freedom, the attraction of foreign capital, and generation of foreign exchange (Shrapley & Telfer, 2002).

Holden (2008), observed that any tourism policy whether it is fruitful is judged on the steady flow of the tourist's arrival and its corresponding expenditure as well as achieving a growing share of the tourism market in the world. On the other hand, development-steered tourism refers to strong economic conditions through a stable political and social environment, unflawed and protected natural resources, ensuring utmost satisfaction of tourists, guest requirements, and valued welfare as well as safety of localities. (Gazici, 2006; Muller, 1994).

The development of tourism and other related sectors helps increase the flow of tourists from within and outside the country which is pivotal in driving the travel market. The travel market is mainly flourishing due to various key factors including the evolving tourism industry. The rapid penetration of the internet and the boom of smartphone users across the globe. According to International Civil Aviation Report, 2018 the travel & tourism industry and its associated industries are distinctly making a significant addition to the economic and social

growth of the country, by fostering economic development, opening up job opportunities, and creating resources steering trade, and boosting investment.

In the flourishing of the travel & tourism industry, the contribution of IT cannot be ignored. The role of IT or Information Technology can be pivotal in managing Travel & Tourism 's Industry's operations and making it functional round the clock. In today's circumstances, activities performed by any unit of the tourism industry are purely the outcome of the advancement of IT tools and techniques. Information technology assists in processing, conveying, and interchange data and information as well as transmission of services. Information is rightly available round the clock and its ensuing cost clarity allows consumers to take a well-informed decision (Sinha 2000). Several scholars (Ham et.al, 2005; Buhalis, 1998, 2003; Chathoth, 2007) considered impact of Information technology on the travel & Tourism business is so hefty that, it's progressively transforming basic framework of business and the cognizance arising out of it is at the core of the diligence of the business. Additionally, Buhalis (2006) proposed that information technology can reshape the essence of travel & tourism products, businesses, processes, and competition. It is further claimed that travel & tourism organizations that lack the appropriate IT framework will face difficulties in managing this information-driven activities and eventually they will suffer as it will lose its business competitiveness. The faster increase in supply and demand of tourists has made IT crucial and hence it is progressively playing a more significant and critical role in Marketing, Promotion, Distribution, and coordination of tourism activities.

2.2 Service:

According to (Gronroos, 2006) service refers to a "value-based" process while goods indicate "value-assisting" resources. In terms of business, service means initiating and assisting a reciprocal procedure that assists in creating value for customers in their day-to-day endeavors. The service provider gets involved with the receiver (customer) throughout the process and such exercise is what customers undertake (Kimbell, 2011; Reckwitz, 2002). Service has been always termed as an "Activity" in the existing literature. It refers to a process where one party for instance a firm initiate and performs something to facilitate someone like a customer in his or her daily actions. (Processes or activities). A laundry cleans and irons a customer's clothes and hence making it convenient for him to attend office and other functions. A restaurant serves a quick meal for an executive who is in a meeting with his client thus enabling him to manage his task(s) smoothly. In both instances, the firms are generating some value for the customers. In this way, service can be interpreted as: "A procedure that includes a bunch of tasks (s) those put forward in encountering between a customer and either some people, merchandise and other tangible resources, arrangements or framework and infrastructure act as a service provider, and likely involve some other consumers that are meant for facilitating customer's daily practices" (Gronroos, 2006: p.323).

(Yang, Cai, Zhou, & Zhou, 2005) stated service as a comprehensive elucidation as to what needs to be done for the target customers (What requirements and desires are to be fulfilled) and how these are to be attained? They emphasized that the development of the service concept is critical as this is the core of designing and developing the service concept. It is critical to acknowledge the needs and wants of the customers in the target segment which is referred to as service logic and position this in line with organizational strategy and combative objectives. Creating superior service is at the nucleus of service. As Grönroos (2008, P.250) observed that "Customers purchase offerings (including goods) that cater services and generate values". This

view indicates that customers are not usually buying products or services differently or with a different motive, rather they buy them with accompanying services that should generate value for them. Researchers and practitioners have opined after reviewing the existing best practices of formidable business brands from the early stage of e-commerce that, these online service brands create brand awareness and pursue commitment from consumers, build a reputation through service excellence and provide superior customer value (Carpenter, 2000).

Additionally, the process aspect of the service is another most discerning characteristic, which is targeting to facilitate customers' daily practices. The process is conceivably being diligently assisted by a supplier employing an inclusive service concept or partially aided by a self-service arrangement (Zeithmal, Berry & Parasuraman, 1988). A valuable painting is not just purchased in the interest of painting, but to look at it, to present it to others, or may intend to inform that it is in the buyer's possession. In case of buying from a superstore/hypermarket, a customer needs to carry a trolley, pick up the desired things, pay at the counter and leave. All these are the processes where the painting is an input material and arrangement of merchandise concerning superstore required to generate value for the customers.

For operating the process with some additional arrangement of resources, the customer only needs to play the role by adding the necessary skills. Putting the required information through apps or websites for booking a service or withdrawing cash from ATMs are some examples of such circumstances.

2.3 Branding in Services:

The concept of branding has originated in the FMCG (Fast moving consumer goods). There is absolutely no hesitation that, the service industry can take advantage of the knowledge gathered by consumer goods organizations. Nevertheless, the characteristics of services particularly the inseparability and intangibility from production to consumption need a separate

method to develop a significant service brand. Cowell insisted that the intangibility nature of service and the difficulties in differentiating a brand from another impose potency for striving at developing strong brands which can be easily traceable by customers. Moreover, according to Krishnan & Hartline (2001) a strong and good service brand signals an improved service quality to customers.

Branding plays a crucial role in service organizations and also pivotal for achieving customer trust in purchased service which is intangible. Strong brands help decrease consumers perceived safety, and social or monetary risk(s) in obtaining services that are complex and hard to assess before purchase. In a service context, strong brands act as a substitute when the organization left no scope for fabrics to touch upon, no shirts to try on, no apples or promulgates to inspect, or no autos for trial. Developing a brand is thus important in services, subject to its implicit hurdles in distinguishing products that are inadequate in actual distinction (Zeithmal, 1985) and the fierce competition that exists inside service marketing, some of those might have been denationalized.

In the literature related to service marketing, quite a smaller number of researchers have proposed novel approaches to develop a powerful and strong brand in the service industry (McCollough, Berry, & Yadav, 2000). A strong brand is logical as an assurance of future satisfaction. It is the mingling of what is the opinion of others and how the company's performance reflects in its services – all narrated from the viewpoint of customers. Branding of services differs from branding from consumer goods since in several high-contact services like hotels, Airlines, Financial services, or even insurance firms, the delivery of services takes place throughout a couple of interactions in self-service technologies or between the services staff and customers. This resulting experience encountered during a service influences his/her opinions regarding the service and governs the future relationship between the customer and the brand (Bitner, 1990; Berry, 2000).

Doyle (1989) has suggested four viable aspects of service branding. Although these aspects are not deliberately directed at any particular sector, their importance to service marketing cannot be overlooked. These four aspects are briefly described below:

Uncompromising quality:

Ensuring high quality is the most customary factor among the top brands across the sectors. Prior studies indicate that the firms who prioritize quality are benefitted from improved margins, and can generate competitive advantage, thereby augmenting market share which results in economies of scale (Gorla, Somers, & Wong, 2010).

Provide superior service:

The evidence suggests that customers who are dissatisfied with the service they receive tend to switch to other brands. Therefore, service organizations specifically focus on delivering a higher level of service to distinctively position their image.

Be the First:

The most underlying principle of product life cycle induces the value and necessitates becoming a pioneer in the market. In branding principles, being the pioneer in the consumer's mind holds a significant value and that's what all matters.

Distinctive:

The significance of being distinctive, specifically in a more developed market, is well acknowledged. In the service industry in general, productive differentiation is specifically important since the service offerings to some extents are similar and the chance to provide something special and different needs to be explored.

2.4 Branding in Travel & Tourism Industry:

Branding is the greater challenge faced by travel & tourism firms. The practice of the travel & tourism industry has been started extended into the travel & tourism industry merely a decade ago (Wagner & Peters, 2009). Tourism & Hospitality brands may instill distinguished meanings to customers. The experience that customers encounter with the brand and the meanings interpreted by the brand may evoke a psychological association between the customer and the brand. Tourism marketers emphasize branding their service packages to impart novel practices. This particular business is taking a shift from "Service Economy" to an "Experience Economy" through which customers can invoke a distinct experience involving their instincts and can also personify the experience (Schmitt, 1999).

In connection with increasing competition in the market for developing an exclusive brand identity, tourism firms have intensified their efforts to build up their brands by embracing experiential techniques that may generate sole experience and also individualize the experience for the consumers.

Powerful brands generate idiosyncratic experiences in consumers' minds that lay the foundation for preference of brand (Brakus et. al, 2009). Schmitt (1999) hinted that consumers in this century are not only rational but also emotional in making a decision and further stated that emotion is the resulting outcome of eccentric brand experience.

Heightening Branding in Travel & Tourism firms is essential because the industry is facing increasing and tough challenges due to dynamic changes. For instance, the rising purchasing power of people leading them to spend more and demand better and improved service. (Mangini, 2002) emphasized that, tourism and hospitality branding call for designing superior service offerings and maintaining consistency in delivering novel standards over its

products and services. He added that the strategy makers should emphasize directing aspects like generating hope between customers and brands.

2.5 BRAND AND BRAND EQUITY: CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES:

The brand is anything that adds value to the product(s) or services. Consumers usually identify or recognize their intended products or services by their name at first instance(s) or by the logo, sign, symbol, etc. It gives some meaningful worth to the consumers and some assurance regarding the brand's desired performance. Due to its diverse application, the brand has been defined from various perspectives (s). (i.e., from consumers or sellers). Further, it has been defined based on their purpose(s) and often explained by their features. According to AMA, a brand has been defined as: "A name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competitors". This definition lacks the holistic approach of being too product-centric, focusing on observable attributes for differentiation (Arnold, 1992; Crainer, 1995). However, despite its product-oriented approach, some authors have adopted this definition. Warkins (1986), Stanton et.al., (2015), Doyle (1994), Aaker (1991), Kotler et.al., (2002), Dibb et.al.,1998, propose another view of the brand taking into consideration Benett (1988) variant approach. According to them, a Brand is "A name, design, symbol of term or any other characteristics that recognize the manufacturer and that distinguish from other sellers in the same product category". This approach marks the intangibility of a brand as highlights "any other characteristics" like an image which could be an image that could be a differentiating factor. Differentiation is the key that gets the brand operates and subsequent establishment in the market.

Ambler (1992) comes up with a little broader view and takes a consumer-centric approach while defining a brand as " A set of promises given in an array of features that one

grasp to satisfy some needs. The features that compose a brand may be factual or illusive, logical or impassioned; visible or intangible". This thought accommodates consumers' functional as well as psychological needs. These features or attributes are revolved around marketing mix elements and the consumer's perceptual process determines its expedience. Further, some more authors have defined Brands considering differentiation in the center and emphasizing benefits that consumers gain through purchasing brand(s). Some of them highlight brand as a depiction in the consumer's mindset (Boulding, 1956); Personality (Miller, 1988); virtue (Sheth et.al., 1991), and value addition (Austin & Levit, 2012).

However, Amber (1995) has demonstrated brand into two philosophical approaches. The first one they portray the brand as a reckoning to the product, that is brand is actually an attributive of the product. According to this approach, branding comes to the final stage of the product development process as a product has to have a name attached to it. In another approach, they take the complete view where the emphasis is on the brand alone.

Depending on the elements of marketing mix, the brand should be capable of fulfilling the requirements of customer group it targeted. The ultimate message of the brand is created in such a way that any individual element (i.e., Price) can support it. Hence it is critical to evaluate which definition matches its perspectives. Riley & De Chernatony (1997) appeared to consider the product-addition approach while they stated the differentiating factor between a firm (brand) and a product perhaps "added values". Indeed, they proposed that, organization (Brands) and add up values are identical in marketing. Added value is unquantifiable and reflected in consumer's benefits, as Kinnear and Bernhardt (1986) suggested, "companies are emphasizing on convenience aspects through easy to use that leads to added value for the customers".

Add up value come across as higher when the focus is hinge on more intangible and not as much as objective facets of the commodities and services. That is the reason why McDonald and DeChernatony (1992) termed Brand and added value as synonymous. Based on the above discussion it can be summarized that the ultimate objective of creating and sustaining a brand is to have superior value in the marketplace as this is the indication of market power (1992). A brand can be holistically viewed as: “some integrated performance that facilitates obtaining competitive advantage in the marketplace revolves around differentiation”. Higher the competitive advantage, higher the brand values for the companies. Brand value stems from brand stability which in succession the functions of brand narratives.

The brand description holds the association and beliefs consumers possess regarding a brand. Brand managers are potentially responsible for flourishing a clear and strong brand description so that higher strength is achieved. Here strength signify the customer’s extent of attachment towards a brand. Higher brand strength ensures greater brand value. Managing and maximizing brand value and brand strength would pave the way for a perennial effect for the company which is profitability. The ultimate objective of any firm or organization is to strive for long-term profitability through achieving excellence by uniquely placing the brand by offering benefits to achieve competitive advantage.

2.6 Brand Equity:

A condition developed and backed by the company, where the brand name or item is already in consumers evoke set and can ruminate with positive and strong brand connection marked by Keller in the year 1993. He defined brand equity as “The differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer’s response to the marketing of a brand”. Brand equity has been a center of attention in marketing research and has regained its importance over the last few years (Yoo et.al., 2000; Cf, Van Osselaer and Alba, 2000). Simply stated an effort to signify the

relationship between consumers and brands is termed Brand Equity in marketing literature. There are two perspectives of brand equity (i.e Accounting & Marketing). Feldwick observed the accounting view of brand equity as the "sum of the brand value accrues in exchange of goods or services sold that reflected in the balance sheet. Accountants predominantly consider Brand Equity as assets subject to the revenue earning for the firms(s). Some researchers also viewed brand equity as a financial asset as a brand is capable of creating monetary value (Bailey & Ball,2006), which is further manifested by (Biel, 1992) as “ensuring continuous cash flow by a brand”.

However, in Marketing literature brand equity has been viewed as an “effort to signify the relationship between consumer and brands. Marketers tend to indicate brand equity as synonymous with brand description and brand strength and both these terms are often mentioned as customer brand equity to differentiate them from that of net worth of the brand. Brand strength in turn yields brand value for the firm(s). It is truly acclaimed that a brand has no meaning if it is unable to produce any fruitful benefits for its users. However, Feldwick mentioned that the term Brand Equity is illusive cause the functional associations among brand strength, brand description and brand value seem unable to portray as operational in reality. Davis (1995), stated brand value as making a significant contribution through benefits that it offers to consumers as well as to the company. However, the majority of researchers have focused on the consumer-centric approach and stress that, the utmost essence of brand equity is to generate value for consumers that in turn earns a distinct place for the companies through competitive advantage.

Keller (1993), suggested that brand awareness and brand image are the two elements that constitute consumer-based brand equity. Whereas awareness is instilled through repeated exposure, the brand image may be inflated through the continuous campaign, the credibility of sources, and when product performance meets consumer's expectations (Guiltinian, et al.,

1997). Moreover, the brand image could be the consumer's perceptual evaluation of product quality (Kayaman and Arasli,2007). This strong brand image helps in building a distinctive and conducive association with the brand which also increases brand familiarity that he or she recollects in every instance they attempt to purchase. That's the brand's distinguishing effect on consumers' response towards the promotional effort of the brand and because of the familiar name and strong brand association. Hence equity does not exist even after the resultant outcome of any marketing program incurs some value without having a name attached to it.

Leuthesser (1988) covers broader aspects by including major stakeholders of the brand stressing an identification (i.e., Brand name). He stated Brand Equity is "A chain of a network having association comprised of customers, channel partners and the organization created the brand that allows the brand for achieving higher volume and margin which would not otherwise be possible without a brand name”.

Brand equity pays off by providing several benefits, sealing a competitive edge, increasing loyalty intentions, and acting as a safeguard against intruding competitors' entry, as Pitta and Katsanis(1995) indicate high brand equity prompts the customers to quickly pick the product(s), enhances the chances of repurchase, and protect the brand from competitors strategies. Aaker (1991) suggests that a strong brand can ensure higher profitability, better coverage for its channel partners, and provide a greater area for product assortment.

2.7 Scope of Brand Equity:

Equity is crucial because it serves with a driven information package that customers require about a specific product. Brand Equity has been an important area of research that has been emphasized by many scholars and practitioners (Aaker 1991, Keller 1993). However, despite its wider research, the focus is mostly on the physical products, as (Yoo, Donthu, and Lee, 2000) stated, brand equity has been widely researched for tangible goods. In the last few

decades, service marketing scholars have emphasized that branding aspects of service marketing organizations also need to be examined with equal importance. (Berry, 2000; Chernatony et.al., 2003). Berry (2000) also stated that branding acts as a key in the services as it facilitates building trust and tangibles of the purchase. In packaged product settings, a product substituted the brand while for services, customers attribute the company as a brand.

Since customers are seemingly distant from the provider, their evaluation regarding post-service outcomes appears critical and also entails some perceived risk and this risk is comparatively higher when customers choose to opt for experiencing products (Laroche et.al., 2013;). Zeithmal (1988), emphasized that building a strong brand is essential in service(s) since there is difficulty in differentiating product aspects that lack tangible clues (Zeithmal, 1988) and service competition exists in the service industry. A strong brand is a symbol of trust and customers find it benign to be attached to fulfilling their regular needs (Rechards, 1998). Customers' general tendency is to buy from dependable sources due to the intangibility nature of service. Hence intending to visualize the intangibility aspects of service, cultivating brand equity is essential. Researchers in service marketing also emphasized that brand equity is crucial in tackling the competitive threat and making the company viable in the market (Bharadwaj et.al., 1993). Moreover, a strong brand helps reduce consumers' premeditated risk(s) and escalate trust towards the organization, while customers are involved in purchase decisions which are critical (Keller, 1993). Berry (1999) claimed that brand equity cultivation is the key driver of success while studied on 14 high-performing organizations across the service industries.

According to Bharadwaj et.al. (1993), branding seems to have more importance in service compared to goods because of the difficulty in dealing with that customers come across while opting for it. Like other services online businesses are also services and online travel, business is no exception to it. Online business brand equity differs in different aspects as

compared to tangible goods brand equity perspective. The main difference lies in the customer's overall experience with the brand which (Berry,2007, P.130) pointed out, "The root of experience is the essence for formation of the brand. Second, customer experience revolves around the website since in an online platform, the company's website is all that the customer interacts with and creates impression among people. Third, since customers interact closely with the website, web site acts as a brand representative which ensures security in terms of keeping personal information safe, its accessibility, navigability, and provides a wider array of features and content which shows brand equity has some unique antecedents for online brands. Fourth, due to the intangibility nature of online business and lack of tangible cues, it is difficult to infer trust which is crucial for online businesses. Concerning offline business, customers can get in touch with physical and tangible cues that facilitate forming trust (Berry, 2007).

2.8 Online Brand Equity and its Dimensions:

A scale related to brand equity has been developed by Christodoulides et. al., (2006) for online brands in the context of ORS (online retail sales). Brand equity for ORS has been viewed as affiliating to intangible asset which is cogenerated through the exchange between e-tail brands and consumers. The “ORS” brand equity model has five dimensions which are discussed below:

2.8.1 Emotional Connection:

Emotional connection is gauging the level of kinship between customers and online brands. Berry (2000), emphasizes that the key to successful brands is that, they aim to build a solid brand with their customers through emotional connection. Every brand is a composition of some set of functional and emotional values (De, Chernatony,1999) and along with ensuring the fundamental value (i.e., pure economic value), a brand must strive to engender emotional values for example immediacy and amity (Berry, 2000). Additionally, surfacing a holistic view,

the brand should go beyond satisfying customers and touch their emotions by fulfilling distinctive needs. Such as making them feel closer to the brand, successful, feelings of security, etc. So, to be economically viable, mere customer satisfaction does not suffice the purpose rather building a strong psychological affiliation with their customers can make the brand worthwhile in the long run.

Further, he also asserted that "Brands that connect emotionally are authentic summations of a company with a soul" (P. 134). A strong brand denotes having a solid foundation by emotionally connecting to its customers and weighing the brand is difficult to evaluate to a great extent. Marketers should emphasize dispersing their value proposition through online platforms for generating emotional connections. If something relevant and worthwhile remains at the end, irrespective of even it is unpretentious or elusive then the brand may manifest a solid emotional bond.

2.8.2 Online Experience:

The online experience is extremely crucial and has a very strong notion in online business (Hoffman, Novak, & Schlosser, 2000). Online experience denotes how customers perceive the website's functionality and its effect on their decision-making (i.e., buying behavior). Studies have shown that consumers who encounter superior experience are more likely to buy online (e.g., Bridges and Florsheim, 2008), and its opposite can radically turn in changing their perception of the brand which may result in poor brand equity (Muller & Chandon 2004; Chang et.al.,2004). In packaged product settings, the product constitutes the brand but in services, the company represents the brand. Dayal and his colleagues claimed that there is an edge between the brand and customer's experiencing the brand online context and the haziness of this makes the customer feel that the brand is everything to experience. Customers who buy online should not be treated as traditional shoppers but must be counted to

be well equipped with IT. Thus, it can be posited that the shopping experience online embraces more complexities than the traditional shopping experience (Contantinides et. al., 2010).

Further, online experience postulates that customers' brand experience is instantaneous that has a substantial influence on their perception of the brand and that nothing is obscure on the internet, is a massive platform and since customers experiencing the brand is present, any interruption in the process can dramatically change their perception about the brand.

2.8.3 Responsive Service Nature:

Responsive service nature or RSN indicates the organization's prompt reaction within the service structure in aid of crafting an effective online platform and the extent of reciprocity of customer service assisted through the respective website. Chaffey (2000) stated that customer service is the most significant determinant for positioning the brands and perhaps the key distinguishing factor for digital brands. Moreover, an internet firm's success or failure has been linked with how well the customer service is crafted. It has been anticipated that service firms in the coming decades will consider exceptions as a chance to better read their customers rather than treat them as a threat. As long as they are open and responsive, they will continue to grow and advance which will also mark their success.

A survey of some lodging firms found that market-oriented firms have been able to develop improved quality-laden service delivery mechanisms because of their profound responsiveness. One expert has argued that companies who run their business online are service-driven no matter what products they are selling. If you buy a cup from the website there is a substantial portion of the service is associated because apart from the tangible product (i.e., cup) that drive the website, owners are also looking after personal info, secured card transaction, etc. Your ultimate brand experience is mostly constituted by these service elements rather than the product itself.

Clark, 1987 observed that "A responsive organization makes every effort to sense, serve and satisfy the needs and wants of its clients within the constraints of its budget and good practice" (P.41). ORM or online response management part of CRM is considered as a key base that has meaningful insights which signal an improvement in service quality, exploring new ways in catering services, that also facilitates in generating scope to design tailoring to the need of every individual (Gu & Ye, 2014).

2.8.4 Trust:

Trust is the key that connects and binds buyer–seller in any form of interaction. Trust denotes when one party buyout the product or service rendered by another party i.e., a person or an entity e.g. a brand that is dependable (Tran & Strutton, 2016). Particularly in the online context trust is at the center of the business association because security and privacy aspects of the online transaction are significantly impacted by the trust. Booking a service online is always involved some degree of perceived risk and considering the intangibility aspect of service, customers would like to consider some external cues that act as some potential risk reducers. In this line, online firms bestow substantial drive to develop trust in their service(s). Customers form trust when they are firm that they can opt for the service firm's offerings without any question, and are ethical and reliable (Kim, Kim & Ryu, 2009).

According to Rousseau et.al. (1998), there is no question of trust if the customers are certain about the expected outcome. Rather trust is necessary for a situation that involved risk and is embraced with a high possibility of gaining net loss (Molm et.al., 2000). So, the probability of gaining net loss is signifying some level of trust for the parties involved in the transaction. Therefore, trust can change the scenario where some degree of perceived risk is anticipated. (Rousseau, 1998). Moreover, Young, Hwang, McDonald & Oates, (2010) noted that, when customers possess trust in a firm, that significantly influences their behavioral

outcome (i.e., buying a product or obtaining a service). For online travel companies, since the website is considered the face of the business, the increased trust in the website reduces the perceived risk which also enhances the customer's inclination towards buying or booking a service from that website (Mansour, Kooli, & Utama, 2014).

2.8.5 Order Fulfillment:

The last dimension, order fulfillment has the extent of online and retail world circumstances and it's a mixture of customer's online and offline experiences. In the context of online retailing order fulfillment is a key area that needs significant attention which impacts on creating value for both parties with an enhanced and delightful shopping experience for customers. (Jain et.al., 2021). Thus, if the expectations in service booking do not match while service is delivered, or delivery time is higher than what has been promised then customers will eventually be frustrated and will rethink obtaining the same service which is also detrimental for the brand equity of online business firms. Similarly, if consumers' physical product consumption or service experience does not match their expectations then even if they had a delightful online experience while booking, that will turn down their experience and in no way can counter their disappointing offline experience.

2.9 Consumer Hope:

Hope is a person's feelings or emotion that he or she encounter often in their daily lives. Several researchers have observed emotions are feedback or reaction to someone's elucidation or evaluation of the circumstances which is in line with predetermined goals. According to Harris et.al.; Snyder (1991), consumer hope may be expressed as a perceptual process tied with the concrete and favorable agency to achieve goals. Here the agency element indicates having deployed goal-directed energy in achieving the objectives in earlier, current time, and future

endeavors. Hope stems from emotion or feelings. In particular, hope indicates consumers' feelings/favorable dispositions arise in an uncertain yet aiming plausible result following the goal. Here Snyder coined the term "Agency" i.e., will component of hope Harris et.al., (1991) added that apart from "will" hope is also involved the anticipated option of possible pathways in connection to achieving goals. According to them, the pathways component indicates an individual's ability to create plans those are favorable in achieving their desired goals. Lazarus (1991,1999) postulated that hope is connected to the target with observance of the result. This indicates hope is objective-oriented and emanates from the aspiration to accomplish a particular goal.

(Snyder et.al.,1995) postulated that agency element of hope accelerates “willpower” (i.e., motivation to attain goals) on the other hand, the pathways element boosts the "way power" (i.e., action plans) that is necessary to produce some alternative ways to reach the goal. Appraisal theorists proposed that people evaluate their circumstances based on several dimensions those are 1) Personal agency 2) Goal congruency 3) Normative/moral compatibility 4) Importance 5) Certainty. Among these, the dimensions which are particularly related to hope are Goal Congruency, Certainty, and Importance.

The goal congruency aspect of hope refers to the degree to which the circumstances may or may not be favorable to attain the goal. For example, "Goal Congruent" implies that a favorable outcome would occur in a benign environment. On the contrary, the same could be meaning that resulting negative outcomes that could occur in unpleasant or intimidating circumstances could be borne. Secondly, the certainty aspect implies that the consequences that are taken for granted usually do not generate hope. For example, when a person is somehow sure that the result will not match his or her expectation then undeniably the person is unable to fulfill the goal. (Seligman, 1975) asserted that, a person carries no hope when he or she is definite that, the "goal congruent outcome" will be on the fence. The last dimension that is

"importance" indicates that hope is an inappropriate emotion when the resulting consequences are of less value or insignificant.

This will (motivation) and ways (pathways) elements of hope can well describe consumers' online booking services and rebooking/rebuying behavior. Establishing an exigent aim with exigencies can be pragmatic in generating hope (Luthans et. al., 2006). For example, consumers desire that buying an online brand or booking a service online will yield maximum satisfaction which may then affect trust as well as a commitment to the brand. On the contrary, studies have indicated that consumers' goal achievement process may get affected when they feel less hope and they may be unwilling to employ further efforts or unable to reach the goal even though they are capable of achieving the same (Snyder et.al., 1991; Youssef and Luthan, 2007)

2.10 Customer Satisfaction:

It's been four decades since customer satisfaction is on the card and engendering interest for academicians as well as for marketing practitioners. Oliver's (1997) seminal paper paved the way for further extensive research regarding this topic. Oliver 1997, (P.3) considered satisfaction as a consumer's fulfillment response and defined it as "Customer's judgment about the consumption or post consumption of products or service and cognitively assessing whether that turn out to be level their expectations" (Oliver, 1980). Most of the research on customer satisfaction has shed light on products however, a substantial number of researchers on satisfaction have focused on service context too. Service firms irrespective of the industry are continuously searching for innovative ways to satisfy customers because customer satisfaction has an effect on firm performance and indicates profitability (Ryu et.al., 2012). In an online context and computer-mediated environment, satisfaction has been proved futile in determining the favorable outcome (e.g. rebuy, positive online reviews, and extended loyalty intention etc).

Previous studies have postulated that customer satisfaction is most likely governed by the features and characteristics of web site (Pattern of information dissemination, navigational quality, etc). Because the website is usually the unique medium that connects the customers and the organization (Anderson and Srinivasan, 2003); Bansal et. al., 2003). Customer satisfaction is feedback (Cognitive or Evaluative) that is related to focusing on a particular object or incident (i.e., corresponding product and or buying experience that happens at a particular time (e.g., after obtaining or after using the product or experiencing the services)

Satisfaction is a subjective evaluation and intuiting its essence varies from person to person even though they encounter the same service experience. Customers possess various requirements, have distinctive goals and the experience regarding the product(s) or services affects their satisfaction judgment. Satisfaction is such an essential aspect that its influence brings a lot of benefits to the organization. i.e., it facilitates the development of customer trust (Flavian et. al, 2006). Bring out positive e WOM (Choudhury & Bhattacharjee,2001) and envisage buying intention (McQuitty et.al., 2000), and last but not least online business firm's success and long-term profitability (Evanschitzky et.al., 2004)

2.11 Customer Commitment:

Customer commitment has been substantially termed as a focal construct and engendering research interest in relationship marketing (Gundlach, Achrol, & Mentzer 1995; Garbarino and Johnson 1999;). Previous studies have embedded that customer commitment is a rudimentary element that has the power of governing customer's persistence in enduring marketing kinship with the organization (Gustafsson et.al., 2005; Hess and Story, anot2005). The majority of marketing scholars have come to a consensus that, customer commitment denotes the wish of customers to carry a long-lasting relationship being valued by the business firms (Dick & Basu 1994; Morgan & Hunt 1994; Anastasiadou et.al., 2019). Other scholars

have argued that commitment is a psychological impetus that allows a person to carry a long-term tie-up with the organization (Tabrani et.al., 2018).

The commitment concept has been found fruitful in studying the relationship between consumer and retail firms (Beatty & Reynolds, 1999), providing services (Bansal et al., 2004), as well as brands at large (De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 2000). Commitment is also specified as a long-term wish to continue in an appreciated association (Mason and Simmons, 2012; Fatima and Mascio, 2020) and has termed as an intuitive or emotional connection towards a particular correspondence (Francesco and Chen, 2003). Three aspects of commitment (Affective, Continuance, and Normative) are generally explored in literature i.e., in psychology (e.g., Jones and Adams, 1999), OB (e.g., Meyer & Allen, 1990), and in marketing (e.g., Gruen et al., 2000; Bansal et al., 2004). Affective commitment indicates a person's craving for continuing a relationship which is an affirmative emotional attachment to a service firm(s). Normative commitment is the impression for being obligated in an association. Continuance commitment refers to a customer's awareness regarding the possible relinquish related to discontinuing the tie-up with a service firm. The present research focus on affective commitment since, affective commitment is predicted to be the most influencing factor in generating customer loyalty (Venetis & Ghauri, 2004; Gruen et.al., 2000). Johnson et.al., 2001 also claimed that affective commitment has a broader impact on customer loyalty.

Affective commitment indicates "A thrive for developing a strong bond with another individual or group of people because bearing some mindset, kinship and forming of dependence over time due to close interaction with each other". Customers who are effectively committed are most likely to carry the business relationship as they bear close bonds with suppliers which generate fruitful and pleasant working outcomes (Fullerton 2005)

2.12 Re-patronage Intention:

Although studies related to customers' re-patronage intention towards the retail store or shopping mall have long captured a notable interest of the researchers (Burns & Warren, 1995), work related to the same in other contexts has not been explored in detail. Re-patronage intention indicates a customer's emotional bonding with a particular store because of some specialty regarding that outlet and willingness to repeatedly choose that store for shopping (Rossiter Donovan, 1982). Re-patronage intentions indicate the possibility that a customer will continue to buy from a particular outlet again and again (Oliver, 1987). The re-patronage intention is also termed as customer's "Revisit Intention", "Continuance Intention" or "Repurchase Intention" and perhaps the most significant predicted variable in retail operation context as it enhances retaining the customers (Wakefield & Barnes, 1996).

Re-patronage intention contemplates that, the customer is eager to shop from a specific outlet over and over again (Oliver, 1987). In the environment of hypermarket consumers are usually optimistic about obtaining satisfying shopping experiences (Kesari and Atulkar, 2016) which extend emotional bond and create intense re-patronage intent (Swinyard, 1993; Zeithaml, 1988). In a retail environment, after visiting a shopping mall, customer's overall shopping experience produces a vibe that leads to their post-shopping behavioral intention (Tai and Fung, 1997; Baker and Wakefield, 1998) (Bloch et. al., 1994) added that, that particular environment, customer's Re-patronage intention is most likely to be affected by the excitement that customer feels during shopping, willingness to carry on the activities in that shopping atmosphere which ultimately engender satisfaction.

Re-patronage intention differs from loyalty since re patronage intention denotes the possibility that an individual will continue to shop from a particular store over time whereas

loyalty indicates a strong attachment that a customer possesses with any entity or object (i.e., a brand or retail store etc.) (Oliver, 1997). Customer patronage and loyalty toward a brand are vital to the success of retailing in online context (Goode and Harris, 2004). When consumers come across an enjoyable shopping experience that further trigger a desire to carry on the same retail website, it is more likely that they will revisit or patronize to recollect the pleasurable shopping experience.

2.13 Self-Efficacy:

"Self-Efficacy" is the basic and significant aspect of theory of social learning that has been largely coined by Bandura within the field of social psychology (Bandura, 1994, 1986,1997, 1995, Zimmerman, 1995; Pajaras,2002, Schunk,1985). Self-efficacy is delineated as an evaluation of an individual regarding his or her own ability to carry out some tasks essential for achieving the pleaded objective(s). Self-efficacy is trusting in one's ability and carrying this belief concerning how nicely the person can execute the course of actions (Huffman,). Self-efficacy theory postulate that Self-efficacy is the person's perceptions and evaluations regarding their abilities as against their objective capabilities.

To have superior performance, possessing related skills is not enough rather utilizing these skills effectively is necessary (Bandura, 1997). Bandura in another article (Bandura (1982) suggested that evaluation of an individual's skill drives his or her performance and it does not ally with true-skill sets. Besides people tend to overlook and are unwilling to carry out any task when they are confident that they are not capable enough to do so and are interested to execute required actions only when they are equipped with confidence with the hope that will bring desired results. An individual's confidence regarding self-efficacy regulates his or her motivational level which is shown in the extent of effort employed and how persistent he or she is in facing challenging circumstances. Individuals who are high on SE analyze problems

from a larger point of view, are assertive in attempting objectives, can handle obstacles, proactively look for reasons for non-success and possess more confidence in themselves (Bandura, 1994). On the contrary, persons who possess little skill on the same are reluctant to try and thus less likely to achieve the objectives. Self-efficacy brings changes in people's viewpoint responses and activities, specifically, it affects the shaping of completeness in person's behavior (Cassidy and Eachus, 1998). Self-efficacy confidence is the force that stimulates humans to prompt into action, get comfort and drive to accomplish personal goals. Self-efficacy is a key aspect that drives a person's self-regulation which is also a significant element of learning for a lifetime.

The present research focuses on technology self-efficacy in examining consumers across different age groups who are capable and compatible with using technology while booking their desired services through online portals. Technology self-efficacy is the confidence that one has regarding enough accurate abilities along with requisite skills for successfully performing a job when dealing with a technology-related task (McDonald & Seigall, 1986). Previous studies have examined technology self-efficacy in the student's classroom and workplace behavior (Shu, Tu, & Wang, 2011) and teachers' technology usage Albion (2001); Clark (2000).

2.14 Theories:

2.14.1 Affect Theory of Social Exchange:

Social interaction is termed as a mutual activity between the parties (Brand and customer) where each party tends to generate some value for others. The inherent or obvious activities involved are obliged to create and offer benefits or rewards by trading goods or exchange behavior that is not possible to achieve by a single party only. (Homans 1961; Thibaut and Kelley 1959; Emerson 1972b). This theory (Affect theory of social exchange) extends the

area of interaction conjecturing over several major ways. Firstly, exchange or interaction results that may be benefits or retribution—are interpreted as carrying emotional impacts that differ in intensity and form. When interchange between the actors is successful then they encounter a high passionate feeling on the contrary, when the same does not yield any successful results, the actor's emotional state keeps low (Lawler and Yoon 1996). Positive feelings include pleasure, excitement, gratitude, and pride whereas cynical bonds comprise shame, grief, as well as antagonism. Second, social exchange refers typical mutual action, yet the degree and also nature of collaboration vary.

This mutually dependent relationship rooted in the exchange framework governs the collaborative exchange activities. The theory elucidates that, depending on the structure of exchange, warm relationship arising out of exchange stimulate how parties feel and perceive mutual collective activity, their shared group associations, and/or the relationship. With a greater level of collaboration, the emotions encountered by parties in the arrangement should justify the relational context more striking aiming for understandings and feelings.

2.14.2 Hope Theory

Hope is a person's feelings or emotion that he or she encounter often in their daily lives. “Hope is a positive motivational state that is based on an inter- actively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)”. The goal is the central perceptive element that constitutes hope theory (Snyder, Cheavens, & Sympson, 1997; Snyder, Sympson, Michael, & Cheavens, 2000; Snyder, 1994a, 1994b, 1998b). Setting objectives are the basis for psychological sequences of acts. Hope theory can be broadly classified into two categories of desired goals. The first one reflects “approach” or positive goals. The aforesaid “approach” or positive goals may be intended for the first time (i.e. a person wants to buy a maiden "Home Theatre" or pertaining to the nourishing of a

current goal.) The second category of general goal includes the thwarting of undesirable goal consequences. In the sturdiest practice, this category of goal mirrors discontinuing something in advance it occurs (e.g., not desiring to be unemployed due to being laid off). Research related to hope discloses that people perceive hope develops under the likelihood of Transitional goal achievement (Averill, Catlin, & Chon, 1990).

Two major interconnected aspects of hope namely agency and pathways fuel hope and drive a person to meet the goals. the agency element indicates having deployed goal-directed energy in achieving the objectives in earlier, current time, and future endeavors. The sense of agency has been termed as “Will” by Snyder. Following Snyder, Harris et.al., (1991) added that apart from "will" hope is also involved in the anticipated option of possible pathways in connection to achieving goals. According to them, the pathways component indicates an individual's ability to create plans those are favorable in achieving their desired goals.

2.14.3 Social Exchange Theory:

Social Exchange theory is broadly applicable in explaining the constitution of Customer-Brand relationships (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Homans (1961), who is one of the pioneer sociological theorists has emphasized relational exchanges. According to him, a social exchange involves exchanging of activities that may be noticeable or elusive, and roughly satisfying or expensive, occurs between two parties. Blau (1964, p. 91) stated that social exchange indicates discretionary acts of individuals that are driven by the gains they are desired to fetch and naturally do and in reality, they take from other people. In opposition to economic and social exchange, he stressed the fact that it is more possible in social exchange for the sake of obligations involved to stay unspecified, in the first instance. He argues that social exchange “includes the proposition that one person does a favor to another person, however, there is an overall expectancy of some return in future, its particular characteristics

are certainly not specified in advance” (Blau, 1986, p. 93). Customers are obligated as they hope or desire to gain from their exchange partners (i.e., the virtual firm/retailer those presents the brand) (Fredrickson, 2001; Ellemers et al., 1999). With the desire of obtaining advantages(s) in distinction to particular brand, self-provoked feelings and willingness is being generated in customers to respond to those advantages, which triggers the feeling of hope to continue an esteemed association with that brand (Eisenberger and Rhoades, 2002).

2.14.4 Equity Theory:

Homans (1961), Patchen (1961), and Jacques (1961) are the pioneers in proposing Equity theories. Equity theory refers that persons are driven by a relative comparison of the quotient of their investments as compared to their resulting outcomes comparative to the similar proportion of other individuals that are equivalent to them. (i.e., comparison with others) (Adams, 1963). Jacoby (1976) restates the “comparison others” concept to “reference others,” in which he clarifies that “reference others” could be "a class of people, an organization, another person, or the individual himself qualified to prior experiences from the previous period." Inputs consist of any of the above or all the key factors important to a person and relevant due to gaining some payback based on the investments for instance the factors like age, effort, beauty, education, etc.

The key point is that the individual relatively sees them valuable as to what he/she brings or inlays in a relationship. On the contrary, outcomes refer to either single or all the factors seemingly important to the person that yield some return, in other words, whether all those factors constitute some benefits or value to the individual. Outcomes and inputs generate ratios, and the inputs and outcomes of personnel are subject to their discerning significance in ascertaining the ultimate "value" of this input/output ratio. Consumers always desire to have an equal distribution and this has a significant impact on their association with the service

providers (Eisenberger and Jones, 2005). Individuals rarely put in their effort to receive the premiere services, but rather look for fair services and steady treatment. consumers tend to be more satisfied if they obtain a service comparable to what their counterparts (i.e., other customers) receive.

2.14.5 Technology Acceptance Model:

Since the last two decades, substantial amount of research has emphasized on spotting several factors that impact users or consumer's approval behavior proceeding various theoretical models. TAM or technology acceptance model, initiated by Davis and associates (Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989), has gained significant attention and turned into acclaimed as a frugal yet dominant model for describing and envisaging usage desire and suitable behavior. TAM postulates that a person's definite system handling is governed by behavioral intention, which in succession equally decided by perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. Behavioral intention is elucidated as the degree to which an individual anticipates to execute a particular task (Davis et al., 1989). TAM asserts that the influence of added peripheral variables on behavioral intent is entirely mediated by the two aspects like ease of use and usefulness. Latest outcomes on self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation in social psychology indicate that goal orientation, self-efficacy and enjoyment play important roles in shaping an individual's behavior. TAM model has been extensively used in explaining consumer's internet self-efficacy and online shopping intention, Faqih, (2013), Web-based system self-efficacy and goal orientation Mun, & Hwang, (2003).

2.15 Hypotheses Development:

Brand equity has got considerable interest among researchers and academicians and has been a crucial topic of investigation for over two decades. Brand equity related to tangible goods has extensively explored in the literature of marketing. Because of intrinsic distinction

between commodities and services (Zeithaml et al., 1985), the notion of brand equity requires more modification to suitably fit into the context of services marketing. Christodoulides et al. (2010) established and suggested an alternate model of brand equity in the context of online retail/services for online companies. The brand equity developed in online retail services comprises of five dimensions namely, online experience, emotional connection, responsive service nature, trust, and fulfillment. CBBE (consumer-based brand equity) measures and model for online companies is different than packaged-goods brand equity in degree. One variance is that online businesses are predominantly services and that "the basis on forming the experience lies in positioning the brand" (Berry, 2007, p.130). The Booming of information communication & technologies is the force behind the development of online brands. At one extreme, an online brand embraces a name, term, or a symbol along with a bunch of goods and service characteristics those are attached to that specific name (De Chernatony & Christodoulides, 2004). Similar to a brand that is offered in physical environment, a virtual brand signifies a perceptible goods supplemented in a fashion that consumers or end users can readily notice it's worthiness and distinctive amid competitors' products.

Major distinguishing characteristics of an online brand is the consumer's perspective of observing the firm (brand) (Hoffman & Novak, 1996; Christodoulides, 2009). Online brand experience from marketing point of view, is merely not a technology but a merchandise too and the user of systems are consumers (Song et al., 2010). The design of service and the way it is catered along with the compassion of the service providers play a key role in engendering the experience, as customers nowadays not only buy the service but essentially obtain an experience. In the context of online shopping, the intent to buy online is firmly connected to the shopping circumstances that consumers come across in transacting technology mediated environment which have a significant effect on their shopping intention over this platform (Ruyter, Monsuwé & Dellaert, 2004). Cognizance developed out of the previous experience

and its intervening role in driving consumer decision-making is important because buying through physical and online platforms poses distinctive challenges (Scarpi, Pizzi & Visentin, 2016) and there is an observable difference in pre-endorsement and post-appropriation stages (Amin, W. Ismail & Rezaei, 2014) that impact consumer buying intention. Experience gained through buying brand through online platform represents inner and personal feedback directed towards proximity through a brand purchased online (Schwager & Meyer, 2007). A favorable experience regarding an online brand transpires when the net worth of satisfactory exchange with brand surpasses the worth of bad experience (Christodoulides et al., 2006). Further consequences might be an individual's intent to re explore a website (Koufaris, 2002), loyalty (Flavian et al., 2006) or re-purchase intentions (Kim, 2005).

Business strategies formulated with the consumer experience as a key in today's competitive market can make a major differentiation as this trigger the likelihood of developing a unique brand through customer involvement and flourishing an emotional bond with them (Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Berry et al., 2002; Pentina et al., 2011). Two facets highlight the presence of a strong bond between the brand and the consumer: communication and the emotional attachment (Veloutsou, 2007). The psychological aspect of the bond, which includes affinity and closeness, constitutes the association (Pawle & Cooper, 2006; Fournier, 1998). An emotional bond exists between the consumer/end user and technology add-on logical assessment of the technical and functional execution of the brand (Christodoulides et al., 2006). Thomson et al. (2005) have indicated that the stronger the bond between customers and the brand, it is more likely that they are connected to the brand, be loyal, and eager to pay premium price for the brand.

Additionally, trust plays a key role in forming a favorable conception of the brand. Considering the relative novelty of the internet joined with the distant landscape of the customer-organization online relationship, trust is most crucial in mitigating the risk.

Moreover, online context necessitates higher levels of trust in comparison to face-to-face interaction (Corbitt, Thanasankit, & Yi, 2003). In the tourism & hospitality industry, branding impacts customer repurchases and re-patronage intention; and a strong brand also augments customer trust in purchase decisions (Kang, 2011). A large number of the latest studies (Dinev and Hart, 2005; Wang and Chiang, 2009; Roca et al., 2009) observe that, Trust is a vital aspect impacting customers' re-patronage intention and shall increase among the consumers who interact online subsequently (McKnight et al., 1998). Hence the study hypothesizes:

H1: Brand equity of online companies has a significant influence on customer re-patronage intention.

CBBE or consumer-based brand equity is termed as the “value of a brand signal to consumers” (Swait & Erdem, 1998, p.140). They also asserted that a reliable brand creates customer value by: (i) decreasing discerning risk (ii) falling cost for seeking information, and (iii) generating favorable insights. According to affect theory of social exchange, achieving implied or overt benefits by contributing associates in collaborative social exchange pursuit decides the structure and strength of the affecting encounters (Lawler, 2001). When interactions are prosperous, for instance, purchase of a brand through online is beneficial for the parties involved, for example customer is satisfied with the brand and retailer is also benefited, – both collaborative partners come across unequivocal feelings which strengthened the standard of reciprocal associations (Raggio and Folse, 2009).

Prior research highlighted that customers' perceived brand value that adds to their general well-being may significantly increase their motivation level and may also have a positive impact on behavior concerning buying a brand (Feeney and Noller, 1990; Bowlby, 1977; Bretherton, 1985). In an online buying scenario, where product/brand cannot be seen practically and customers are unable to touch/feel the products, brand value perception (quality) can be engendered by reliability, usability, interactivity, security, quality of content

on online platform of brands (Chang and Chen, 2009). Responsive service nature or RSN indicates the organization's prompt reaction within the service structure in aid of crafting an effective online platform and the extent of reciprocity of customer service assisted through the respective website. Chaffey (2000) stated that customer service is the most significant determinant for positioning the brands and perhaps the key distinguishing factor for digital brands as well as notable factor of e-tail quality (Wolfinbarger and Gilly 2003).

Another dimension "is trust" which is a key that connects and binds buyer–seller in any form of interaction. Particularly in the online context trust is at the center of the business association because security and privacy aspects of the online transaction are significantly impacted by the trust. Booking a service online is always involves some degree of perceived risk and considering the intangibility aspect of service, customers would like to consider some external cues that act as some potential risk reducers. Order fulfillment has the extent of online and retail world circumstances and it's a mixture of customer's online and offline experiences. In the context of online retailing order fulfillment is a key area that needs significant attention which impacts on creating value for both parties with an enhanced and delightful shopping experience for customers. (Jain et.al., 2015). All these aspects can add value to the brand and constitute a reliable and quality brand. Some scholars claimed that the adjudged brand value (quality) can have an influence on consumer attitude toward a brand in an online buying deal (Kim et al., 2004).

Emotional connection is gauging the level of kinship between customers and online brands. Berry (2000), emphasizes that the key to successful brands is that, they aim to build a solid brand with their customers through emotional connection. Every brand is a composition of some set of functional and emotional values (De, Chernatony,1999) and along with ensuring the fundamental value (i.e. pure economic value), a brand must strive to engender emotional values for example immediacy and amity (Berry, 2000). In online interactions, consumers who

seek for value driven by emotions essentially involve in exchanging with brands and observing product related information on virtual context (Hsin Chang and Wang, 2011; Yoo et al., 2010). Therefore, consumer's value perception (emotional attachment) eventually generates in consumers' minds. Positive feelings or emotions arising out of customer's value perception of an online brand may encourage for propensity of actions. The intrinsic action propensity of hope is characterized by physiological and emotional states, which enhance the adjudged ability to commence and endure drive beyond a pathway till the objective is attained.

As customers encounter encouraging outcomes in post-purchase affairs in online transactions and consider that the brand quality may develop their situation (psychological & physical well-being), tend to generate hope for enduring significant relationships with the brands. Therefore, the study hypothesizes:

H2: Brand equity has a significant impact on consumer hope.

In the recent past, customers' online buying has surged tremendously and rapidly evolving technology significantly changed their buying pattern as well as made online buying more easy, convenient, and quick (Hiselius and Rosqvist 2016). The rising of buying through online platform has brought changes in the fashion that brands involve beside correspond with their target consumers and also the resulting augmentation in competition has made the marketers better realize the necessity of importance to understanding the customer perceptions and the emotional feedback that they exhibit while they buy online. (Rosqvist and Hiselius 2016; Colton 2012). In all the buying circumstances, the customer's major aim is they intend to feel happy by the brand they obtained (Sinha and Thirumalai 2009). (Oliver 1993) noted that customers' general brand satisfaction depends on their experiences throughout the buying procedure and reflects in their echelon of perceptive reaction to the same.

It has been observed that consumers ought to be happy with the brands when the brand's perceived values proliferate more than that of accompanying associated efforts, or when desires are fulfilled or convenience is encountered or surpassed customers tend to be pleased (Agnihotri et al. 2016). Features those govern the degree of projected assistances in the online buying platform comprise perceived risk, convenience, product information, and positive emotions (i.e., hope). Hope is interpreted as the passionate reaction to develop ways to anticipated goals beside stimulate a person through employing thoughtful agency for utilizing those pathways (Snyder 2000). Positive emotions can be supportive in customers' perceptual evaluation in a way that their anticipated advantages outstrip the discerning cost accompanying their buying (Buck, 2004), ensuring a greater degree of gratification. Equity Theory (Hatfield et al., 1978) also furnish adequate explanation in support of the spat that pathway and agency elements of hope pose significant influence largely on customer complacency. Consumers' expected gains and expenses through exchange in virtual platform is vital. At the same time, customers need some incentive and course of action for pragmatic value to make sure that they experience brand satisfaction. So, the study postulates:

H3: Consumer hope has a significant influence on customer satisfaction

As mentioned previously, the current study emphasizes affective commitment as it is more certainly linked with positive attitudes and behaviors than normative or continuance commitment (Evanschitzky et al., 2006). The fundamental conceptual point of view of elucidating whether hope rises affective commitment take on the elementary principal Theory of Social Exchange (Cook et al., 2013): persons (i.e., consumers) requisite as to anything they desire or anticipate to obtain from their trade-off partners (i.e., the online firm/retailer that presents the brand) (Fredrickson, 2001, Ellemers et al., 1999). With the desire of obtaining advantages(s) from a particular brand, self-provoked feelings and willingness is being

generated in customers to respond towards that benefit(s), that triggers the feelings of hope to continue an esteemed association with brand(s) (Eisenberger and Rhoades, 2002).

Emotional response of hope to buy products or services and get benefits from online brand may encourages customers to approve and feel good for the brand (McCullough et al., 2004). Online firms usually provide comprehensive assortments and varieties through their online portals to convey and induce customers regarding the availability, plausible benefits, and description of brands. Some portals or settings also sanction customers who look for those products or services and intend to buy to let their opinions, suggestion, and experience be shared with these online brands or resume dialogues or chat with other customers who are also users of a similar brand(s). Hence, online customers are allowed to receive product or service-related queries, information, and knowledge from sellers as well as from other customers. This expedites consumers' propensity to respond positively in exchange for the benefits obtained due to the affiliation with virtual brands. This unanimously favorable association is predisposed to yield affective commitment and stimulate further purchases (Dipietro et al., 2020; Raggio and Folse, 2009; Buch, 2015). Hence the study proposes:

H4: Consumer hope has a significant influence on customer commitment.

Customer (end-user) satisfaction has been extensively studied and got considerable attention in service marketing literature. Satisfaction is defined as the "delightful consummation" of a necessity, wish, or purpose after encountering a service or consuming a product while having an overall satisfaction with a strong emotional orientation while consumers come across the service encounter at large (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Oliver, 2010). In online settings, satisfaction indicates a person's extensive degree of coherent feedback, constituted through the overall experience they gathered from the brand(s) they choose from a particular online firm (Zhu et al., 2015; Oliver, 1993). Likewise, satisfaction is purported to be

linked with corroboration of conjecture (Agnihotri et al., 2016) and since the customer's satisfaction level emanated from the corroboration or non-corroboration of expectations in respect of all facets of services, satisfaction is pretended as the solid indicator of customer's behavioral intentions.

Satisfaction is considered as a mental state marked by encouraging consequences likely to result in purchase intention (Soderlund et al., 2018). In virtual platform, factors driving consumer's level of discerning advantages from a specific brand may embrace product information, perceived risk, convenience & positive emotions. Hsu et al. (2010) suggested that when customers can easily and conveniently recognize the benefits of the services received, it is likely that they are satisfied and are eager to reuse the service. Most satisfaction models indicate that when consumers perceived benefits are greater than their perceived related efforts, then consumers feel satisfied (Snell et al., 2013). In the online platform, where brand elements are intangible, consumers' felt positive emotions induce their evaluation regarding virtual platforms', effectiveness, informative and entertainment. This evaluation governs the relationship between consumers and online brands depending on the brand quality and customer's encounter with the online brand and also subject to the belief that seemed fulfilled (Mazaheri et al., 2012).

The majority of the scholars (Soderlund et al., 2014; Sharma, 2014; Ali and Amin, 2014; Ballantine et al., 2015), admitted that satisfaction is the key to shape customers' impending behavioral intentions. When consumers are pleased with the product they buy or service they receive they are likely to exhibit repeat buying from the similar retailer or service sources. Several pieces of research have established positive association between repurchase intentions and customer satisfaction (Wolfenbarger and Gilly, 2003; Kitapci et al., 2014; Blut et al., 2015; Pham and Ahammad, 2017). Wakefield and Baker (1998) posited that, in retailing context, shopping excitement, customer satisfaction, and aspiration to linger in an enjoyable

shopping context are the influential factors that trigger customers' re- patronage intentions (Bloch et al., 1994). Wu and Wang (2012) observed that a consumer who tends to be pleased with the service rendered by suppliers is more likely to show a positive attitude and will unquestionably show further favorable attitude and higher repurchase intent (To et al., 2007). The level of satisfaction ultimately results in a favorable approach toward buying and has a significant influence on re-patronage intentions (Reynolds and Arnold, 2003). Hence, the study postulates:

H5: Customer satisfaction has a noteworthy influence on customer re-patronage intention in an online context.

Commitment, roughly stated as an intention to carry an esteemed association. (Moorman et al., 1992), has thoroughly researched in user-provider relationships context (Wilson, 1995) as well as in agency associations (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Additionally, the commitment concept has found fruitful in studying relationship between customer and retail firms (Beatty & Reynolds, 1999), providers of services (Bansal et al., 2004), and brands at large (de Chernatony and Dall'Omo Riley, 2000). Commitment is also specified as a long-term wish to continue in an appreciated association (Mason and Simmons, 2012; Fatima and Mascio, 2020) and has termed as an intuitive or emotional connection towards a particular association (Chen and Francesco, 2003).

From the perspective of consumer behavior, Mascio and Fatima (2020) asserted that commitment is the foundation for brand loyalty. Moorman et al. (1992, p. 316) narrated commitment as a customer's willingness to support an esteemed association and to manifest a higher level of effort to maintain the relationship. If the buyer-seller relationship is to prosper, customers are to be under the impression that they are being sufficiently noticed for their patronage. Committed consumers are obliged to carry on the association owing to a sense of

emotional bonding as well as earnestness in their approach. Consumer commitment is thus crucial for developing and maintaining marketing relationships. Majority of marketing scholars opined that commitment would enhance the prospect of steadiness (Hewett et al.,2002; Doney and Cannon, 1997; Akrouf et al., 2016), and the aspiration for steadiness (Gilliland and Bello, 2002; Geyskens et al.,1996; Bricci et al., 2016)

Three aspects of commitment (Affective, Continuance, and Normative) are generally explored in literature i.e., in psychology literature (e.g., Jones and Adams, 1999), OB (e.g., Meyer and Allen, 1990), and marketing (e.g., Gruen et al., 2000; Bansal et al., 2004). Affective commitment indicates a person's craving for continuing a relationship which is an affirmative emotional attachment towards a service provider(s). Normative commitment is the impression for being obligated in an association. Continuance commitment refers to a customer's awareness of possible forfeiture related to discontinuing the attachment with a service firm. The present study incorporates affective commitment because it is conceivably and consistently linked with positive approaches and behaviors of the consumers to a great extent than normative or continuance commitment (Evanschitzky et al., 2006). Consumers are eager to sustain an emotional attachment with brands which let consumers sense deeply and pleasurable feelings. Simultaneously, consumers who are highly committed would generate a stronger psychological affiliation with the brand. (Keh et al., 2007). (Gruen et al., 2000) observed that affective commitment is a solid emotional connection with the target depending on how positive one feels regarding the target.

The psychological association has an inducing impact on carrying out the relationship (Wiener, 1982). In simple terms, because the parties like and trust the partner, they maintain the relationship. Hence, the customer who is affectively committed to the service provider is more certain to consider the same service provider for future buying. A study conducted by Hennig-Thurau (2004), on travel agencies and media retailers, has empirically tested the

positive relationship between emotional commitment, which is a similar notion to affective commitment, and repurchase intention. Verhoef (2003), found a significant impact of customers' affective commitment on re-purchase intention in banking services. Hence the study postulates:

H6: Customer commitment has a significant influence on customers' re-patronage intention.

Hope is among the crucial perceptual-engrossed sensual process that include motivation (will) and also maneuver plans (way) elements in describing consumer's online buying and rebuying behaviors. Hope refers emotion which regularly occurs in day-to-day life. Studies relating to psychology which denotes hope revealed that hope entails a person engaging in positive activity (i.e., purpose-oriented energy) and conduits (i.e., intention to achieve purpose) (Rego et al., 2014; Snyder et al., 1991). The concept of hope is important when customers make an online purchase; different than within the store purchasing, online buying involves more or less a degree of optimism that customer's objective (e.g., the product and service will do as specified) shall be accomplished (Raggio et al., 2014). Experience encountered through online business dealings is likely to raise some favorable emotional feedback. Additionally, a consumer is too required to employ energy (e.g., searching for info, comparison and analysis) and pursue ways (safe dealings, repayments, policy regarding compensation) to subjugate the chances linked with buying-associated goals (Chiu et al., 2014). Hope as an encouraging passionate response is anticipated in the environment of online buying circumstances that are uncertain and require such affirmative energy (Fazal-e-Hasan et al., 2019).

According to the theory of appraisal, hope is stated as a pragmatic passion that rises corresponding to a goal-directed future consequence considered vital, risky still on. It may be notable that, some theoretical studies claimed that hope is hypothesized as rational behavioral attribute that draws the person's intrinsic predisposition of being positive regarding the prospect

(Proctor, & Wood, Day, Hanson, Maltby, 2010). the labeling of hope as like emotion has also supported and gained considerable attention in meticulous factual research (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Roseman, 1991; Bagozzi et al., 1999; Baumgartner et al., 2008; Bruininks & Malle, 2005).

Literature related to hospitality and tourism has shown that scholars have tested the contribution of customers' emotions in the development related to their affirmative service-associated behavior (Ahn, 2019; Ahn & Back, 2019; Back & Parks, 2003). In an online context, repurchase intention has been defined as “the intuitive inclination of a customer (i.e., experienced customers) that he or she is likely to remain in a relationship with an online seller and continue to purchase products or services from the same online seller” (Chiu et al., 2012, p. 5). Appraisal theory postulated that emotion that emanates from the assessment or evaluation of impetus leads to their behavioral reactions (Smith & Kirby, 2009; Smith & Lazarus, 1990). when consumers fulfill their desires that they experience from goal achievement from a prior transaction, they are more likely to expect a positive outcome about future exchanges, that is, they turn out to be more hopeful about future dealings (Roseman, 1991), and ultimately, repurchases occur (Fazal-e-Hasan et al., 2018). Therefore, the study proposes:

H7: Consumer hope has a significant influence on customers' re- patronage intention.

Fahy, Bharadwaj and Varadarajan, (1993) posited that brand equity is a crucial factor for the firms to secure competitive advantage, specifically in services industries where the major rewards and benefits are impalpable and consumers' perceived risk is high. The study conducted by Rindova, Kotha and Rajgopal, (2001) highlighted that developing brand equity is a vital determinant of achieving competitive achievement for online brands. Considering the growing importance of the branding role in e-marketing, it's little surprise that very scant notice has been given to weighing brand equity concerning internet and interrelated technologies.

Involving with this collaborating medium has revealed that only reproducing the effort of store marketing in online is not sufficient (Meyers and Gerstman 2001). (Christodoulides, De Chernatony, Furrer, Shiu, & Abimbola, 2006) have developed a brand equity scale for online companies which embraces five aspects specifically online experience, emotional connection, trust, responsive service nature and fulfillment. Prior research highlighted that customers' perceived brand value that adds to their general well-being may significantly increase their motivation level and may also have a positive impact on behavior concerning buying a brand (Bretherton, 1985; Bowlby, 1977; Feeney and Noller, 1990). In a virtual shopping context, where the commodities/brand are not practically visible beside customers are unable to touch/feel the products, perceived brand value (in terms of quality) is likely to engendered by reliability, interactivity, security, usability and content quality of online brands (Chang and Chen, 2009). Responsive service nature or RSN indicates the organization's prompt reaction within the service structure in aid of crafting an effective online platform and the extent of reciprocity of customer service assisted through the respective website. Chaffey (2000) stated that customer service is the most significant determinant for positioning the brands and perhaps the key distinguishing factor for digital brands as well as a significant factor of e-tail quality (Wolfenbarger and Gilly 2003).

Another dimension "is trust" which is a key that connects and binds buyer–seller in any form of interaction. Particularly in the online context trust is at the center of the business association because security and privacy aspects of the online transaction are significantly impacted by the trust. Booking a service online is always involved some degree of perceived risk and considering the intangibility aspect of service, customers would like to consider some external cues that act as some potential risk reducers. Order fulfillment has the extent of online and retail world circumstances and it's a mixture of customer's online and offline experiences. In the context of online retailing order fulfillment is a key area that needs significant attention

which impacts on creating value for both parties with an enhanced and delightful shopping experience for customers. (Jain et.al., 2015). Thus, if the expectations in service booking do not match while service is delivered, or delivery time is higher than what has been promised then customers will eventually be frustrated and will rethink obtaining the same service which will leads to a poor effect on the brand equity of online business firms.

All these aspects can add value to the brand and constitute a reliable and quality brand. Some scholars claimed that consumers brand value perceptions (regarding quality) may have an influence on customer attitude toward a brand in a deal in online platform (Kim et al., 2004). Attachment theory indicates that customers seeming brand value adds to enhancing their motivation level (will) and substitutes (way) they embark on to achieve their buying-associated objectives (Goldberg et al., 2013; Feeney and Noller, 1990). Since customers encounter encouraging outcomes in a post-purchase affair in online transaction and consider that the brand quality may develop their situation (psychological & physical well-being), tend to generate hope for enduring significant relationships with the brands.

Emotional connection is gauging the level of kinship between customers and online brands. Berry (2000), emphasizes that the key to successful brands is that, they aim to build a solid brand with their customers through emotional connection. Every brand is a composition of some set of functional and emotional values (De, Chernatony,1999) and along with ensuring the fundamental value (i.e., pure economic value), a brand must strive to engender emotional values for example immediacy and amity (Berry, 2000). In online interactions, consumers who seek for value driven by emotions essentially involve in exchanging with brands and observing product related information on virtual platforms (Hsin Chang and Wang, 2011; Yoo et al., 2010). Therefore, consumer's value perception (emotional attachment) eventually generates in consumers' minds. Positive feelings or emotions arising out of customer's value perception of an online brand may encourage for propensity of actions. The intrinsic action propensity of

hope is characterized by physiological and emotional and states, which enhance the adjudged capacity to commence and endure drive along a pathway until the objective is attained. Research relating to psychology denoting hope has revealed that hope entails a person engaging in positive activity (i.e., goal-oriented energy) and conduits (i.e., plans to achieve the goals) (Rego et al., 2014; Snyder et al., 1991).

Re-patronage intention indicates a customer's emotional bonding with a particular store because of some specialty regarding that outlet and willingness to repeatedly choose that store for shopping (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982). Re-patronage intention is also termed as a customer's "Revisit Intention", "Continuance Intention" or "Re purchase Intention" and perhaps the most significant predicted variable in retail operation context as it enhances retaining the customers (Wakefield & Barnes, 1996).

In an online context, repurchase intention has been defined as “the intuitive inclination of a customer (i.e., experienced customers) that he or she is likely to remain in a relationship with an online seller and continue to purchase products or services from the same online seller” (Chiu et al., 2012, p. 5). Appraisal theory postulated that emotion that emanates from the assessment or evaluation of impetus leads to their behavioral reactions (Smith & Kirby, 2009; Smith & Lazarus, 1990). when consumers fulfill their desires that they experience from goal achievement from a prior transaction, they are more likely to expect a positive outcome about future exchanges, that is, they turn out to be more hopeful about future dealings (Roseman, 1991), then ultimately, repurchases occur (Fazal-e-Hasan et al., 2018). Hence the present study postulates:

H8: Consumer hope mediates the relationship between brand equity and customer re patronage intention.

Emotional or psychological brand connection is a crucial concept in the marketing literature since it explains the extreme bond between customers and brands. This attachment with the brand eventually impacts their behavioral pattern which in due course makes the firm profitable and enhances customer lifetime value (CLV) (Thomson et al., 2005; Theng So et al., 2013). In explaining the experiential bonding concept, Lacoeyuilhe (2000, p. 55) denotes it as “A conceptual variable describing a touching relationship that is intended for last long and adaptable (parting is agonizing) with the brand and showing a close relationship with it” (Bahri-Ammari et al., 2016). Previous studies highlighted customer satisfaction includes emotional elements (Liljander and Strandvik, 1997; Oliver and Westbrook, 1993; Martin et al., 2008; Yu and Dean, 2001). Satisfaction appertains to customer’s passion for goods or services (Anderson, 1973; Bhattacharjee, 2001a). Scholars proposed that customer gratification serves as impassioned feedback on the post-purchase encounters (Mano and Oliver, 1993; Oliver, 1993). A seemingly great service quality, that aims to satisfy customers beyond their desire may generate an encouraging feeling of pleasing surprise, and delighting the customers, causing greater fulfilment levels (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991; Ndubisi and Wah, 2005; Oliver et al., 1997; Rust and Oliver, 2000; Oliver and Westbrook, 1993).

In the recent past, customer experience in online context has become the concern of researchers in service marketing (Watt & Nambisan, 2011). Online business portals have become more dynamic and interactive, posing loftier portals for their customers to discover the offerings. Consumer’s online buying behavior is mostly impacted by their superior experience online (Florsheim & Bridges, 2008). The determinants that constitute a customer's online experience include viewing of the products, services, risk, privacy, delivery conditions, payment, security, navigation, visual appeal, personalization, enjoyment, entertainment, etc. In essence, business firms' websites that furnish a classy online experience led to greater consumer satisfaction positively.

Researchers unanimously accord that, faith is a crucial factor in evaluating consumer behavior (Göritz and Büttner, 2008), and contemplated as particularly a critical element in the theory of marketing relationship (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Flavián and Guinalíu, 2006; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). In the context of service industry, trust refers to consumers' desire as well as faith that the benefits provider will throughout deliver the service promises. This has termed as the customer's dependence on a firm's integrity and reliability (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), therefore signifies its authenticity. Trust is crucially impacted through customer satisfaction (Singh and Sirdeshmukh, 2000; Moorman et al., 1993), and also exert positive consequence on customer loyalty (Singh and Sirdeshmukh, 2000; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). According to (Marinkovic and Obradovic, 2015), Customers who have faith in the serviceability of the bank are more likely to be satisfied with the bank, generate positive emotions about the bank, and hence tend to be loyal.

The majority of the scholars (Soderlund et al., 2014; Sharma, 2014; Ali and Amin, 2014; Ballantine et al., 2015), admitted that satisfaction is the key to shape customers' impending behavioral intentions. When consumers are pleased with the product they buy or service they receive they are likely to inhibit repeat buying from the similar retailer or service sources. Several pieces of research have established positive association between repurchase intentions and customer satisfaction (Wolfenbarger and Gilly, 2003; Kitapci et al., 2014; Blut et al., 2015; Pham and Ahammad, 2017). Wakefield and Baker (1998) posited that, in retailing context, shopping excitement, customer satisfaction, and aspiration to linger in an enjoyable shopping context are the influential factors that trigger customers' re-patronage intentions (Bloch et al., 1994). Wu and Wang (2012) observed that a consumer who tends to be pleased with the service rendered by suppliers is more likely to show a positive attitude and will unquestionably show further favorable attitude and higher repurchase intent (To et al., 2007). The level of satisfaction ultimately results in a favorable approach toward buying and has a

significant influence on re-patronage intentions (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003). Hence the study postulates:

H9: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between brand equity and customer re patronage intention.

Affective conditions are mirrored by concepts such as feelings and emotions (Mattila & Enz, 2002; Ethier, Hadaya, Talbot, & Cadieux, 2006). Commitment is defined as “a continuation of affiliation between exchange partners” or like a strength of “emotional attachment” towards a firm (e.g., Chien et al., 2012). commitment turn over an individual’s psychological comfort to the prosperity of the association (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001), which could be instigated by the feelings provoked in social exchange interactions. Considering the hotel service provider’s website scenario, commitment becomes vital, as consumers can simply change to another hotel website with just single sneak of a mouse. Compared to other two form of commitments, affective commitment performs a vital role in generating travelers’ psychological bond towards a service provider’s website (Koo et al., 2020). Research has shown that, in traditional exchange scenario, interactions with other consumers as well as with service personnel have an impact on their (customer's) experience in the time of and post service dealings (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003). However, in connection with studies within the traditional exchange scenario, Hair, Rose, Samouel and Clark, (2012) outlined the implications of consumer feelings (emotions) throughout the online encounters. Flavian-Blanco et al. (2011) found that consumer feelings or emotions prevails in virtual environment prior, in the time of, as well as after search and frequently cause consumers to relinquish their online actions.

Tombs and McColl-Kennedy's (2003) study observed that social exchange can bring about an individual's feelings or emotions and emotional exhibits, which in succession may

impact the consumer's behavior. In the context of hotel website, when customers feel pleasant corresponding in networked dealings, they are disposed to grow confidence (Cheng et al., 2019) and show receptiveness (Kim & Peterson, 2017). Because of hospitality sector's intangibility composition, visitor's condition of reliance to a hotel webpage is an important deciding aspect when they contemplate exchange with the sites. Studies have reflected that visitors are prone to navigate hotel webpages that they recognize as dependable as well as trustworthy (Ekinici & Hosany, 2006; Abubakar et al., 2017; Wang & Law, 2019). In this circumstance, a visitor's faith is conditional to the hotel website's capacity and integrity to furnish the desired services and conveniences to travelers while they visit the hotel (Rather, 2019; Ponnappureddy et al., 2017). With this impression, many researchers agreed that visitors who have faith in hotel websites are very keen to perpetrate themselves to their associations and grow online booking intent (Agag & El-Masry, 2016). Morgan and Hunt (1994) presume that strong commitment between buyers and suppliers act as a catalyst to strengthen and continue their association with the firm/brand in future. In some other study where the influence of brand trust on brand commitment was examined i.e., Shergill and Lii (2005) established that trust has a remarkable impact on customer commitment.

Repurchase intentions are usually identified with brand commitment. Affective commitment is mirrored in a customer's emotional attachment, which encourages them to carry on reciprocal and trusting associations with the service firms those extends the services that customers really want (Sashi, 2012; Jones, Reynolds, Mothersbaugh, & Beatty, 2007). Li, Browne, and Chau (2006), Wetzels, Jones et al. (2007) and Ko, and Marcel (1998), have suggested that affective commitment is considerably linked with a person's buying intention. Empirical studies support that there is a noteworthy connection between affective commitment and consumers' buying intention (Jones et al., 2007; Li et al., 2006; Chih et al., 2015; Raju, 2017). Hence, the study postulates that:

H10: Customer commitment mediates the relationship between online brand equity and repatronage intention

(Raggio et al., 2014) have stated that, consumer hope is notable to gain recognition since it serves as an input into consumers' look out about, and passion toward, consumer-brand association effects in a virtual platform. Hope is a regularly occurring emotion in day-to-day life. Contemplating the part of consumer positive feelings is critical in virtual platform subject to the condition that various strategic branding guidelines may be essential due to the intangibility nature of online services (Liu et al., 2017). Emotions refer to a series of feedback happening particularly when consumers encounter some experience (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991). Positive emotions are referred to as emotions that are capable of bringing favorable feelings to the individual due to the experiences, such as affection, joy, pleasure, admiration, etc. Positive emotions can arise before the manifestation of one's mood, the propensity of one's implicit nature, and the responses to a supportive circumstance, like services rendered to customers, interest in goods, or sales promotions (Watson & Tellegen 1985).

Many scholars have stressed the importance of emotions to form satisfaction in several arenas (Evrard and Aurier, 1994; Oliver, 1993; Westbrook, 1987). Westbrook (1987) in his empirical study claimed that higher levels of satisfaction may involve positive as well as negative emotions (Arnould and Price, 1993). Positive or negative feelings may strengthen or weaken customer satisfaction (Liljander and Strandvik, 1997). Because, satisfaction itself is an affirmative emotional condition, positive emotions are likely to be also strongly linked to customer satisfaction rather than adverse emotions (Dubé, Bélanger, and Trudeau, 1996).

Positive emotions, which are a predictor of satisfaction, are more likely to impact customer behavioral intentions through satisfaction as total satisfaction obtained through product or service experience is usually understood as indispensable for customers to

repurchase, criticize, and endorse. Donovan and Resister, 1982, indicate that customers' re-patronage intention is the emotional attachment which reflects in customer commitment to continue the relationship with the brand and keep visiting the specific retail store. In retail settings, re patronage intention is the possibility that a customer will buy repeatedly from a particular retail store (Oliver, 1987). Wakefield and Baker (1998) claimed that re-patronage intentions are possibly impacted by shopping excitement, customer satisfaction, and the intention to stay longer in a pleasurable shopping setting (Bloch et al., 1994). Satisfaction may be simply an assessment with perceptive and emotional aspects, whereas the re-patronage intentions also possess a behavioral element (Carpenter, 2008).

Wu and Wang and (2012) proposed that a consumer who is pleased with the service offers is likely to exhibit an increased positive attitude and revisit/rebuying intentions (To et al., 2007). Han and Back (2007) showed the role of customer satisfaction as a mediator, particularly in their empirical approach in investigating the customer behavior in the tourism and hospitality industry that, the positive emotion that occurs out of experience impacts their re-visit intentions through customer satisfaction. These findings advocate that customer satisfaction act like a mediator in relationship between hope and revisit intention. Hence the study posits that:

H11: There is a significant influence on satisfaction between the relationship between consumer hope and re-patronage intention.

Hope sanctions customers to deal with problems related to purchasing bearing the mindset and course of action plans appropriate for effective transactional encounters (De Mello, 2005 and Macinnis) which assumably intensify the degree of satisfaction, level of faith, and secure emotional attachment to the brand bought. Hope is explicated as the passionate feedback to emanate alternative ways to achieve expected goals and persuade him/herself

through agency reasoning for using those ways (Snyder 2000). Hope infers that consumers know regarding their aim, get encouraged to buy (agency) a product/service, and find the alternatives to obtain a strong positive experience while buying. It presupposes that feelings are influenced by person-circumstances interaction (i.e., pleasurable-ness) and objective-directed inspirations (i.e., goal relevance, goal congruence,) (Frijda, Scherer, Moors, Ellsworth, 2013). Hope is a minimum exertion and goal-consistent optimistic feelings (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; MacInnis & De Mello, 2005).

The vigor of hope to purchase online and extent of hope to achieve purchase-associated results, like trust, satisfaction and commitment, are most probably associated with and based on consumer's goal accomplishment. goal achievement allows customers to reckon a favorable result from future interactions with the brand(s) under the virtual retailers, also rebuy the brand. (Nesje, 2017; Ruiller & Van Der Heijden, 2016) their study on novice nurses' emotional state and affective commitment claimed that nurses who are emotionally connected to their profession possess solid beliefs in the goals. The study also showed that nurses' job satisfaction and commitment were positively associated with emotion which influenced their work experiences. (Mattila & Enz, 2002; Ethier, Hadaya, Talbot, & Cadieux, 2006) hinted that affective condition is governed by emotions and feelings.

The affective commitment may be explained as an immense inclination and yearning attachment (Bansal et al., 2004) that echoes consumer's wish to be part of a community of buyers and to purchase the products or services to which they perceive that they are emotionally attached (McAlexander et al., 2003; Shukla et al., 2016). Affective commitment or attachment is mirrored in a customer's emotional connection, which motivates them to perpetuate a reciprocal trust and association with the service firms those provide the array of services that consumers actually want (Sashi, 2012; Jones, Reynolds, Mothersbaugh, & Beatty, 2007). Li, Browne, and Chau (2006); Jones et al. (2007) and Wetzels, Ko, and Marcel (1998), have

suggested that affective commitment is crucially linked to a person's repurchase intention. Scholars (Jones et al., 2007; Li et al., 2006; Raju, 2017; Chih et al., 2015) have empirically tested the association between affective commitment and consumers' buying intention and found that there exists a positive association between them.

In the hospitality and tourism context, Mattila (2001) indicated that affective commitment can cause a higher level of resistance to switching behavior (i.e. Switching to restaurants) and according to Sui and Baloglu (2003), the emotional bond with a company plays a significant mediating variable which positively influences customers' behavioral intentions. Hence the study hypothesizes:

H12: Customer Commitment mediates the relationship between consumer hope and Repatronage intention.

Self-efficacy indicates individuals' faith that they have the capability and expedient to thrive over a particular task. Trust in Self-efficacy pay off in the effective execution of a task by enhancing motivation, activity centered, also exertion, as well as reducing concern and person's subjugating cynical reasoning (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy refers to the faith regarding an individual's capability to effectively execute a specific activity (Bandura, 1997). Persons with high level of self-efficacy trust that, they possess the necessary capability and resorts to accomplish certain tasks, and the faith in the ability that inspires setting a goal, tactical planning, strength, and positive acts (Wood & Bandura, 1989; Bandura, 1991, 1997). Self-efficacy since proved to have a positive impact on successful presentation in many job-related circumstances (Luthans & Stajkovic, 1998).

Persons who possess a high level of self-efficacy are usually well equipped to pursue, assimilate, more ability to infer information, and elucidate task expectations. They tend to give more attention to task requisites and are hardly abstracted by performance concerns and

exhaustiveness (Bandura, 1997). Individuals who are more focused on their task(s) with higher self-efficacy may be more correctly explicate information. On the contrary, persons with low level of self-efficacy may be dubious regarding their capability to precisely understand info as well as generate a response. As they are uncertain about their expertise, they might attribute positive responses to administering their motives and hence reduce it. Similarly, individuals who are less confident in their capabilities are likely to strive for info that is constant with their opinions of themselves and explicate obscure facts in a way that is stable with these interpretations (Swann, 1985, 1987).

The constructs of self-efficacy and hope are associated but not alike. Hope indicates more precisely a positive discernment about something to take place, with the person accomplishing the objectives, however, it diverges from self-efficacy in the manner that it is not essentially connected with a significance of individual's self-excretion but belief in general that "Actions will turn out to be fine". Contrasting to self-efficacy, hope is a widespread faith and includes the fortitude to attain individual goals (Rand, 2018).

Self-efficacy primarily dealt with the eagerness that an individual may carry out actions, while hope involves the desire that can achieve goals. Hope is an affirmative psychological concept that relates to a person's professed likelihood to attain some specific anticipated goals and encourage him/herself to pursue these goals (Snyder, 2002). It embraces pathways thinking, the seeming ability to create pathways leading to the goals, and the insights that these pathways can steer towards these goals (Snyder, 2002). It is one's feelings that affect a person's observation of the condition along with the inference of the results.

In reserving services, persons with high self-efficacy (Mostly young people) will be focused on the attainment of tasks with better integration and interpret information and with less anxiety and off-task cognitions. In other words, they will be persistent to achieve their goal

bearing the hope that, their persistence in the goal attainment process and belief in their ability will result in the desired outcome. On the contrary, persons with low level of self-efficacy will still be hopeful in that they will generate some alternative ways to reach the goal. Until and unless they are certain that, their effort might produce the desired outcome, they will keep persevering on their task to reach their goal. perceptions of self-efficacy increase with hope.

Hope is a person's feelings or emotion that he or she encounter often in their daily lives. Positive feelings can convey to consumers' insights that their advantages surpass the perceived expenses related to their buying (Buck, 2004), resulting in a greater degree of satisfaction. Equity Theory (Hatfield et al., 1978) also furnishes assistance for the logic that agency (will) and pathway (energy) elements of hope have a significant influence on total customer satisfaction. So, the study postulates:

H13: Self-Efficacy moderates the relationship between consumer hope and satisfaction.

Self-efficacy indicates individuals' faith that they have the capability and expedient to thrive over a particular task. Trust in Self-efficacy pay off in the effective execution of a task by enhancing motivation, activity centered, also exertion, as well as reducing concern and person's subjugating cynical reasoning (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy since proved to have a positive impact on successful presentations in many job-related circumstances (Luthans & Stajkovic, 1998). Persons with high level of self-efficacy trust that, they possess the necessary capability and resorts to accomplish certain tasks, and the faith in the ability that inspires setting a goal, tactical planning, strength, and positive acts (Wood & Bandura, 1989; Bandura, 1991, 1997). Self-efficacy has been proved to have a positive impact on successful performance in many job-related contexts (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

Persons who possess a high level of self-efficacy are usually well equipped to pursue, assimilate, infer info, and elucidate task expectations. They tend to give more attention to task

requisites and are hardly abstracted by performance concerns and exhaustiveness (Bandura, 1997). Individuals who are more focused on their task(s) with higher self-efficacy may be more correctly explicate information. On the contrary, persons with low level of self-efficacy may be dubious regarding their capability to precisely understand information as well as generate a response. As they are uncertain about their expertise, they might attribute positive responses to administering their motives and hence reduce it. Similarly, individuals who are less confident in their capabilities are likely to strive for information that is constant with their opinions of themselves and explicate obscure facts in a way that is stable with these interpretations (Swann, 1985, 1987).

The constructs of self-efficacy and hope are associated but not alike. Hope indicates more precisely a positive discernment about something to take place, with the person accomplishing the objective(s), however, it diverges from self-efficacy in the manner that it is not essentially connected with a significance of individual's self-excretion but belief in general that "Actions will turn out to be fine". Contrasting to self-efficacy, hope is a widespread faith and includes the fortitude to attain individual goals (Rand, 2018).

self-efficacy primarily dealt with the eagerness that an individual may carry out actions, while hope involves the desire that can achieve goals. Hope is an affirmative psychological concept that relates to a person's professed likelihood to attain some specific anticipated goals and encourage him/herself to pursue these goals (Snyder, 2002). It embraces pathways thinking, the seeming ability to create pathways leading to the goals, and the insights that these pathways can steer towards these goals (Snyder, 2002). It is one's feelings that affect a person's observation of the condition along with the inference of the results.

Self-efficacy to a great extent is skeptical concerning whether an act will yield in resulting outcome, on the other hand hope refers expectations that one can reach goals through the blending of goal-oriented planning (pathways) and will (agency).

In reserving services, persons with high self-efficacy will be focused on the attainment of tasks with better integration and interpret information and with less anxiety and off-task cognitions. In other words, they will be persistent to achieve their goal bearing the hope that, their persistence in the goal attainment process and belief in their ability will result in the desired outcome. On the other hand, persons with low self-efficacy will still be hopeful in that they will generate some alternative ways to reach the goal. Until and unless they are certain that, their effort might produce the desired outcome, they will keep persevering on their task to reach their goal. perceptions of self-efficacy increase with hope.

With the hope of obtaining benefits from brands, consumer usually have a willingness as well as wish to respond to those benefits, that eventually raises some hope or emotion to keep up the esteemed association with brands (Eisenberger and Rhoades, 2002). This emotional feedback concerning hope to buy a brand and obtain benefits from a virtual retailer (in the case of online retailing) then encourages to act as an advocate and 'do good for retailer (McCullough et al., 2004). Virtual firms exhibit a range of deals through online context to induce consumers regarding availability, and probable advantages, along with a description of brands. Several retailers also let consumers exchange their ordeals with brands or prompt chats with another customer who has the experience of using the specific brand. Hence, customers who transact online are furnished with the scope to gain product knowledge from multiple sources i.e. Brands and other customers. This expedites consumers' propensity to reciprocate the benefits obtained through an enduring affiliation with virtual brands. This reciprocal and beneficial association is disposed to yield affective attachment and motivates further actions (Dipietro et al., 2008; Raggio and Folse, 2009; Buch, 2015.). Hence the study postulates:

H14: Self-Efficacy moderates the relationship between consumer hope and consumer commitment.

Chapter Summary:

The present chapter briefly describe the evolution of travel & tourism industry, its growth and the role of ICT in its development. The study then discussed about the service concepts, impact of branding in service and in travel & tourism industry. Further the study sheds light on brand and brand equity and briefly narrated the conceptualization of brand equity and its scope. The study also discusses the relevant literature about the constructs proposed in the study. Additionally, the study highlights the key theories through which the conceptualization of the study has been framed. Finally, the chapter consolidate key aspects from literature on various constructs and proposes hypotheses to be examined empirically.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The present chapter focuses on the methodology that describes the research design being undertaken for present study. The chapter delineate the present research pattern and methodological framework as appropriate to questions research aim to answer, depending on the ontological, axiological, methodological and epistemological postulations as suitable for this research. The proceeding chapter also rationalizes the choice being choosing particular research techniques and addresses aptness of assessing the present study under the condition of social science research i.e. validity, consistency, replicability, and observability. Moreover, the present chapter concisely describes techniques of data analysis and phase wise extent of research. The chapter ends with a note regarding an ethical concern related to concealment, obscurity, and cognizant accord as followed throughout the process.

3.1 Introduction

Research design is the procedure for specifying the methods and systematically capturing the needed information for research. In the words of (Green & Tull, 1970) “research design is the comprehensive functional model or structure of any academic work that specifies what all the important information to be obtained out of the available sources and through what procedures”. The two important aspects such as ontology and epistemology of the prevalent research questions direct the methodological choice which requires additional thoroughness because of the accessibility of several research techniques, procedures, sampling plans, and procedures as well as varying analytical tools. However, any research in which researcher(s) can demonstrate the lucidity regarding the two aspects (e.g. the projected methodology and also the basis for its choice, tend to evolve smoothly.)

3.2 Research Typology

The methodology used for this specific research is in conjunction with the research queries being answered beside entails an orderly explanation of the process. The process is assisted through the typology of research evolved by Saunders *et al.* (2012), those who proposed units of analysis in a figurative method denoted by an “onion” that leads an investigator across various layers for the effective formation and positioning of his/her research in a relatively extensive research context. The laps of the diagram “onion” embrace 06(six) major components of research – “philosophy, approach, strategy, choice, time horizon and data collection and analysis” (Figure 4.1).

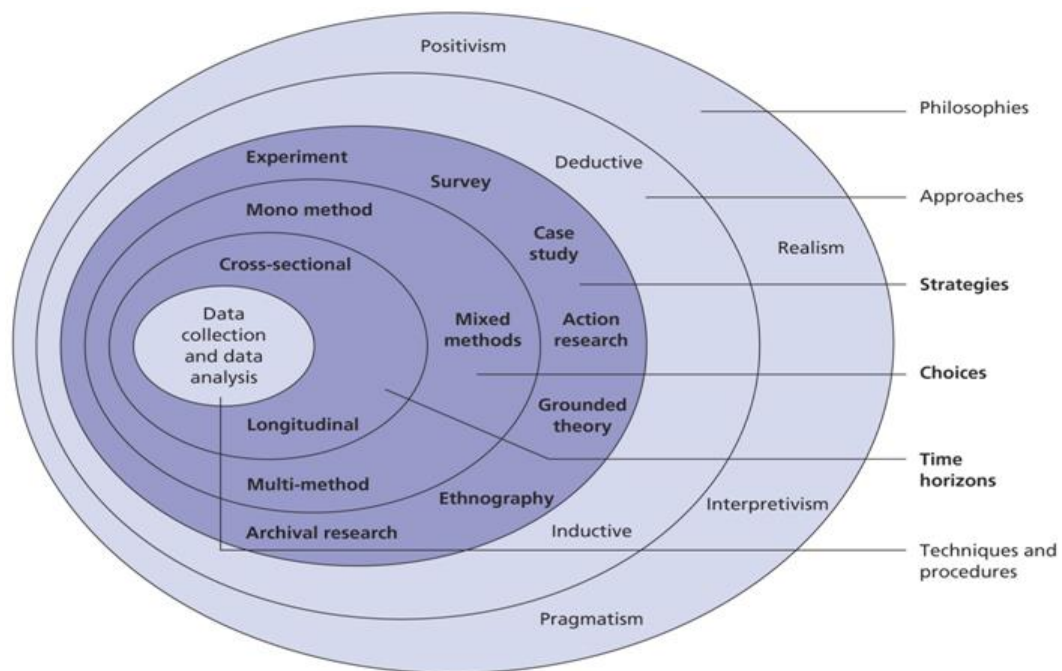


Figure 3.1 : Typology of Research adapted from Saunders *et al.* (2012, p. 128)

Respective units and positioning of the present research within this structure are deliberated further.

3.3 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy indicates an underlying structure of presumptions that constitute the basis for developing a knowledge base (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). These presumptions are perhaps linked with:

- Serving real-life situations while conducting the investigation (Philosophical or ontological assumptions),
- individual knowledge (Intellectual or epistemological assumptions), and,
- The extent to whatever one's principles affect the probing process (Elemental or axiological assumptions)

Each facet of research i.e. apprehending the research questions, methods followed and explanation and narration of findings, all of these are substantially shaped by these presumptions (Crotty 1998). *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis* written by Burrell and Morgan (1979), explored five categories or groups of assumptions that are to a great extent filtered and well-crafted throughout the research process and embedded noteworthy meaning into the research.

- i. Philosophical (Ontological)
- ii. Intellectual (Epistemological)
- iii. Fundamental (Axiological)
- iv. Professional (Methodological) assumptions
- v. Supposition regarding human characteristics.

Management and business research, due to its disclosure from several areas like sociology, behavioral economics, anthropology, etc., has endorsed various philosophies, methodologies, research paradigms, and approaches. The current study grasps a diverse view and agrees with this fact. Hence, for better positioning the current research and to arrange it aptly, the research probe into a relative analysis of four main philosophies of research those guide the researchers in management as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Research Philosophies in Management and Business Research: A Comparison

Ontology (nature of reality or being)	Axiology (role of values)	Epistemology (what constitutes acceptable knowledge)	Typical Methods
Positivism			
Actual, outward, unrestrained One literal realism (diversity) Ordained	Advantage-open research The researcher is separated, impartial, and self-governing of what is investigated	Technical method Noticeable and calculable facts Regulation-like overviews Underlying explanation and estimate as Support	Logical, Mostly structured, vast samples, quantitative investigation, yet a variety of data could be scrutinized
Critical realism			
Stratified (the experimental, the concrete, and the actual) Outward, unrestrained Unbiased formations Underlying mechanisms	Advantage-weighted research The researcher recognizes bias by world opinions, ethnic knowledge, and fostering The researcher attempts to reduce errors and bias The researcher is as impartial as possible	Knowledge traditionally set and ephemeral Actuality is societal formation Factual connecting description as offering	Generative, thorough traditionally set examination of preceding compositions and developing agency. Series of mechanism and facts to suit the substance
Interpretivism			
Multifaceted, substantial Informally formed through language and culture Several meanings, clarifications, actuality The variability of processes, circumstances, exercises	Advantage-inevitable research Researchers are portion of what is investigated, instinctive Researcher clarifications are vital to the contribution	Concepts and theories a too naïve Emphasis on reports, perceptions, stories and clarifications New considerations and perspectives as Contribution	Naturally inducible Lesser samples, thorough examinations, qualitative techniques of investigation, but a series of data can be construed
Pragmatism			
Intricate, well off, outward 'Reality' is the real-world significances of ideas The variability of processes, circumstances, exercises	Practicality-driven research Study originated and continued by the investigator's suspicions and views Researcher impulsive	Applied meaning of understanding in particular contexts 'Factual' knowledge and theories are those that allow fruitful action Emphasis on issues, observes, & significance Analytical and well-versed impending exercise as a ontribution	\\Driven by the problem of research and research question, Multiple, mixed, quantitative, qualitative, action research Focus is on actual solutions and results

Source: Morgan & Burrell, 1979

3.4. Research Approach

Research perspective incorporated in current thesis is - *the hypothetico-inferential method* (Figure 3.2). Bryman (2012) proposed that “Deduction” is the procedure for gaining a broader and comprehensive conception of some familiar aspects of a particular area (i.e. the influence of Brand Equity on customer re-patronage intent regarding current research) and inferring hypotheses from those aspects (s) and subsequent initialization for furnishing measurement. Operationalization indicates evolving procedures to evaluate the proposed concepts or constructs to be investigated which is ensured by obtaining data and additional scrutiny to examine the projected hypotheses. The resulting outcome that arises through this procedure can add a significant value to the existing stream of research which may be valuable for interested researchers to enhance future knowledge.

3.5 Methodological Choice

The methodological choice solicited in conveying a specific research question is governed by research philosophy as well as a research approach. The study follows a "positivist view" and exerts a deductive approach, as described in the preceding segments. The methodology is a possibly qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method that has distinct features which differentiate them and thus inducing their application for diverse studies. Saunders *et al.* (2012) have proposed the differentiation between the two types of methods that are mostly used in social science research as stated in Table 4.2.

The underlying factor that distinguishes the two major research designs lies with the research philosophy. The quantitative method incorporates a "positivist view" and is extremely organized, whereas the qualitative research method takes an "interpretivism view" in which the researcher grasps a subjective deliberation and observes the research aspects supporting the norms corresponding to the social structure related to the contexts. Moreover, the quantitative method trails the deductive approach which objectively examines theory; on the contrary

qualitative method takes an inductive approach. Considering research approach, doctrine, questions and utilizing table (Table 4.2), the current study adopted the "quantitative research method" as a suitable methodological approach and deemed appropriate to foster the study's research queries.

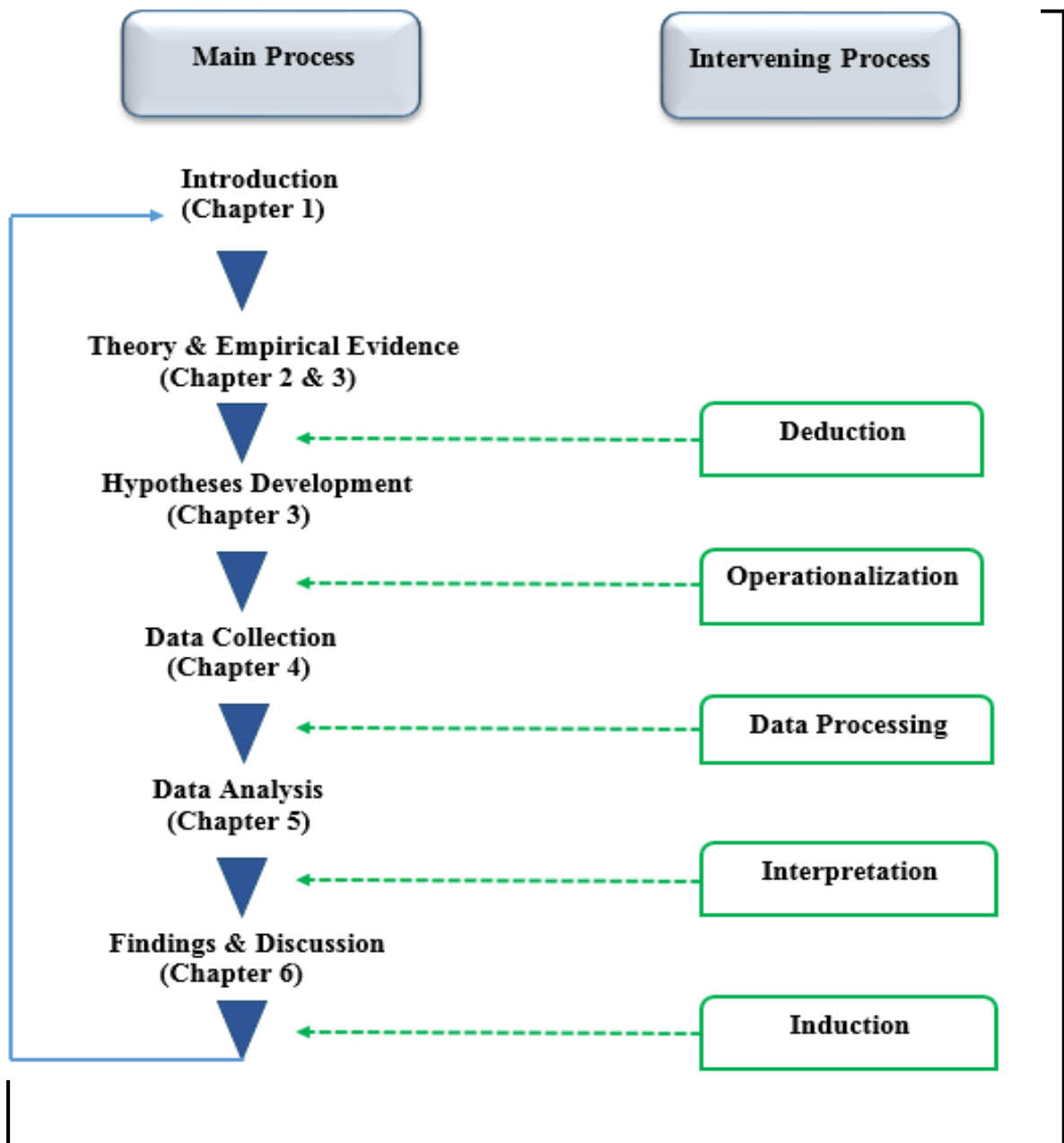


Figure 3.2: Research process adapted from Bryman (2012)

Table 3.2

Quantitative Vs Qualitative Research Methods

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Research Philosophy	Positivism. Generally used within the realist and pragmatist philosophies.	Interpretivism. Used within the realist and pragmatist philosophies.
Research objective	Investigate association between variables	Research respondents' interpretation and associations between them.
Research approach	Largely deductive	Primarily inductive
Research strategy	Principally associated with experimental and survey research	Key strategies used include case study, ethnography, action research, grounded theory, and descriptive inquiry.
Position of researcher	Seen as independent from respondents	Take dynamic role

Source: Saunders *et al.* (2012)

3.6 Research Strategy

Several research strategies are being followed by researchers such as – survey, experiments, ethnography, case study, archival research, action research, narrative inquiry, and base theory – based on nature and context in which the study is conducted. The current study is descriptive and thus survey method is adopted as a research strategy. The strategy is widely used by researchers in marketing research, particularly in Brand Management which is also suitable to examine hypotheses that emanate from a prevailing review of the literature (Guest, 2001).

3.7 Time Horizon

The research can take up either a cross-sectional or longitudinal survey depending on the research question it would like to clarify. Cross-sectional research indicates collecting data from a different group of respondents at a particular point in time while a longitudinal study is a procedure to obtain data from the same respondents over some time. (Jiang *et al.*, 2019) observed that in the cross-sectional study due to lack of time order, it is only possible to investigate the association between variables and hence establishing a causal relationship is not possible which is a major drawback. Acknowledging the advantages of longitudinal research, the present study still opted to frame cross-sectional design because of limited time, difficulty in accessing data and respondents as well as resource limitations. A longitudinal study involves additional time and collecting data from respondents several other times was extremely difficult.

3.8 Data Collection

The survey is considered as most commonly employed mechanism that involves “unstructured”, “semi-structured” or “structured” opinion sets through questionnaire for collecting required feedback from the appellant of a selected sample (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005). Bryman (2012), indicates several steps included in the survey that are apprehended in the following subsections.

3.8.1 Sample Design

3.8.1.1 Target Population

Target population for this study were customers across age groups ranging from 20 – 50 years who book through online travel companies for their dire needs to travel for various purposes. Five online travel companies were selected namely Make my Trip, Yatra, Clear Trip, Ease my Trip, and Ixigo based on their business performance and connectivity with the customers.

3.8.1.2 Sample & Sampling Technique

Since sampling formation of intended population was indefinite and the segment of the targeted population was not known, present study opted to perform the survey by means of sample. Moreover, keeping in view the constraints like the high cost of studying the population, limited time, and inadequate access, the study prompted to selection sample to conduct the survey. Additionally, as the population was unidentifiable, pursuing probabilistic sampling would not be appropriate and hence convenience sampling, one of the techniques of the non-probabilistic sampling approach was selected.

3.8.1.3 Sample Size Justification

Hair *et al.* (2017), observed that for every variable considered, at least 5 - 10 responses have to obtain. The current study contains 34 items. Therefore, minimum sample size should be 340 (in case of 10 responses per variable) to conduct SEM productively. This perspective corresponds with ratio approach recommended by Gorsuch (1990), which suggests at least 5 responses for each item in the scale, proposing a minimal sample size of 170 for the current research. Keeping in view the range of the recommended minimal values the present research considers SEM as the logical technique with highly possible little feedback rates, considers to circulate questionnaire to 1000 respondents.

3.8.2 Mode of administration

A self-administered and structured questionnaire was developed to administer the survey. Assuming the understanding level of respondents, a short description of the objective of the survey was given initially and all other queries regarding the questionnaire were clarified. Places like Airports, Railway stations, Bus Terminus, and some select hotels were chosen to

collect data. Because there happened to be a flow of people who travels for various purposes, were approached to take part in the survey as convenient. Apart from that, some other places like libraries or canteens where people usually gather were picked up to conduct the survey. Therefore, the survey was conducted in person. The researcher did not share his opinion or assist in any form in filling up the questionnaire items to keep impartiality and thus diminish biases.

Although this data collection method geared up the pace of collecting responses by interpreting survey naïve and in-person interaction, it endured some limitations due to incurring a high cost for traveling to several locations and the likelihood of having SDR (socially desirable responses) because of the researcher's presence at the time of data collection.

3.8.3 Generation of the questionnaire

The present study followed Iacobucci's and Churchill (2002) proposed method to evolve as well as corroborate the questionnaire as shown in Figure 4.3.

3.8.3.1 Specifying information sought

This stage includes ascertaining the queries or questions need to be dispensed to the target customers for collecting necessary details essential to examine the proposed research conception. The questions that were incorporated in the initial portion of the questionnaire sought to apprehend the socio-demographic portrayal of the respondents and thus the variables used were marked as control variables. The remaining questions of the questionnaire were envisioned to obtain data about the constructs used in the study's conceptual model. For examining the proposed model, data was pursued from the targeted respondents on ensuing variables – BE (Brand Equity), RI (Re patronage Intention), CH (Consumer Hope), CS (Customer Satisfaction), CC (Customer Commitment), and SE (Self-Efficacy). The study is

mainly engrossed in the influence of brand equity on consumer re-patronage intention of select online travel companies.

3.8.3.2 Determining the type of questionnaire and administration method

Closed-ended questions were considered in the questionnaire as appropriate for the current study is also allowed the researcher to limit the range of the questionnaire as suitable for the respondents to respond with patience. (Saunders *et al.*, 2012) suggested that keeping closed-ended questions ensures the consistency of responses since identical sequences were maintained in the questions and presented to the respondents. A self-administered survey was selected as the mode of administration for warranting a better mechanism for the process of data collection.

3.8.3.3 Operationalization of constructs (Content of individual items)

As (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002) indicated, all the constructs were converted into multiple-item variables. Well-defined scales established by the eminent scholars of the respective constructs were used to extract the items. 5-point Likert scale was applied to analyze all the scale items with pertinent scale labels. The relevant modification was done to align with the present work. The questionnaire that is used for obtaining responses from the targeted respondents is given in.

The scales used to obtain data from respondents are appended below:

Brand Equity: *Brand Equity* of online companies was measured using the items adapted from Christodoulides et al. (2010), which they developed to estimate the brand equity in Online Retail Sales (ORS) context. The sub-dimensions of the constructs are ***Emotional Connection, Online experience, Trust, Responsive Service Nature and Fulfilment respectively.*** A specimen item included “I feel connected with the type of people who usually book through

this website”. The scale is assessed through five-point scale where 1 indicate strongly disagree & 5 denotes strongly agree.

Consumer Hope: To measure the “Hope construct” the scale was adapted from (Snyder 1995, 1991) A sample item was “I hope that the brands I bought online will benefit me”. It is scrutinized on a five-point scale where 1 = “strongly disagree” & 5 = “strongly agree”.

Customer Satisfaction: "Customer satisfaction" was analyzed through the scale proposed by Olorunniwo, Hsu, & Udo, (2006). A sample item was “I am pleased with my choice to visit this travel website”. It is evaluated with a five-point Likert scale where 1 = “strongly disagree” & 5 = “strongly agree”.

Customer Commitment: “Customer Commitment” was measured through the scale amended from (Fullerton 2005). A sample item was “This travel website has a great deal of personal meaning for me.”. It is gouged on a five-point Likert scale where 1 = “strongly disagree” & 5 = “strongly agree”.

Self-Efficacy: *Compeau & Higgins (1995)* scales were adapted to measure *customer re patronage intention*. A sample item was “I could use the travel website only if there is any help facility for assistance.”. It is scrutinized on a five-point Likert scale where 1= “strongly disagree”; 5= “strongly agree”.

Re-Patronage Intention: Re-patronage intention scale was adapted from the study of Jones et al., (2006). A sample item was “I will continue purchasing products from this website in the future.”. It is evaluated on a five-point Likert scale where 1= “strongly disagree”; 5= “strongly agree”.

3.8.3.4 Pattern of response to each question

All scale items incorporated in the questionnaire appeared as closed-ended questions that were either dichotomous or multichotomous. The respondent’s demographic details were

captured through dichotomous questions. On the contrary, the multichotomous questions evolved from scales of the variables used in the study and were measured through a five-point Likert scale.

3.8.3.5 Question wording

Concerning respondent understanding levels and to make sure they can grab the essence of the questionnaire easily and clearly, the effort was made to simplify the wordings and language of the questionnaire as far as possible and also to keep away the technical terms. Although respondents from some of the target groups were well capable to comprehend the technical terms still simplifying the language and wording assured perseverance of the respondents in providing their responses and decreased unwillingness to do the same. Further, it was ensured to avoid double-barreled questions. The wording and language structure of all the constructs were modified corresponding to the context.

3.8.3.6 Question sequence

Churchill and Iacobucci (2002), suggested that to keep the interest of the respondents and maintain consistency, the sequence of the questions may be arranged in the following order a) Introductory questions should be interesting and simple, and b) categorizing information may put at the last, c) Challenging or subtle questions need to be in the middle of questionnaire, and d) Ensure rationality in organizing the questionnaire. The questionnaire was arranged as far as according to the proposed guidelines except the demographic profile was sought at the beginning of the questionnaire. Additionally, the questions were sorted into clear-cut segments allowing each segment prompting responses on a particular construct. This assured exact flow and well-directedness for the respondents. Moreover, the questions or items related to the explanatory and response variables were put in discrete segments to ensure reducing CMV (common method bias) to a major magnitude.

3.8.3.7 Questionnaire layout

The study determined to distribute the questionnaire physically as well as in online mode. Hence the questionnaire had to be well designed in its outlining and appearance while presenting to the customers so that it captured the interest of the respondents as well as allure and inspire them to take part in the survey for an untroubled and efficient finishing survey. The questionnaire that was used to collect information in person was designed through Microsoft word and online survey was conducted through Google Forms. The introductory questions of the segment of the questionnaire distinctly describes the objective about the study and assures concealment beside obscurity of the responses provided by the respondents.

3.8.3.8 Pre-testing of the Questionnaires – Pilot Study

Prior testing the questionnaire, the same were placed and shared with the research supervisor as well as some research scholars to obtain opinions and for coherence and transparency. The questionnaire set for obtaining data is to through face to face interaction which was ably grasped by the informants, except for a little changes recommended. A slight modification was made to the items to suit the context of the study; however, it was crucial to keep every item for dependable estimation of the constructs. Further, a pilot study was necessary to conduct to authenticate the scales in the current context among the targeted respondents.

To conduct pilot studies, data were obtained from 200 respondents and it was scrutinized through IBM SPSS Version 26.0. The table which represents the results of KMO and Bartlett's test shows that Bartlett's experiment of sphericity is proved worthy ($p < 0.001$), with df (degrees of freedom), = 2080. KMO (the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) value is 0.873 which is well beyond the suggested threshold value 0.7, suggesting a notable correlation between fundamental variables and appropriate for additional examination (Kline, 1994).

Table: 3.3

KMO and Bartlett's Test (Pilot Result)

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.873
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	9815.803
	df	2080
	Sig.	.000

Table 3.4:
Total Variance Explained (Model 1 Pilot Results)

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	%of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	%of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	%of Variance	Cumulative %
1	20.739	31.907	31.907	20.739	31.907	31.907	7.890	12.139	12.139
2	5.741	8.832	40.739	5.741	8.832	40.739	7.246	11.148	23.287
3	3.137	4.826	45.566	3.137	4.826	45.566	5.577	8.580	31.867
4	2.612	4.019	49.584	2.612	4.019	49.584	3.709	5.706	37.573
5	2.242	3.449	53.033	2.242	3.449	53.033	3.454	5.314	42.886
6	1.831	2.817	55.850	1.831	2.817	55.850	2.911	4.478	47.365
7	1.617	2.488	58.339	1.617	2.488	58.339	2.813	4.328	51.692
8	1.496	2.301	60.640	1.496	2.301	60.640	2.568	3.951	55.643
9	1.436	2.209	62.849	1.436	2.209	62.849	2.103	3.235	58.879
10	1.288	1.981	64.830	1.288	1.981	64.830	2.087	3.211	62.090
11	1.171	1.802	66.632	1.171	1.802	66.632	1.962	3.019	65.109
12	1.110	1.708	68.340	1.110	1.708	68.340	1.654	2.545	67.654
13	1.069	1.645	69.985	1.069	1.645	69.985	1.319	2.029	69.683
14	1.016	1.562	71.548	1.016	1.562	71.548	1.212	1.864	71.548
15	.899	1.383	72.930						
16	.854	1.314	74.245						
17	.839	1.291	75.535						
18	.828	1.274	76.809						
19	.755	1.161	77.970						
20	.746	1.148	79.119						
21	.712	1.095	80.214						
22	.682	1.049	81.263						
23	.629	.967	82.230						
24	.614	.944	83.174						
25	.603	.927	84.101						
26	.576	.886	84.987						
27	.545	.839	85.826						
28	.531	.817	86.642						
29	.513	.789	87.431						
30	.473	.728	88.159						
31	.467	.718	88.877						
32	.447	.687	89.564						
33	.429	.660	90.224						
34	.418	.644	90.867						
35	.378	.581	91.448						

36	.374	.575	92.023						
37	.359	.552	92.576						
38	.332	.510	93.086						
39	.316	.487	93.573						
40	.308	.474	94.047						
41	.284	.437	94.484						
42	.270	.415	94.899						
43	.256	.394	95.293						
44	.245	.377	95.670						
45	.230	.355	96.025						
46	.215	.330	96.355						
47	.208	.320	96.675						
48	.194	.299	96.974						
49	.181	.278	97.252						
50	.172	.265	97.517						
51	.161	.248	97.765						
52	.155	.238	98.003						
53	.154	.237	98.241						
54	.150	.230	98.471						
55	.136	.210	98.681						
56	.128	.197	98.878						
57	.119	.183	99.061						
58	.103	.159	99.220						
59	.091	.140	99.360						
60	.088	.136	99.496						
61	.083	.127	99.623						
62	.071	.109	99.732						
63	.069	.106	99.838						
64	.056	.086	99.925						
65	.049	.075	100.000						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

The result shows the cumulative variances which reflected as 71.54% for all the factors. This to a greater extent approves uni-dimensionality of all constructs where eigenvalue noted as higher than 1.

The table also shows Cronbach's Alpha or CA values which reflects the inner consistencies of the research constructs. The calculated values span across 0.786 to 0.930 which reflects beyond the proposed threshold value 0.7 and hence warrant the substantial constructs reliability (Nunally, 1978).

Table: 3.5
Construct Reliabilities (Pilot Results)

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha
BE	0.887
CH	0.873
CS	0.825
CC	0.930
SE	0.798
RI	0.786

3.9 Final Data Collection

The reviewed and final questionnaire was circulated among six hundred (600) respondents out of which 130 respondents returned the questionnaire as they were unwilling to participate in the survey and 70 responses were found incomplete due to partially filling or not attempting all the questions. 400 responses were seeming viable for further analysis. To obtain the data online the questionnaire was designed and developed through Google Form and distributed among the different student groups, work executive groups, and fan page groups. 200 responses were obtained online. The entire data collection process took almost a year due to covid-19 pandemic and its impact. Altogether 600 usable responses were retrieved and subsequently registered for final data analysis.

3.10 Data Cleaning, Coding, and Conversion

The feedback attained through virtual mode were downloaded and formatted in an MS Excel worksheet while the responses collected via face-to-face survey were manually inserted into the same excel sheet. The total responses in the datasheet were encoded by allocating numbers to each data point or response. The final data file was subsequently examined for missing values (if any) and finalized with ensuring zero missing values. The whole dataset was then transferred to the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 26.0) and SMARTPLS for conducting SEM and necessary data analysis.

3.11 Data analysis

The present study examines the relationship between brand equity for online companies (independent variables/predictors) and its effect on customer re-patronage intention (dependent variables). The study took consumer hope as a mediator and checks its influence on the association between brand equity and customer re-patronage intention. The study also examines a serial mediation model of consumer hope and re-patronage intention with customer satisfaction and commitment as mediators. Further, the study adapted self-efficacy as a moderator and tests its influence on the relationships between consumer hope and customer satisfaction and consumer hope and customer commitment. This suggested that the proposed model deals with different variables, and hence, to examine the data relating to several variables, the present research needs to exert multivariate analysis mechanism.

Depending on the purpose of the research, multivariate methods plausibly be characterized as first-generational and second-generational techniques. The purpose of the study may either be confirmatory or exploratory and the researcher may use either first or second-generational techniques as given in Table.

Table 3.6

Typology of Multivariate Techniques

	Predominantly exploratory	Predominantly confirmatory
First-generation techniques	Multidimensional Scaling Exploratory factor analysis Cluster Analysis	Logistic Regression Multiple regression Analysis of Variance
Second-generation techniques	Partial Least Square -SEM	Covariance based-SEM, including CFA(Confirmatory factor analysis)

Source: Hair *et al.*, 2013, p. 2

This study employs exploratory first generational technique- factor analysis and PLS-SEM - second-generational technique to analyze the data. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is composed of applying interrelated procedures comprising coefficient structure modeling, coefficient structure analysis, etc. that permits examination of priori data and assessing the sum of measurement error throughout this proposed model (Byrne, 2001). The major distinctive aspect of this technique while compared to multiple regression method is that it assesses the moderator and mediator association concurrently. Therefore, SEM is logical when examining a model consisting of multiple hypotheses (Kline, 2011). SEM can be classified into two methods i.e. Partial Least Squares- Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and Covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM). The current study predominantly employs PLS-SEM mostly for the following reasons: Compared to CB-SEM, PLS-SEM is a dispersal-free postulation (Hair et al., 2014b; Hair et al., 2012b; Reinartz et al., 2009; Peng and Lai, 2012). Second, in contrast to CB-SEM, PLS-SEM executes well with relatively multifaceted models (Lee et al., 2018; Chin et al., 2008), which contains underlying variables with a relatively more number of factors and intricate associations. Third, PLS-SEM is the favored method for research purposes to forecast endogenous underlying constructs (Sosik et al., 2009; Chin and Dibbern, 2010; Hair et al., 2011), which is persistent with the study objective. Lastly, PLS-SEM has gained considerable recognition from marketing scholars in immediate past (Rezaei, 2015; Wilden and Gudergan, 2015). Depending on this note, PLS-SEM seems to be pertinent method for the current research.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

As a researcher, one must bear in mind the ethical perspectives throughout the study. Considering this, the respondents are supposed to be certain about the confidentiality and anonymity regarding the personal information and responses they provided during the survey.

This was briefed before handing over the question set. Additionally, the objective of the study was also to specify any possible misconception regarding the motive of any commercial gain.

Chapter Summary

The present chapter narrated the design and framing of the methodology in the current study. It delineated the research philosophy administering the study by highlighting its ontology and epistemological framework. It also presented drawing of the sample, measurement tools that were applied along with data analysis techniques and software. The chapter concludes with an ephemeral narration of ethical considerations in connection with study.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The chapter provides the reason for choosing SMART PLS for data analysis. It then presents the demographic profile of the respondents participated in the survey and descriptive statistics of other aspects related to the study. Further it describes the process of evaluation of measurement model through examining reliability and validity of the constructs and subsequently the chapter presents the evaluation of structural model along with mediation and moderation analysis. The chapter ends with showing explanatory power of the model and predictive relevance of the model.

4.1 Analysis and Results

The present research is an experiential in nature which collected data from 600 potential respondents who visited select online travel company's website for booking. The respondents who undertook travel at least once in prior one year from the data collection were considered for survey. In progress of cleaning the data from the 780 data-points, 180 partially filled data as well as outliers were detected and removed and eventually finalized with 600 valid data sample. The final valid sample was scrutinized for Common methods bias or common method variance (CMV). Further the study also checked proposed conceptual structural equation model using smart PLS. The proposed model was tested using 14 Hypotheses.

4.1.1 Common Method Bias

Within social science research there remains every possibility of biases which needs to be checked and avoided. To do so, the researcher followed appropriate measure to examine for common method bias or common method variance (CMV) before conducting SEM (Structural

Equation Model) in the succeeding manner. Measures were used to develop the questionnaire. At First, the questionnaire with the constructs used in the study were sequenced where the independent variables came first and the dependent variable later. Second some of the items were the reversed coded items to ensure eliminating the bias. Following each 100 responses another set of questionnaires was distributed to avoid CMV. Secondly, few items in the questionnaire were reverse coded which ensures eliminating the bias. To determine CMV, Herman Single factor test was conducted to check the first factor where the covariance was 24.83 % (< 50%) which shows that data was not agonized with prejudices (Padsakoff et al 2012).

Table 4.1*Harman Single Factor Test Result***Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.445	24.837	24.837	8.445	24.837	24.837
2	3.499	10.291	35.128			
3	1.806	5.312	40.440			
4	1.478	4.346	44.786			
5	1.369	4.026	48.812			
6	1.179	3.467	52.279			
7	1.139	3.349	55.628			
8	1.090	3.205	58.833			
9	.927	2.728	61.561			
10	.870	2.559	64.120			
11	.804	2.365	66.485			
12	.792	2.330	68.815			
13	.761	2.240	71.055			
14	.734	2.158	73.212			
15	.692	2.035	75.247			
16	.657	1.933	77.180			
17	.626	1.841	79.021			
18	.601	1.767	80.789			
19	.576	1.693	82.482			
20	.558	1.643	84.124			
21	.526	1.547	85.672			
22	.524	1.540	87.212			
23	.487	1.431	88.644			
24	.457	1.344	89.988			
25	.438	1.287	91.275			
26	.423	1.243	92.519			
27	.388	1.140	93.659			
28	.377	1.109	94.767			
29	.343	1.010	95.777			
30	.327	.961	96.738			
31	.305	.897	97.635			
32	.290	.852	98.487			
33	.267	.786	99.273			
34	.247	.727	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rationality concerning employing Smart PLS for analysis

Partial Least Square or Smart PLS was employed for testing the theoretical model proposed in the research. Mr. Herman O.A. Wold a Swedish econometrician was first developed the software which needs less technical knowledge to operate. Application of this software have increased in recent past specially in social science research (Hair et al.,2012).

The reason behind choosing PLS-SEM over CB-SEM is firstly because, as opposed to covariance-based SEM, Partial least square-SEM is an unbound distribution postulation (Peng and Lai, 2012; Reinartz et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2014b; Hair et al., 2012b). Second, compared to covariance-based SEM, Partial least square-SEM appeared as effective and produce better results with relatively convoluted models (Lee et al., 2011; Chin et al., 2008), which embraces covert variables with more indicators and multifaceted relationships. It craves in finding the latent alleys associations among the variables. It is widely employed to envisage the statistical vigor of the model (Sarstedt et al., 2017). Some additional advantages of using SmartPLS are it could be effectively operated on small sample size (Willaby et at, 2015) and measurement model and structural model results can be presented simultaneously using Smart PLS. Analyzing SEM through using smart PLS provides a high vigorous statistical strength in relation to some other techniques (Reinartz et al.,2019). This lofty statistical strength proves beneficial when scholars tend to explore the new relationships and thrive for new theory.

Structural Equation Model (SEM)

SEM (Structural Equation Model) is “a collection of analytical approaches applied to estimate and examine the association between perceived and covert construct (Gonzalez, De Boeck & Tuerlinckx,2008) It integrates the fundamental analytical approaches like regression analysis as well as factor analysis. In recent times, researchers are hanging on more on the several correlational analysis techniques to comprehend intricate relationship amongst the

constructs and that correlational analysis has greater benefits of examining the associations between the constructs concurrently. The SEM also provides room for interpreting the critical role of moderating and mediating variables in research. This power of the dependent and independent variable in explaining and guiding the research towards newer level of inquiry in presence and absence of mediating and moderating variable usually not possible with multiple regression. The first order and also the higher order constructs can be analyzed through SEM. The major advantage of using SEM is to validating the theoretical model by empirically examining the same and also to control the measurement error.

4.1.2 Demographic Profile of the study

Very few studies are available on online travel business in Indian context. The present study unveiled the demographics of the respondents on different aspects to have a comprehensive view of the study. The details of the demographics are given in the tables below.

Table 4.2 Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	CumulativePercent
Male	389	64.8	64.8	64.8
Female	211	35.2	35.2	100.0
Total	600	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.2 refers to the demographics of the respondents cooperated in the study. The total number of respondents took part in the survey were 600 out of which male respondents were 389 (64.8%) and female respondents constituted 35.2 % (211). As seen from the table the male respondents were almost double as compared to their counterpart.

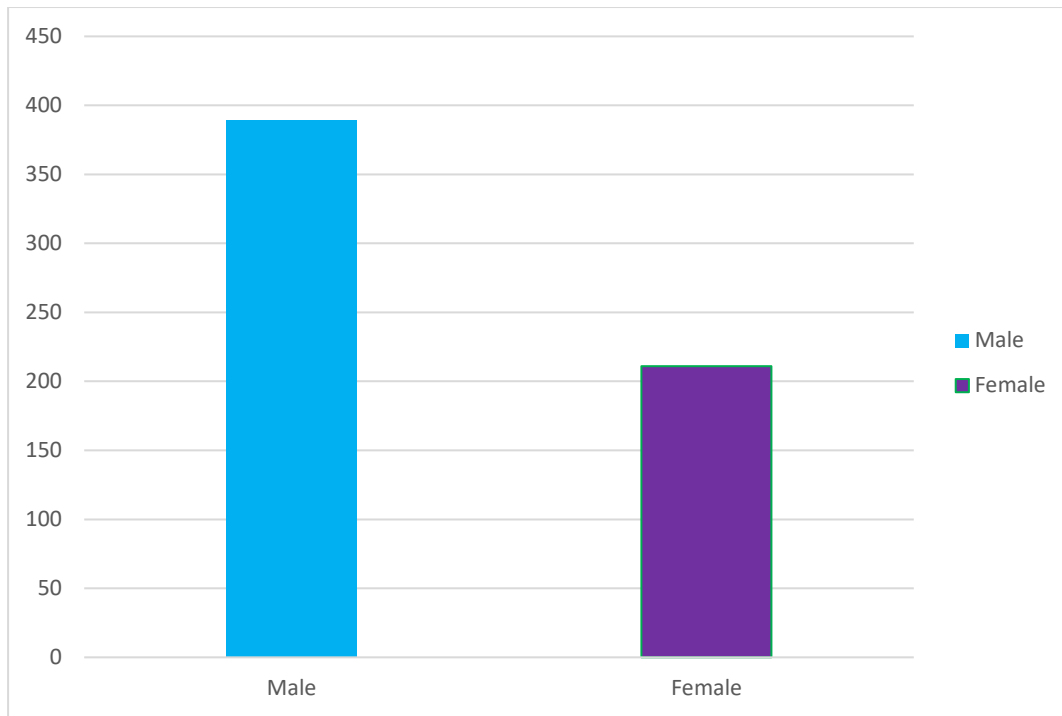


Figure 4.1 Gender

Table 4.3 Age Group

Age Group	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	CumulativePercent
20-29	295	49.2	49.2	49.2
30-39	137	22.8	22.8	72.0
40-49	113	18.8	18.8	90.8
50 & above	55	9.2	9.2	100.0
Total	600	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.3 reflects the age cluster of the participants who were part of the survey. It indicates the respondents between 20 to 29 years represent the highest percentage (49.28%) followed by 30-39 years' age group (22.85%). Respondents within 40-49 age group constituted the next highest percentage with 18.8% and lastly there were 55 respondents (9.2%) from 50 & above age group.

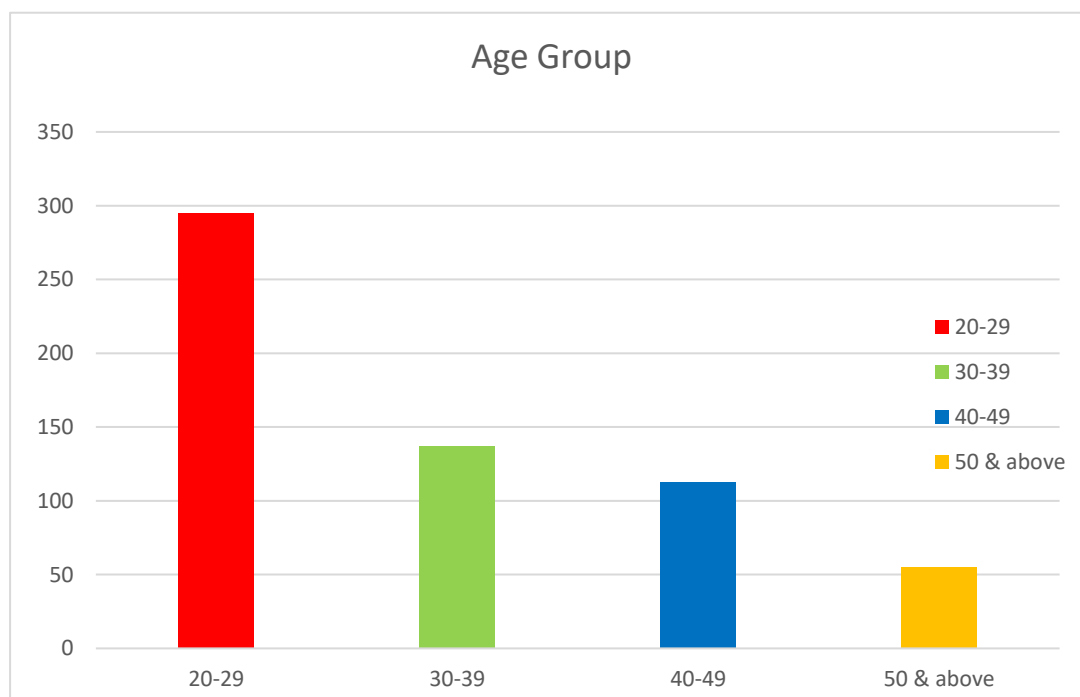


Figure 4.2 Age group

Table 4.4 Educational qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	CumulativePercent
Matriculation & above	8	1.3	1.3	1.3
Higher Secondary	13	2.2	2.2	3.5
Under Graduate	63	10.5	10.5	14.0
Graduate	203	33.8	33.8	47.8
Post Graduate	284	47.3	47.3	95.2
Others	29	4.8	4.8	100.0
Total	600	100	100	

The Table 4.4 presents the academic qualification of the respondents surveyed in the study. Among the participants the respondents with post-graduation qualification put up the highest number (47.3%) succeeded by graduates (33.8%). There were only 8 respondents who did not qualify the higher secondary exams. However, participants with PhD. and above constituted only 4.8% of the total respondents.

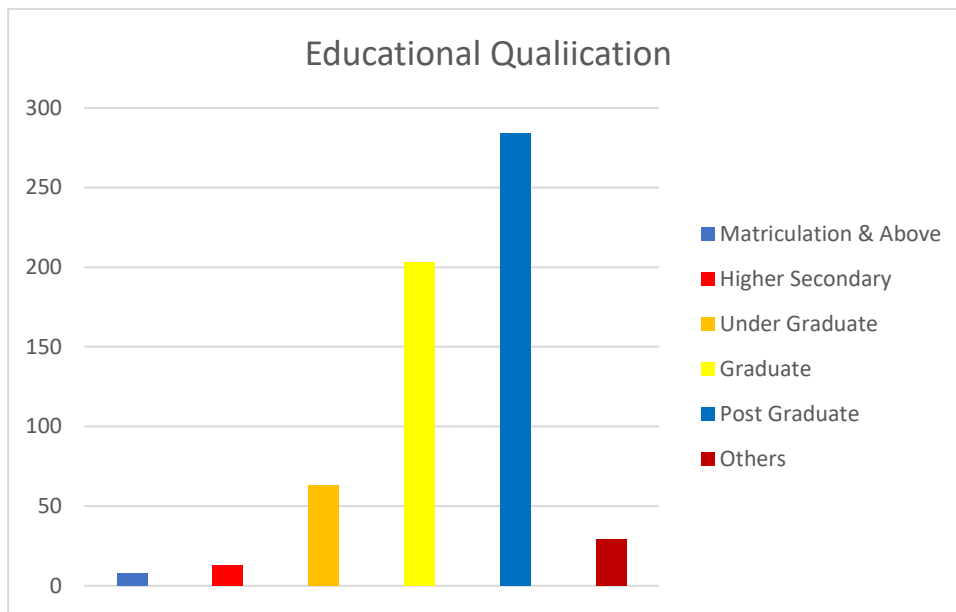


Figure 4.3 Education qualification

Table 4.5 Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	CumulativePercent
Business Persons	83	13.8	13.8	13.8
Home Maker	45	7.5	7.5	21.3
Govt. Employee	67	11.2	11.2	32.5
Student	268	44.7	44.7	77.20
Private Employee	137	22.8	22.8	100.0
Total	600	100	100	

The above Table 4.5 represents the profession of the respondents those took part in the survey. Students occupied highest percentage with 44.7%. Private employees were the next highest respondents with 22.8% followed by business persons who constituted 13.8% of the total respondents.

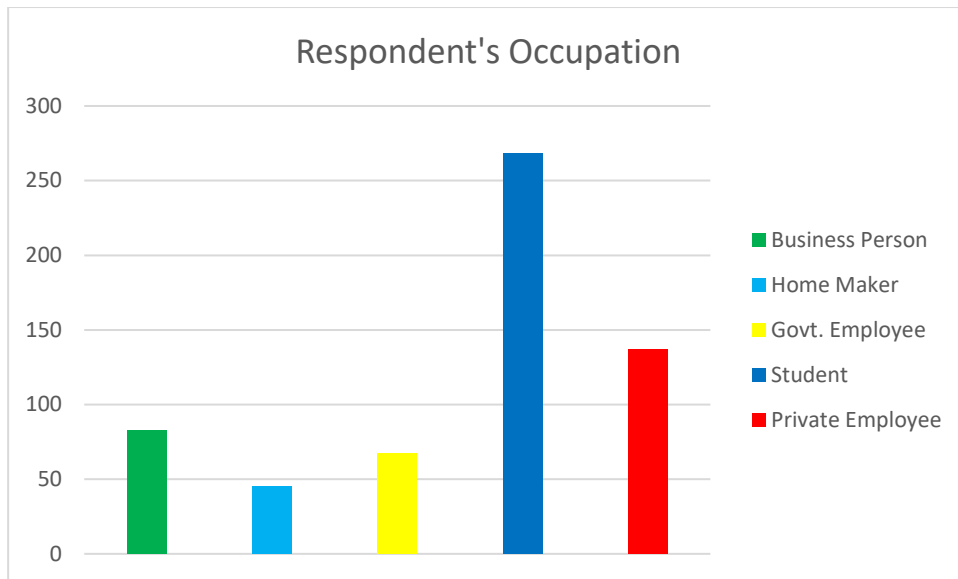


Figure 4.4 Occupation

Table 4.6 City

City	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	CumulativePercent
New Delhi	104	17.3	17.3	17.3
Mumbai	123	20.5	20.5	37.8
Hyderabad	187	31.2	31.2	69.0
Kolkata	96	16.0	16.0	85.0
Others	90	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	600	100.0	100.0	

The above Table 4.1.5 represents the respondent's respective city. Among them the respondents from Hyderabad stood highest which is 31.2% followed by Mumbai (20.5%) and New Delhi (17.3%). There were also a number of respondents from other cities which is 15.0%.

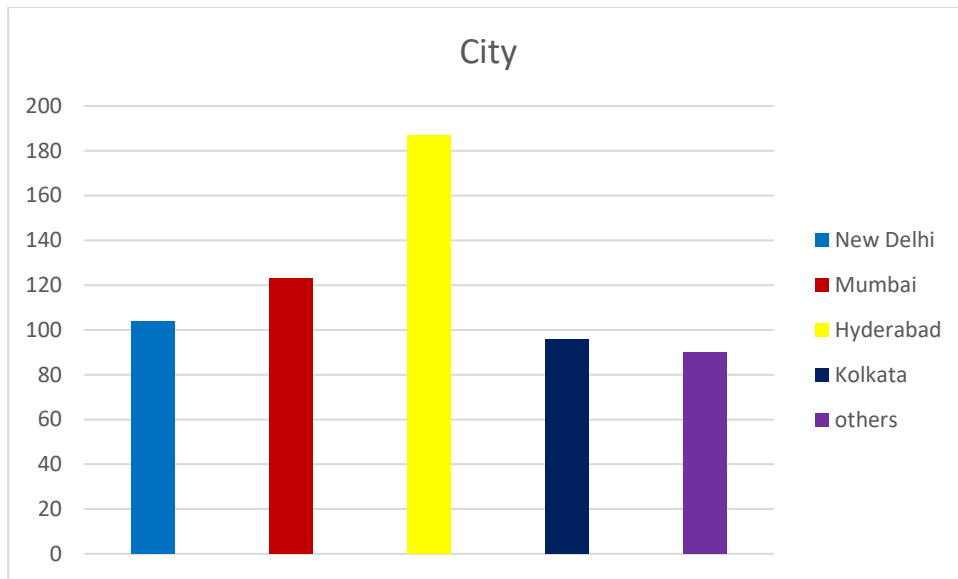


Figure 4.5 Respondent's respective City

Table 4.7 Travel Website Preferred

Website	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	CumulativePercent
Make my Trip	211	35.2	35.2	35.2
Yatra	66	11.0	11.0	46.2
Clear Trip	35	5.8	5.8	52.0
Ease my Trip	173	28.8	28.8	80.8
Ixigo	115	19.2	19.2	100
Total	600	100.0	100.0	

The Table 4.7 reflects the respondents prefer mostly Make my Trip for booking their desired services (35.2%) whereas Ease my Trip is in their second choice for booking online services (28.5%). Ixigo stood 3rd highest among the respondents through which they book their services.

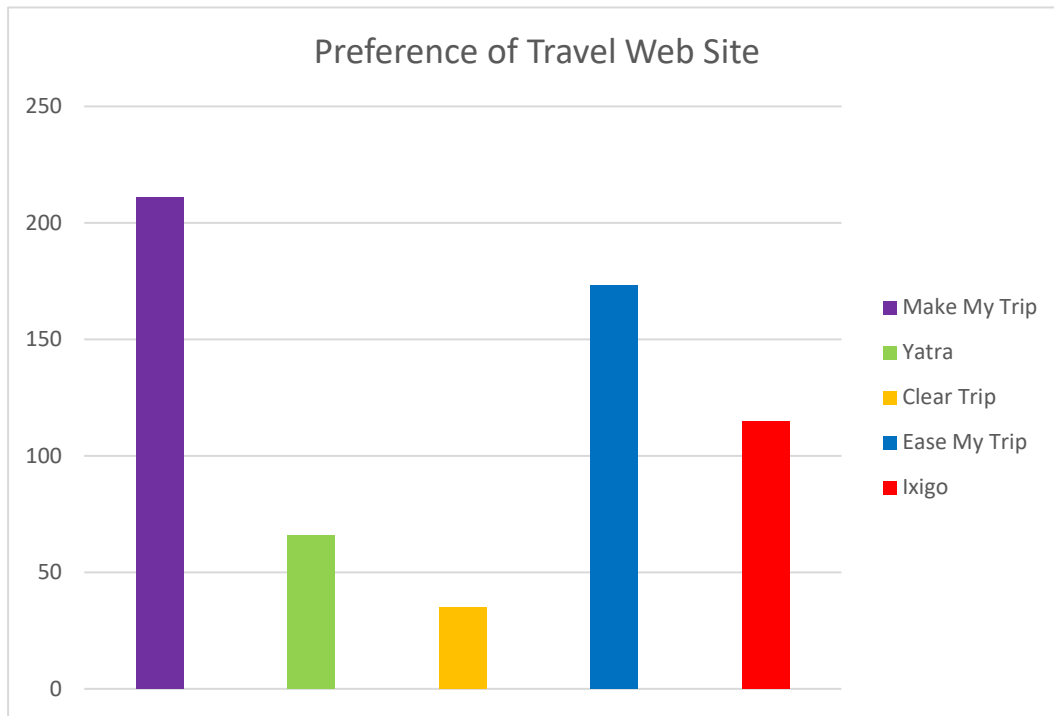


Figure 4.6 Preference of Travel Web Site

Table 4.8 Frequency of Visiting Web Site

Frequency of Visit	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	CumulativePercent
Very Often	236	39.3	39.3	39.3
Often	165	27.5	27.5	66.8
Sometimes	91	15.2	15.2	82.0
Rarely	91	15.2	15.2	97.2
Never	17	2.8	2.8	100.0
Total	600	100.0	100.0	

The Table 4.8 refers frequency of visiting websites by the respondents. Most respondents visit very often to their web site (39.3%) whereas 27.5% visit often. On the other hand, 15.2 % respondents visit occasionally to the respective web sites. Only 2.8% respondents claimed that they never visited the websites.

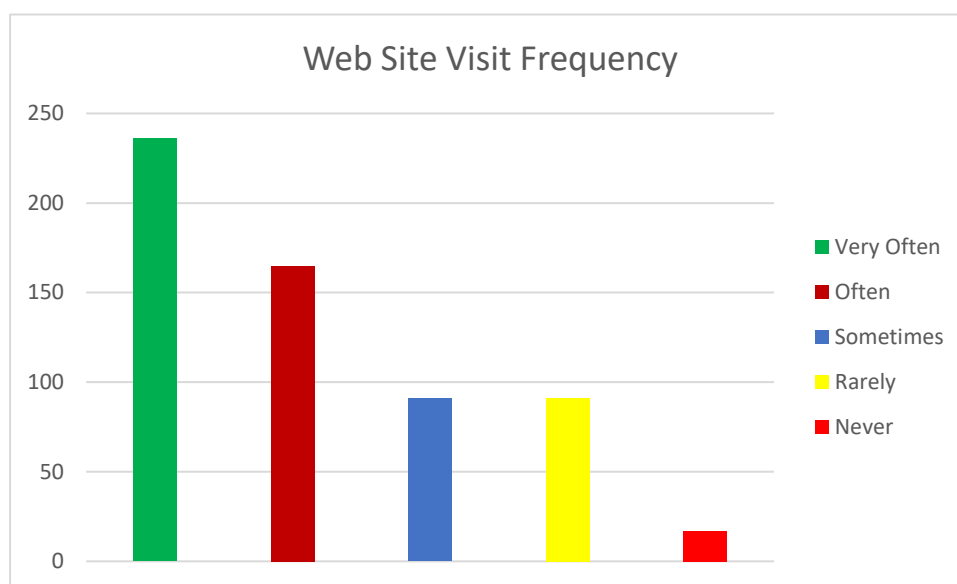


Figure 4.7 Frequency of visiting Web Site

Table 4.9 Frequency of Travel

Travel Frequency	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Once in a Month	305	50.8	50.8	50.8
Bi Monthly	91	15.3	15.3	66.1
Quarterly	83	13.8	13.8	79.9
Half-Yearly	65	10.8	10.8	90.7
Yearly	56	9.3	9.3	100
Total	600	100.0	100.0	

The Table 4.9 reflects frequency of travels undertake by the participants. Most of the respondents travel at least once a month (50.8%). 15.3% travels once in two months whereas 13.8% travels quarterly. Only 9.3% travels once in a year.

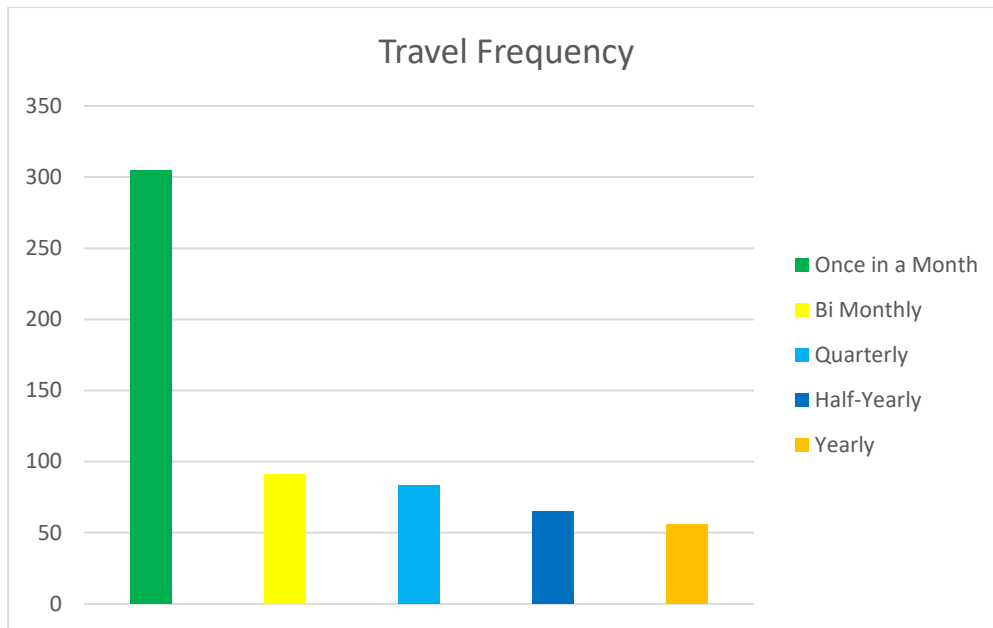


Figure 4.8 Frequency of Travels

4.10 Purpose of Travel

Purpose	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	CumulativePercent
Business	76	12.7	12.7	12.7
Tourism	122	16.7	16.7	29.3
Pilgrimage	99	16.5	16.5	45.8
Leisure	160	26.7	26.7	72.5
Medical	43	4.0	4.0	76.5
Others	100	23.5	23.5	100.0
Total	600	100	100	

The above table (Table 4.10) shows that respondents travel mostly for tourism (29.3%) followed by Leisure (26.5%). 23.5% respondents said that they travel for other purposes (i.e., Meeting relatives, friends etc.). The purpose of travel for pilgrimage also stood substantial (16.5%). They travel less for medical purpose (4.0%).

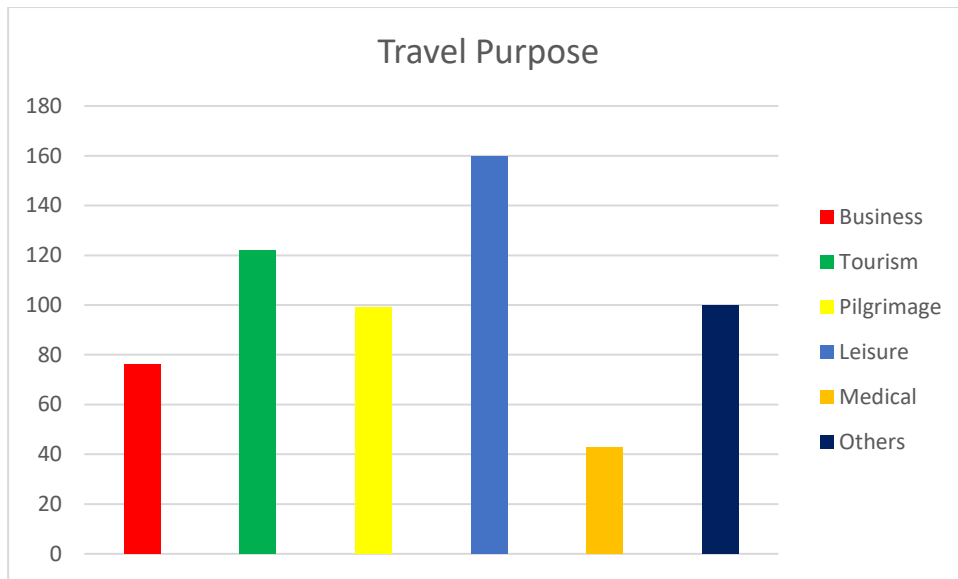


Figure 4.9 Purpose of Travel

Table 4.11 Travel Destination

Destination	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Domestic	470	78.3	78.3	78.3
International	130	21.7	21.7	100.0
Total	600	100.0	100.0	

The Table 4.11 refers the travel destination of respondents. It shows that most respondents undertake domestic travel (78.3%) whereas only 21.7% travels globally.

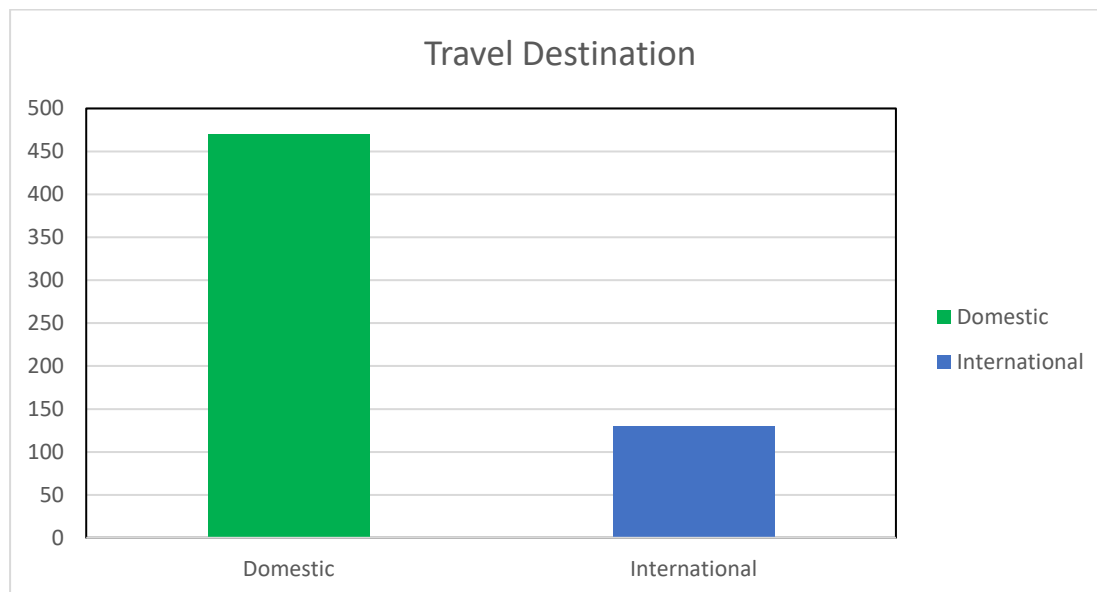


Figure 4.10 Travel Destination

Table 4.12 Preferred way of Travelling

Mode	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Bus	97	16.2	16.2	16.2
Train	300	50.0	50.0	66.2
Airlines	203	33.8	33.8	100.0
Total	600	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.12 discloses preferred way of travelling of participants. It assumes that, most of the respondents prefer to travel by train (50%) followed by Airlines (33.8%). 16.2 percent respondents preferred to avail Bus for travelling.

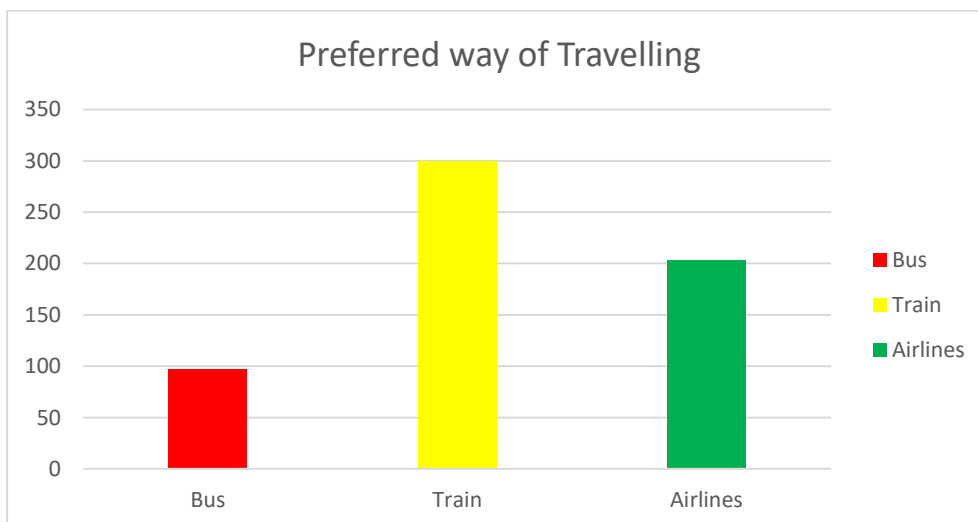


Figure 4.11 Way of Travelling

Table 4.13 Choice of Hotels

Hotel Type	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	CumulativePercent
Budget	369	50.8	50.8	50.8
Economy	139	23.2	23.2	84.7
Two Star	21	3.5	3.5	88.2
Three Star	54	9.0	9.0	97.2
Four Star	17	2.8	2.8	100.0
Total	600	100.0	100.0	

The above table 4.13 reflects that respondents mostly choose budget hotels while they travel for various purposes (50.8). 23.2 % preferred to stay at economy hotels. Regarding the star category 9% respondents choose three-star hotels whereas 3.5% prefer two-star hotels. Only 2.8% opt for four-star hotels for staying.



Figure 4.12 Choice of Hotels

4.1.5 Evaluation of Measurement model

4.1.5.1.1 Reflective Construct Assessment in Measurement Model

The characteristics of reflective construct is latent in nature which exist baring combining its indexes yet be existent regardless of the measured used Borsboom et al (2004). In these circumstances, the relationship is confirmed among constructs and items Bollen and Lennox, (1991). It indicates that any substitute in the item (s), the construct doesn't get affected (Rossiter (2002). It means all the items that constitute a construct bear same theme and have interchangeability characteristics, there happens to be no such big difference if one more item is added or removed Jarvis et al (2003). In the empirical endeavor, for a reflective construct, it is essential that all the items should have solid constructive inter correlation between items Cronbach (1951). Usually to the items inter correlation (reliability and Internal consistency) three statistical tools are applied those are Factor loading, Cronbach alpha, and AVE (Average Variance Extracted) Churchill (1979). Discriminant validity and Convergent validity and are measured for evaluating reflective construct Bollen and Lennox (1991). Measurement model evaluate the association between constructs and indicators. In the first phase for measuring reflective constructs the first and foremost thing is to scrutinize indicator loadings. In the exploratory stages the loaded value for indicators should be more than or equal to 0.70 to be considered for further analysis and the factors with value less than 0.70 are removed. In the next stage the task is to examine the CR (Composite Reliability) that offered by Joreskog (1971). It is done for checking the construct's reliability and CR values falls within the range of 0.60 to 0.70 are considered based upon the circumstances of the study.

If the loading value for any indicator falls below 0.60 then it is recommended to delete the item. Other means of proving internal consistency among the construct is Cronbach's alpha value

which should be equivalent or above 0.70. Apart from the Cronbach's alpha & Composite reliability a novel estimation technique has emerged into contemporary literature which is known as ROWA. Two types of validities need to be checked in order to test the construct validity. The first type is convergent validity and the remaining one is discriminant validity. To indicate the CV or convergent validity, sum of square value of the indicators will produce AVE or Average Variance Extracted values. If the AVE value is equal to 0.50 or more then the condition supports that the indicator variance explains the construct. Another validity measurement which needs to be taken into account in measurement model is discriminant validity. Three measures indicate the discriminant validity of the model. First one is Fornell and Larcker criterion, the next one is construct's cross loading value and the remaining one is HTMT (Heterotrait- Monotrait. Henseler et al., (2016) proposed that the threshold value for the HTMT ratio should be within 0.90 otherwise validity of the constructs won't be settled.

4.1.5.1.2 Formative construct evaluation in Measurement model

Characteristics of the formative construct is dormant in nature and is developed with an array of its indicators Borsboom et al (2003). In the process of establishing the connection between items and construct and linking is created from data points to construct Bollen and Lennox (1991) however any swap in the item does not have any impact on the construct Rossiter (2002). All of the items that constitute the construct does not necessarily possess same theme and they are not substitutable. There will be a notable impact if any item is added to or deleted from the construct **Jarvis et al (2003)**. Moreover, items in the formative construct should be in such a manner that they are having inter correlation pattern and bear same maneuvering relationship **Cronbach (1951)**. Checking the inter correlation empirically is not possible **Churchill (1979)**. Three measurements are used to evaluate the formative construct assessment namely CV (Convergent validity), next one is Indicator Multicollinearity and the last measurement technique is analytical implication and indicator weights relevance (Hair et al.,2017).

4.1.5.1.3 Factor loadings

4.1.5.1.4 Indicator Multicollinearity

IM or Indicator Multicollinearity refers how the scale items are corresponding in respect of their respective constructs. Concerning evaluation of IM (Indicator Multicollinearity), VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) is applied where no particular estimation on onset margin of VIF (Saleroom Gomez et al, 2016).

4.1.5.1.5 Reliability and Validity

Validity and Reliability are the major concepts for measuring models. Both the concepts play vital part in estimating owing to underlying dubiety in the constructs hence there are no other means to measure the unobserved constructs accurately and directly. The credibility of the study warrants establishing reliability and validity.

4.1.5.1.6 Reliability

The prime objective for conducting reliability test is to achieve the similar outcomes while a study is conducted in almost similar circumstances. In simple words reliability means repeatability of study. Few quotes from the notable researchers are appended below:

“The uniformity of a multi-item scale or a construct. A scale can be dependable when it yields constant results under same or similar situations.” (Hair et al., 2019).

“Reliability is the share of the true variance that reflects in achieved test scores” Guilford (1954). “Reliability of study indicates the steadiness of results achieved by a person on various instances or through diverse pool of corresponding items” Anastasi (1958). “Reliability of study may be termed as the association between multiple sets of scores of corresponding tests from the similar category of personnel” Stordahl 1972). Reliability conceivably stated that, “Systematic procedure of reducing the imprecision between the exact worth and perceived assessment”. Largely reliability of a construct is evaluated in two ways. First one is “External Consistency Procedures” and the other one is “Internal Consistency Procedures”. Major means of assessing external consistency procedures are “Parallel Forms Reliability, Test Re-Test Reliability,”. Major approaches in Internal consistency procedure are “Cronbach’s Alpha, Richardson Estimate of Reliability, Kudar- Split Half Reliability.”. The present study tested its reliability through Composite Reliability values as well as Cronbach’s Alpha values.

4.1.5.1.7 Validity

Validity refers the extent to which a test estimates, what it is expected to estimates and instrument validation is vital for application and explanation. Some of the expert observation regarding the validity is given below: “Validity of a test shows what the test estimates and how profoundly it does that”-Anastasi (1988). “An array of validity indicates the extent to which an assessment estimates what it pretended to estimate in contrast with established standard”-Freeman (1975). “Validity is the degree to which an assessment gauges what it supposed to gauge”- Cronbach (1951)

4.1.5.1.7.1 Construct validity - Convergent validity of the lower order constructs

“CV or Convergent validity is the extent to which several efforts are made for measuring the similar notion those within the agreement. The concept behind multiple estimates of the similar thing is the values should preferably differ greatly if they are effective estimates of the concept” (Bagozzi et al 1991). Convergent validity is weighed with Average Variance Extracted or AVE value. Convergent validity is supposed to be signified when the values of AVE is equal or greater than 0.5. (Fronell & Larcker 1981).

4.1.5.1.7.2 Construct validity - Discriminant validity - Fronell and Lacker criterion

Fornell and Lacker criterion is applied to examine the DV (discriminant validity) of the constructs. It is calculated based on logic that “The square root of AVE values for a construct should be higher than the values of association of the particular construct with corresponding construct” Fornell and Lacker (1981).

4.1.5.1.7.3 Construct validity - Discriminant validity - Cross loadings

Another approach of validating DV or discriminant validity of the constructs employed in the study is cross loadings. Primarily cross loading indicates how firmly the indicator is loaded to the corresponding source construct. If the loading value of any indicator is appeared to be higher on other construct in place of the parent construct, it indicates a problem regarding discriminant validity. Hence during the procedure of cross loading evaluation every indicator loading values need to be higher in their respective source construct in contrast to other constructs.

4.1.5.1.7.4 Construct validity - Discriminant validity - Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio

HTMT or Heterotrait Monotrait ratio method is relatively a novel method and several researchers evaluate discriminant validity of the constructs through this method. Although exactly no concrete opinion on endorsement of HTMT ratio values, several researchers have the impression that conventional threshold value of HTMT ratio should be equal to or less than 0.90 (Teo et al, 2008). In current study HTMT ratio value score is less than 0.90 and hence may be considered as credible (Hensler et al 2014). Measurement model seems valid when the values of discriminant validity convergent validity and reliability values are met the threshold value.

4.1.6 Evaluation of Structural Model

Following the assessment of measurement framework for first order construct as well as consequential higher order construct, the next process is examining structural model. For evaluating the structural model, a test was conducted with bias –correctness and accelerated bootstrap (BCa) was applied with five thousand (5000) sub-samples. The significance level

of the test was checked at 0.05 (Two tailed). To validate structural model, VIF is calculated and the cap for VIF is less than 5 for corroboration (G.Lee & Xia, 2010). Conducting bootstrapping with five thousand (5000) sub-samples, variance demonstrated (R- Square) as well as path coefficients degree of significance are evaluated. The same procedure was followed to assess the models and the results are presented with the corresponding model.

4.1.7 Bootstrapping

Final data is analyzed employing partial least square (SmartPLS) with no postulation of normalization of data so calculating regression analysis, external loadings, testing external weights, and path measurement in the parametric analysis was not viable. Rather, Bootstrapping procedure of producing sub-samples was followed with indiscriminately extracted sample from novel set of data. It confirms the constancy in data set (Hair et al.,2017). Following this, novel data set is substituted with the 5000 bootstrapping subsamples that is randomly drawn and parametric assessment of external weights, external loadings, and path measurement are projected on freshly shaped 5000 sub samples. Valuation of the implication is plausible through t-values those are resulting through bootstrapping.

4.1.8 Hypothesis testing running the structural model

Hypothesis are examined following conducting the bootstrapping with required (5000) subsamples. The significance of influence of dependent variable or DV on independent variable or IV is estimated through beta value. Depending on p-values and t-values the association between the study's constructs are evaluated to check whether or not the association is notable.

4.1.9 Evaluative strength of the model (R^2)

R^2 figures shows “the deviation in dependent variable is delineated by independent variable(s)”. It refers the degree of transpose in the endogenous variable is caused by one or several exogenous variables. As suggested by Falk and Miller (1992), R^2 value ought to be higher than 0.10.

4.1.10 Predictive strength of the model (Q^2)

Q^2 value is utilized to evaluate the model’s conjecturing relevance. A Model seems to have a good predictive relevance while Q^2 value is above zero.

4.1.11 Analysis of Model

4.1.12 Validating first order constructs

In examining the validity of the first order construct (s), every construct those are connected to other constructs were scrutinized to check the strength between the variables in the study. In current study Brand Equity has five sub constructs (Emotional connection, Online experience, Trust, Responsive service nature and Order fulfillment) were related with Customer re patronage intention. Connection between all the variables is depicted in the below figure.

Measurement Model

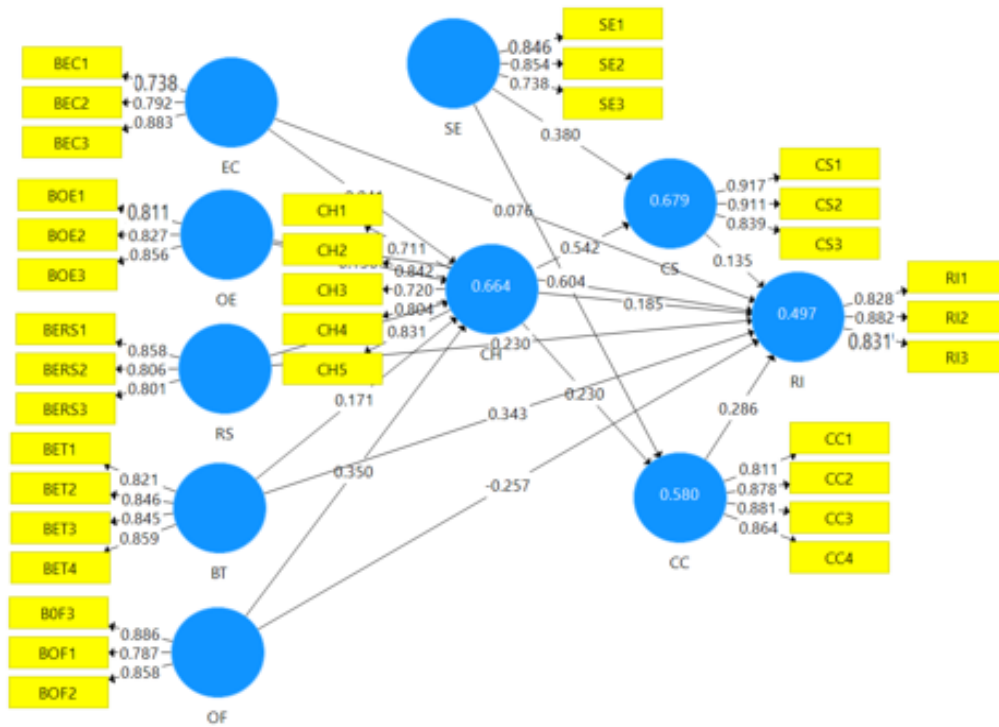


Figure 4.13 Lower order constructs model

Table: 4.14 Factor loading of indicator of lower order constructs

	BT	CC	CH	CS	EC	EF	OE	RI	RS	SE
BEC1					0.738					
BEC2					0.792					
BEC3					0.883					
BOF1						0.787				
B0F2						0.858				
B0F3						0.886				
BERS1									0.858	
BERS2									0.806	
BERS3									0.801	
BET1	0.821									
BET2	0.846									
BET3	0.845									
BET4	0.859									
BOE1							0.811			
BOE2							0.827			
BOE3							0.856			
CC1		0.811								
CC2		0.878								
CC3		0.881								
CC4		0.864								
CH1			0.711							
CH2			0.842							
CH3			0.720							
CH4			0.804							
CH5			0.831							
CS1				0.917						
CS2				0.911						
CS3				0.839						
RI1								0.828		
RI2								0.882		
RI3								0.831		
SE1										0.846
SE2										0.854
SE3										0.738

Factor loadings indicate the power between unnoted constructs and items considered. It refers “the degree whereabouts a single item in the correlation grid connects with the corresponding prime element”. Factor loading values span from -1 to +1 and the greater the value the more correlation among the items between the perceived construct” (Pett et al 2003). SEM or Structural Equation Modelling analysis initiated with assessing factor loadings, where removing of the loading values less than 0.7 is suggested although few researcher(s) in some

of their studies opined that factor loading values corresponding to 0.50 can be considered (Hair et al 2016). In some cases, based on the condition and context of the research items having values less than 0.70 may be retained. Present study considered 0.70 is cut-off value for the factor loadings. Brand Equity which is IV of the study have five dimensions with 3 items in each sub dimensions except “Trust” which has got 4 items. Altogether the construct has 16 items and all the items were retained as all had the loading value above .7. “Consumer Hope” construct has five items and the respective factor loading are 0.711, 0.842, 0.720, .804, and 0.831. “Customer Satisfaction” construct has four items where one item had removed due to less than cut-off value. The remaining items corresponding values are 0.917, 0.911, 0.839. “Customer Commitment” construct has five items and one item were removed due to lower factor loading value. The valid factor loadings for other 4 items are 0.811, 0.878, 0.881 and 0.864. “Self-Efficacy” construct which is moderator in the study has three valid factor loadings with corresponding values 0.846, 0.854, and .738. And lastly “Customer Re-Patronage Intention” which is a dependent variable of the study has got 3 cogent factor loadings value and those are 0.828, 0.882, and 0.831. All indicator’s corresponding values are more than 0.60 hence no item was deleted from the analysis since all values corresponds prescribed limit of 0.60 (Gefen and Straub, 2005).

4.1.12.1 Indicator Multicollinearity

Indicator Multicollinearity refers how items of the respective constructs are associated with their corresponding construct. For evaluating the Indicator Multicollinearity, VIF or Variance Inflation Factor is applied with no concrete limit on threshold of VIF value (Salmeron Gomez et al, 2016). However, expert(s) have recommended considerable threshold value of VIF is less than 10 (Salmeron Gomez et al, 2016; Gujarati, 2003).

Table 4.15 Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of indicators of lower order constructs

INDICATOR	VIF
BEC1	1.043
BEC2	1.357
BEC3	1.328
BEF1	1.443
BEF2	1.997
BEF3	2.117
BERS1	1.735
BERS2	1.461
BERS3	1.523
BET1	1.937
BET2	2.054
BET3	2.113
BET4	2.106
BOE1	1.116
BOE2	1.384
BOE3	1.359
CC1	1.708
CC2	2.759
CC3	2.140
CC4	2.604
CH1	1.648
CH2	2.316
CH3	1.593
CH4	2.302
CH5	2.121
CS1	2.997
CS2	2.898
CS3	1.801
RI1	1.443
RI2	1.649
RI3	1.206
SE1	1.071
SE2	1.922
SE3	1.846

4.1.12.2 Reliability analysis - Cronbach's Alpha values of the lower order constructs

To assess and measure the reliability of the constructs the study checked the Cronbach's Alpha value of the constructs. It was developed and presented by Cronbach during the year 1951. The values of Cronbach's Alpha of the construct BT (Trust), CC (Customer Commitment), CH (Consumer Hope), CS (Customer Satisfaction), EC (Emotional Connection), OF

(Fulfillment), OE (Online Experience), RI (Re-patronage Intention), RS (Responsive Service Nature) and SE (Self Efficacy) were 0.864, 0.882, 0.841, 0.868, 0.835, 0.798, and 0.820, 0.765, 0.760, 0.834 respectively. Here the values (Cronbach's Alpha value) of each construct span from 0.760 to 0.882 which is greater than 0.70 thus refers the noteworthy reliable ness of the instruments.

Table 4.16 Values indicating Cronbach's Alpha of the lower order construct

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha
BT	0.864
CC	0.882
CH	0.841
CS	0.868
EC	0.835
EF	0.798
OE	0.820
RI	0.765
RS	0.760
SE	0.834

4.1.12.3 Reliability Analysis- Composite Reliability of the lower order constructs

CR or composite reliability of BT (Trust), CC (Customer Commitment), CH (Consumer Hope), CS (Customer Satisfaction), EC (Emotional Connection), OF (Fulfillment), OE (Online Experience), RI (Re-patronage Intention), RS (Responsive Service Nature) and SE (Self Efficacy) were 0.908, 0.918, 0.888, 0.919, 0.753, 0.882, and 0.791, 0.814, 0.862, 0.801 respectively. Composite Reliability values of all the constructs as shown in the table reflects more than 0.70 which is adequate to establish reliability of the constructs used in the study. In these ways, instrument reliability is established through Cronbach' Alpha and Composite reliability values.

Table 4.17 Values indicating composite reliability of the lower order constructs

Constructs	Composite Reliability
BT	0.908
CC	0.918
CH	0.888
CS	0.919
EC	0.753
EF	0.882
OE	0.791
RI	0.814
RS	0.862
SE	0.801

4.1.12.4 Construct validity - Convergent validity of the lower order constructs

The validity refers the extent to whether a test should measure, what it is expected to evaluate and corroboration is crucial for application and elucidation. Table 4.2.27 disclosed AVE values of BT (Trust), CC (Customer Commitment), CH (Consumer Hope), CS (Customer Satisfaction), EC (Emotional Connection), OF (Fulfillment), OE (Online Experience), RI (Repatronage Intention), RS (Responsive Service Nature) and SE (Self Efficacy) are 0.711, 0.738, 0.614, 0.792, 0.525, 0.714, and 0.567, 0.600, 0.676 and 0.576 respectively. It is evident from the table that all values are beyond 0.5 hence the CV (convergent validity) is confirmed.

Table 4.18 Convergent validity of the lower order constructs

Constructs	Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values
BT	0.711
CC	0.738
CH	0.614
CS	0.792
EC	0.525
EF	0.714
OE	0.567
RI	0.600
RS	0.676
SE	0.576

4.1.12.5 Discriminant validity – Criterion of Fornell-Lacker

The criteria proposed by Fornell and Lacker is applied to evaluate the DV (discriminant validity) of the constructs. As suggested by Fornell and Lacker (1981), the criteria for establishing AVE is “Sum of the square root value of AVE of a construct should be greater than the association of that particular construct with their corresponding constructs”. Aforementioned table reflects that, sum of square root of AVE values of each and all constructs are higher than the correlation of that particular construct with their corresponding constructs which are highlighted in bold. The square root of AVE of BT (Trust), CC (Customer Commitment), CH (Consumer Hope), CS (Customer Satisfaction), EC (Emotional Connection), OF (Fulfillment), OE (Online Experience), RI (Re-patronage Intention), RS (Responsive Service Nature) and SE (Self Efficacy) are 0.843, 0.859, 0.783, 0.890, 0.725, 0.845, and 0.753, 0.774, 0.822 and 0.759 respectively. From the table it reflects that correlation with its source value is higher than supplementary correlation values in particular rows of every constructs signify the contentment of indicator of Fornell and Larcker hence specified the confirmation of discriminant validity.

Table 4.19 Discriminant validity - criterion of Fornell-Lacker

	BT	CC	CH	CS	EC	EF	OE	RI	RS	SE
BT	0.843									
CC	0.462	0.859								
CH	0.723	0.583	0.783							
CS	0.699	0.723	0.764	0.890						
EC	0.417	0.408	0.370	0.358	0.725					
EF	0.797	0.620	0.748	0.760	0.384	0.845				
OE	0.668	0.516	0.683	0.628	0.501	0.646	0.753			
RI	0.576	0.563	0.583	0.595	0.377	0.506	0.465	0.774		
RS	0.720	0.583	0.726	0.663	0.491	0.685	0.603	0.584	0.822	
SE	0.559	0.738	0.585	0.697	0.319	0.544	0.480	0.606	0.613	0.759

4.1.12.6 Construct validity - Discriminant validity - Cross loadings

As it can be seen from the table 4.2.29 all the measurement values were appropriately placed in respective corresponding source constructs thus confirming discriminant validity.

Table 4.20 Discriminant validity - Cross loadings

	BT	CC	CH	CS	EC	EF	OE	RI	RS	SE
BEC1	0.046	0.105	0.045	0.135	0.410	0.065	0.157	0.227	0.122	0.136
BEC2	0.289	0.296	0.260	0.293	0.792	0.250	0.321	0.236	0.360	0.242
BEC3	0.442	0.401	0.388	0.314	0.883	0.410	0.512	0.348	0.482	0.287
BOF1	0.679	0.379	0.576	0.517	0.321	0.787	0.472	0.454	0.535	0.414
BOF2	0.678	0.556	0.633	0.699	0.296	0.858	0.566	0.385	0.617	0.496
BOF3	0.666	0.626	0.682	0.705	0.354	0.886	0.595	0.443	0.586	0.469
BERS1	0.529	0.521	0.629	0.589	0.370	0.567	0.783	0.482	0.858	0.483
BERS2	0.622	0.494	0.596	0.558	0.422	0.578	0.706	0.501	0.806	0.486
BERS3	0.628	0.418	0.563	0.483	0.420	0.544	0.477	0.457	0.801	0.548
BET1	0.821	0.412	0.553	0.554	0.265	0.632	0.496	0.454	0.595	0.518
BET2	0.846	0.355	0.579	0.538	0.468	0.600	0.519	0.552	0.565	0.430
BET3	0.845	0.275	0.631	0.487	0.279	0.677	0.558	0.406	0.597	0.363
BET4	0.859	0.506	0.668	0.758	0.379	0.772	0.667	0.520	0.666	0.569
BOE1	0.318	0.391	0.240	0.289	0.483	0.273	0.533	0.258	0.392	0.330
BOE2	0.529	0.440	0.589	0.625	0.337	0.575	0.827	0.315	0.662	0.442
BOE3	0.609	0.379	0.619	0.467	0.399	0.550	0.856	0.454	0.705	0.339
CC1	0.541	0.811	0.723	0.815	0.297	0.746	0.560	0.494	0.652	0.643
CC2	0.329	0.878	0.405	0.552	0.397	0.448	0.405	0.514	0.465	0.574
CC3	0.368	0.881	0.443	0.571	0.370	0.431	0.419	0.483	0.441	0.650
CC4	0.313	0.864	0.378	0.497	0.344	0.454	0.356	0.437	0.408	0.658
CH1	0.588	0.401	0.711	0.574	0.269	0.645	0.526	0.255	0.576	0.306
CH2	0.560	0.466	0.842	0.619	0.272	0.598	0.540	0.480	0.568	0.510
CH3	0.418	0.461	0.720	0.516	0.200	0.505	0.487	0.492	0.539	0.460
CH4	0.595	0.439	0.804	0.557	0.348	0.528	0.566	0.513	0.585	0.585
CH5	0.650	0.513	0.831	0.709	0.344	0.647	0.553	0.535	0.577	0.429
CS1	0.623	0.652	0.715	0.917	0.326	0.709	0.561	0.531	0.570	0.635
CS2	0.674	0.636	0.725	0.911	0.327	0.757	0.588	0.573	0.600	0.577
CS3	0.565	0.644	0.595	0.839	0.301	0.555	0.527	0.480	0.602	0.653
RI1	0.527	0.400	0.574	0.525	0.266	0.496	0.414	0.828	0.494	0.527
RI2	0.498	0.566	0.485	0.581	0.340	0.438	0.373	0.882	0.525	0.597
RI3	0.258	0.317	0.223	0.173	0.291	0.163	0.287	0.579	0.300	0.183
SE1	0.350	0.692	0.297	0.464	0.246	0.355	0.255	0.550	0.325	0.674
SE2	0.475	0.581	0.558	0.664	0.270	0.475	0.473	0.375	0.591	0.854
SE3	0.461	0.316	0.488	0.405	0.190	0.403	0.357	0.464	0.478	0.738

4.1.12.7 Discriminant validity – HTMT or Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio

HTMT or Heterotrait- Monotrait ratio calculation method is relatively a novel method and a number of scholars evaluate the construct's discriminant validity through this method. Although no particular earmark on corroboration of values of HTMT ratio exist, several researchers suggest acceptable value would be 0.90 (Teo et al, 2008). The HTMT ratio values were analyzed via smart PLS and shown in table 4.21. It can be observed from table that, the values are lower than 0.90 hence endorsing discriminant validity.

Table 4.21 Discriminant validity – Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio

	BT	CC	CH	CS	EC	EF	OE	RI	RS	SE
BT										
CC	0.513									
CH	0.841	0.658								
CS	0.799	0.811	0.889							
EC	0.527	0.543	0.484	0.504						
EF	0.859	0.717	0.811	0.876	0.512					
OE	0.875	0.714	0.887	0.832	0.858	0.876				
RI	0.725	0.721	0.734	0.723	0.630	0.648	0.711			
RS	0.889	0.697	0.809	0.816	0.702	0.881	0.726	0.798		
SE	0.759	0.827	0.808	0.809	0.511	0.762	0.767	0.866	0.884	

4.1.13 Reflective - Formative evaluation

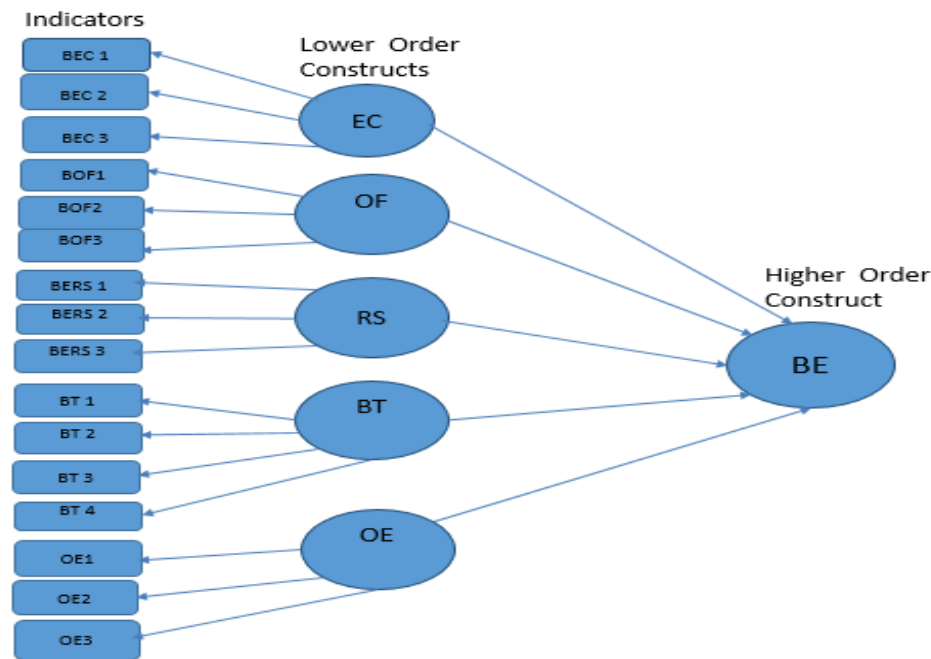


Figure 4.14 Reflective-Formative Higher Order constructs

In the present research, Brand Equity is the Higher (first) order construct and it has five second order constructs namely Online Experience (OE), Emotional Connection (EC), Trust (BT), Responsive Service Nature (RS) and Order Fulfillment (OF). These five lower order constructs or dimensions are reflective in nature and except Trust each sub constructs have three indicators and Trust has got four indicators those are interchangeable. Moreover, any addition or deletion of the item doesn't bring any changes into the construct. The validity and reliability of these lower order reflective constructs were checked in preceding section and implicit figures of these sub dimensions are summed up to the dataset. Implicit values of these dimensions emerged as the pointer for the second higher order construct Brand Equity (BE) which is formative in principle where pointers are not transposable and removal of any of the pointer will bear an impact over parent construct.

Regarding assessing Brand Equity (BE) (second higher order construct), three criteria to check

for validation those are external weights, external loadings and VIF as presented in the following table

Table 4.22 Higher order constructs validation

HOC	LOC	Outer weights	T Statistics	P Values	Outer Loadings	VIF
BE	EC	0.536	2.403	0.000	0.843	1.382
	OE	0.544	3.350	0.001	0.812	2.106
	RS	0.437	3.571	0.000	0.917	2.527
	BT	0.519	2.569	0.000	0.908	1.301
	BF	0.472	2.971	0.001	0.885	2.996

Outer loading values of every single lower order construct seems significant. The VIF values also came less than 5 hence it is valid. Values of outer weights of the lower order constructs EC, OE, RS, B T and B F were 0.536, 0.544, 0.437 and 0.519 and 0.472 respectively. RS and BF were near to the 0.5 and remaining three construct's value was greater than the 0.5 hence all the outer weights came as significant (Hair et al, 2016). After establishing the validity of lower order constructs Structural Model analysis was performed.

4.1.14 Structural Model Evaluation

After evaluating measurement model of lower order construct and secondary higher order construct, the next stage is to assess structural model. In current research assessment of structural model was conducted through Bca (Bias -Corrected and Accelerated) bootstrap through 5000 subsamples with two tailed significance level of 0.05.

4.1.15 Bootstrapping

Total sample of 600 data point were transformed into 5000 sub-samples and the outcome were shown in research.

4.1.16 Testing of Hypotheses

Table 4.2.34 Path coefficients and significances study's research gap was identified based on the Theory. With a view to address the gaps empirically Hypotheses were formulated. The following were the hypotheses (Direct Relationship) of the study to address:

H1: Brand equity of online companies has a notable influence on customer re-patronage intention.

H2: Brand equity has a significant impact on consumer hope.

H3: Consumer hope has a noteworthy influence on customer satisfaction

H4: Consumer hope has a significant influence on customer commitment

H5: Customer satisfaction has notable influence on customer re patronage intention.

H6: Customer commitment has a noteworthy influence on customers re patronage intention.

H7: Consumer hope has a notable influence on customers re patronage intention

Structural model evaluation was conducted following validating higher order constructs. The successive values(β , t-value and P-values) were drawn from the data and presented in the table 4.23

Table 4.23 Path Coefficient and Significance

Relationships	B	t-values	P-Values	Result
BE -> RI	0.271	5.915	0.000	Accepted
BE -> CH	0.805	14.788	0.000	Accepted
CH -> CS	0.481	5.534	0.000	Accepted
CH -> CC	0.051	6.405	0.002	Accepted
CS -> RI	0.102	3.437	0.003	Accepted
CC -> RI	0.250	2.454	0.000	Accepted
CH -> RI	0.178	7.874	0.001	Accepted

4.1.17 Structural model result

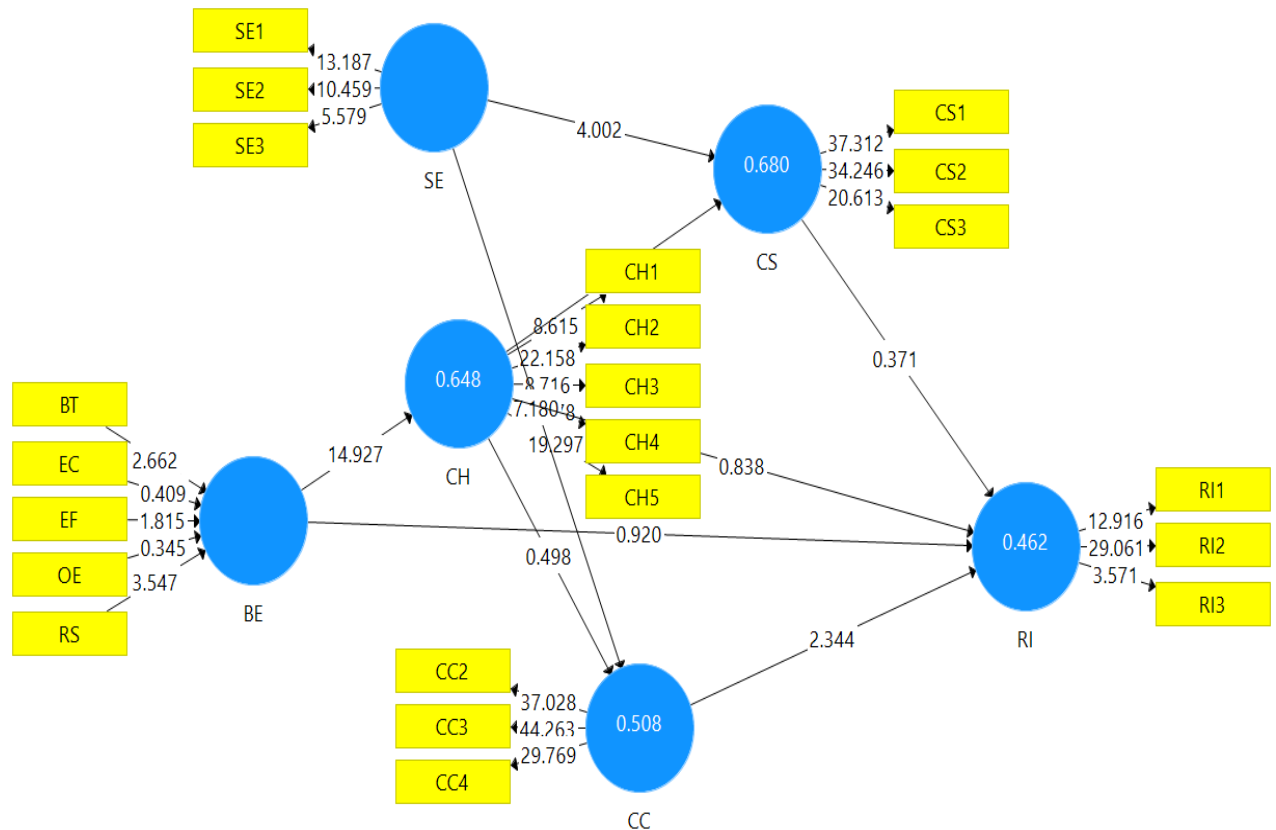


Figure: 4.15 Structural Model

Hypothesis Testing

H1: Brand equity of online companies has a significant influence on customer re-patronage intent.

H1 evaluated whether Brand Equity (BE) for an online company had a considerable impact on Customer Re-Patronage Intention. The outcomes showed that Brand Equity (BE) had a noteworthy impact on customer Re-Patronage Intention ($\beta = 0.271$, $t = 5.915$, $p = 0.000$).

H2: Brand equity has a significant effect on consumer hope.

H2 evaluated whether brand equity had a considerable influence on consumer hope. The

results revealed that brand equity had a positive influence on consumer hope ($\beta = 0.805$, $t = 14.788$, $p = 0.000$).

H3: Consumer hope has a significant impact on customer satisfaction

H3 examined whether consumer hope had a notable impact on customer satisfaction. The outcome disclosed that consumer hope had a considerable influence on Customer Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.481$, $t = 5.534$, $p = 0.000$).

H4: Consumer hope has a significant effect on customer commitment

H4 examined whether consumer hope had a considerable impact on customer commitment. The results reflected that consumer hope had a noteworthy influence on Customer Commitment ($\beta = 0.051$, $t = 6.405$, $p = 0.002$).

H5: Customer satisfaction has a significant effect on customer re-patronage Intention

H5 tested whether consumer satisfaction had a significant impact on customer re-patronage Intention. The result shows that Consumer satisfaction had a considerable impact on customer re-patronage Intention ($\beta = 0.102$, $t = 3.437$, $p = 0.003$).

H6: Customer commitment has a significant effect on Customer re-patronage intention.

H6 evaluated whether Consumer Commitment had a notable impact on customer re-patronage Intention. The result revealed that consumer commitment had a significant influence on Customer re-patronage intention ($\beta = 0.250$, $t = 2.454$, $p = 0.000$).

H7: Consumer hope has a significant effect on customer re-patronage intention

H7 examined whether consumer hope had a notable impact on customer re-patronage intention. The result revealed that Consumer Hope had a considerable influence on customer

re-patronage intention ($\beta=0.178$, $t=7.874$, $p=0.001$).

4.1.18 Mediation Analysis

Brand Equity $\longrightarrow$ Consumer Hope $\longrightarrow$ Consumer Re-Patronage Intention

Analysis of mediation was conducted to evaluate the mediating role of *Consumer hope* on the association between Brand Equity and Re-patronage intention. The results revealed that total effect of BE and RI is significant ($H: 8 \beta=0.468$, $t=3.807$, $p<0.001$). Along with incorporation of interceding variable CH the influence of BE on RI was proved significant ($\beta=0.275$, $t=5.745$, $p<0.001$). Additionally, The indirect influence of BE on RI through CH was also notable ($\beta=0.241$, $t=3.832$, $p<0.001$). The results demonstrate that the association between BE and RI is slightly mediated by CH.

Table 4.24 Mediation effect of CH between BE and RI

Total Effect BE $\rightarrow$ RI		Direct Effect BE $\rightarrow$ RI		Indirect Effect of BE ON RI					
Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value	H: BE- >CH $\rightarrow$ RI	Coefficient	SD	T-value	p-value	BI[2.5%,97.5%)
0.468	0.003	0.275	0.001		0.241	0.169	3.832	0.004	0.161 0.482

Consumer Hope $\longrightarrow$ Consumer Satisfaction $\longrightarrow$ Consumer Re-Patronage Intention

Analysis of mediation was conducted to evaluate the mediating role of Customer Satisfaction (CS) on the relationship between Consumer Hope (CH) and Re Patronage intention (RI). The results reflected that the total effect of CH and RI is significant ($H:9 \beta=0.239$, $t=4.063$, $p<0.001$). Along with incorporation of interceding variable CS the impact of CH on RI was proved significant ($\beta=0.272$, $t=3.298$, $p<0.001$). Moreover, the indirect effect of CH on RI through CS was also considerable ($\beta=0.249$, $t=2.358$, $p<0.001$). The results exhibit that the

association between CH and RI is mediated by CS to a certain extent.

Table 4.25 Mediation effect of CS between CH and RI

Total Effect CH->RI		Direct Effect CH-> RI		Indirect Effect of CH ON RI					
Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value	H: CH->CS -> RI	Coefficient	SD	T-value	p-value	BI[2.5%,97.5%)
0.239	0.030	0.174	0.002		0.049	0.138	2.358	0.001	0.219 0.338

Consumer Hope —> Consumer Commitment —> Consumer Re-Patronage Intention

Analysis of mediation was conducted to evaluate the mediating role of Customer Commitment (CC) on the association between Consumer Hope (CH) and Re Patronage intention (RI). The results disclose that the total effect of CH and RI is significant (H:10 $\beta=0.239$., $t=4.063$, $p<0.001$). Along with the incorporation of interceding variable CC the influence of CH on RI was proved significant ($\beta=0.272$, $t=3.298$, $p<0.001$). The indirect effect of CH on RI through CC was also noteworthy ($\beta=0.258$, $t=4.422$, $p<0.001$). The results reveals that the association between CH and RI is somewhat mediated by CC.

Table 4.26 Mediation effect of CC between CH and RI

Total Effect CH-> RI		Direct Effect CH-> RI		Indirect Effect of CH ON RI					
Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value	H: CH->CC-> RI	Coefficient	SD	T-value	p-value	BI[2.5%,97.5%)
0.239	0.030	0.174	0.002		0.016	0.037	4.422	0.001	0.234 0.329

Brand Equity → Consumer Hope → Consumer Satisfaction → Consumer Re-patronage Intention.

Analysis of mediation was conducted to evaluate the mediating role of Customer Satisfaction (CS) on the association between Brand Equity (BE) and Re Patronage intention (RI). The result shows that the total effect of BE and RI is notable (H: 11 $\beta=0.468$, $t=3.807$, $p<0.001$). Along with the incorporation of interceding variable CS the impact of BE on RI was proved significant ($\beta=0.275$, $t=5.745$, $p<0.001$). The indirect effect of BE on RI through CS was also considerable ($\beta=0.041$, $t=4.356$, $p<0.001$). This exhibits the association between BE and RI is mediated by CS to a certain extent.

Table 4.27 Mediation effect of CH & CS between BE and RI

Total Effect BE-> RI		Direct Effect BE-> RI		Indirect Effect of BE ON RI						
Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value	H: BE->CH ->CS-> RI	Coefficient	SD	T-value	p-value	BI[2.5%,97.5%)	
0.468	0.003	0.275	0.000		0.04	0.112	4.356	0.002	0.184	0.262

Brand Equity → Consumer Hope → Consumer Commitment → Consumer Re-patronage Intention

Analysis of mediation was conducted to evaluate the mediating role of Customer commitment (CC) on the relationship between Brand Equity (BE) and Re Patronage intention (RI). The results reflect that the total effect of BE and RI is significant (H: 12 $\beta=0.468$, $t=3.807$, $p<0.001$). Along with the incorporation of mediating variable CC the impact of BE on RI was proved significant ($\beta=0.275$, $t=5.745$, $p<0.001$). The indirect effect of BE on RI through CC was also notable ($\beta=0.041$, $t=3.416$, $p<0.001$). This reveals the association between BE and RI is somewhat mediated by CC.

Table 4.28 Mediation effect of CH & CC between BE and RI

Total Effect BE-> RI		Direct Effect BE-> RI		Indirect Effect of BE ON RI					
Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value	H: BE->CH - >CC-> RI	Coefficient	SD	T-value	p-value	BI[2.5%,97.5%)
0.468	0.003	0.275	0.000		0.013	0.031	3.416	0.000	0.127 0.208

4.1.19 Moderation Analysis:**Moderating impact of Self-Efficacy on the relationship between Consumer Hope and Consumer Satisfaction**

The Hypothesis sought to ascertain the moderating role of SE between CH and CS. The results revealed that SE moderates the relationship between CH and CS (H13: $\beta = -0.250$, $t=3.836$, $p<0.001$)

Table 4.29 Moderation effect of SE between CH and CS

	β	t-values	p-values
CH -> CS	0.218	2.870	0.016
Mod_SE_CH_CS -> CS	-0.250	3.836	0.001

Moderating impact of Self-Efficacy on the relationship between Consumer Hope and Consumer Satisfaction

The Hypothesis sought to ascertain the moderating role of SE between CH and CC. The results revealed that SE does not moderate the association between CH and CC (H14: $\beta = -0.048$, $t=1.163$, $p=0.245$)

Table 4.30 Moderation effect of SE between CH and CC

	β	t-values	p-values
CH -> CC	0.189	1.625	0.104
Mod_SE_CH_CC -> CS	-0.048	1.163	0.245

4.1.19.1 Interaction Effect of Consumer Hope & Self -Efficacy on Customer satisfaction

The results demonstrated the intervening role of self-efficacy between consumer hope and customer satisfaction. As it can be observed from the Figure 4.19, positive effect of consumer hope on customer satisfaction is positive because the mean is sloping upward. This positive relationship is amplified further as at the higher level of self-efficacy the slope gets steeply positive.

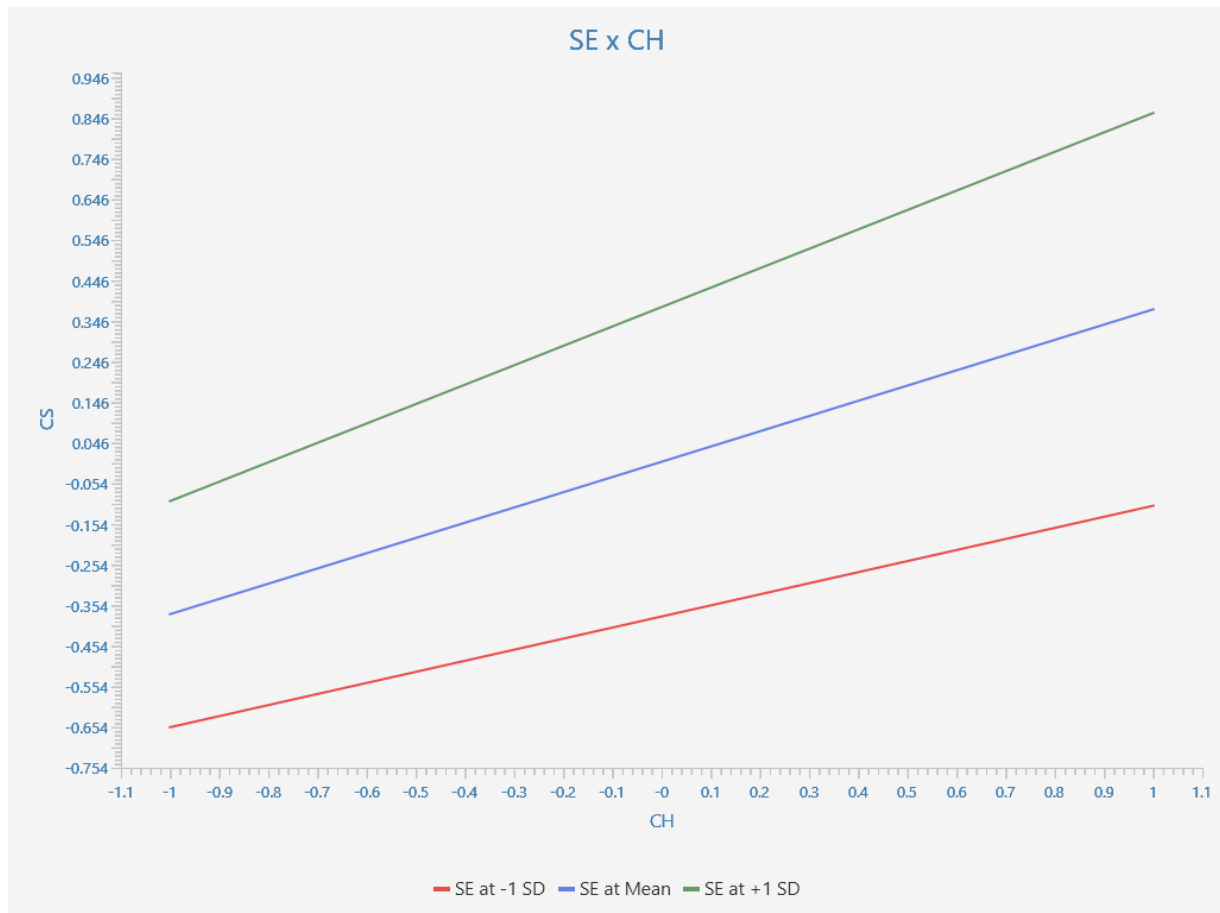


Figure 4.16: Simple Slope Analysis of Interaction between SE & CH towards CS

4.1.19.2 Interaction Effect of Consumer Hope & Self -Efficacy on Customer Commitment

Figure 4.20 indicates that all three lines are parallel therefore no real moderation effect exist on the aforementioned relationships

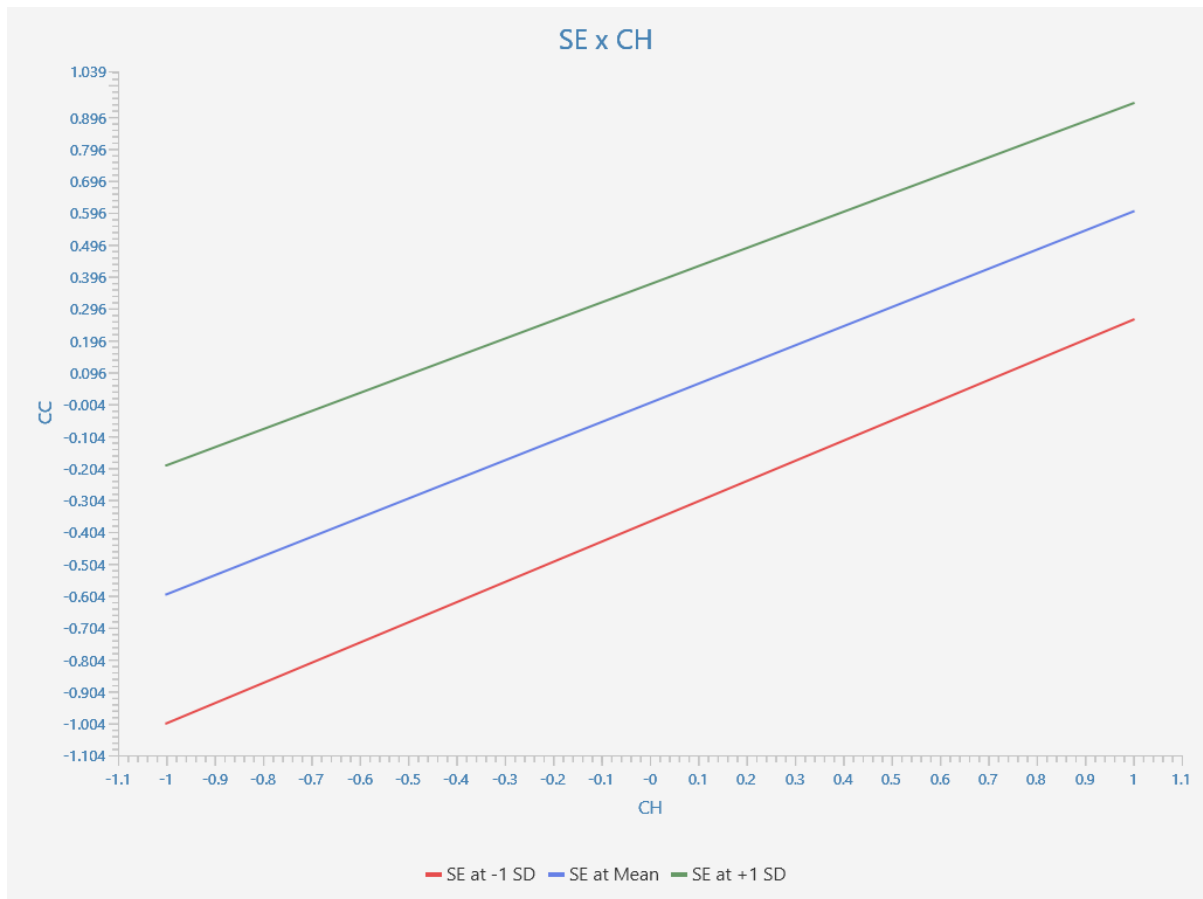


Figure 4.17: Simple Slope Analysis of Interaction between SE & CH towards CC

4.1.20 Interpretive power of the model (R^2)

R^2 statistics refers “the deviation in the dependent variable is described by independent variable(s)”. It shows the degree of difference in the endogenous variable is reckoned by the one or several exogenous variables. There exist several views on explanation of R^2 . Among those Falk and Miller (1992) viewed R^2 value must be higher than 0.10. Cohen (1988) proposed that R^2 value equivalent to 0.26 refers considerable, 0.13 specify passable and 0.02 shows frail descriptive power of the model. Apart from that, Chin (1998) suggested that R^2 value 0.67 refers significant, 0.33 specify adequate and 0.19 shows the frail explanatory power of the model.

Table: 4.31 Explanatory power of the model (R^2)

FACTOR	R^2 Values
CH	0.648
CS	0.680
CC	0.519
RI	0.476

To determine the R^2 values Smart PLS was applied and all the values were proved to be as either substantial and moderate according to Falk and Miller (1992) and Cohen (1998) suggested value.

4.1.21 Predictive power of the model (Q^2)

Q^2 values indicates the conjecturing pertinence of the model. Any representation having Q^2 value higher than zero can be considered as a strong predictive pertinence. The Q^2 value is estimated with unsighted process in Smart PLS. The result shows that the predictive value (Q^2) for all the constructs were higher than 0 and hence indicates good predictive relevance.

Table: 4.32 Predictive relevance of the model (Q²)

FACTOR	Q² Values
CH	0.408
CS	0.395
CC	0.419
RI	0.376

Chapter Summary

The present chapter dealt with the results of the data analysis and the interpretation of the same. The chapter also furnished thorough description of demographic profile of the respondents who participated in the research. Additionally, it described the descriptive statistics of the relevant aspects pertaining to the respondents of the study. Next the chapter showcased the methods of evaluation and outcomes measurement model and structural model along with mediation effects and moderating effect of intervening variable. The chapter also portrayed explanatory power and predictive relevance of the model.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The closing chapter of present thesis describe the outcome of the current study and presents a summary of aforementioned research work. Particularly it highlights the disclosure of the study and scrutinizes whether findings of the study match the stipulated objectives mentioned in preceding chapters. Additionally, it showcases the theoretical contribution and practical significance of the study. Lastly the chapter portrays the limitations of present study while leaving the scope for further research.

5.1 Discussion

The broad objective of the thesis was to analyze the customer's Re-patronage intention towards select online travel companies. The study considered the brand equity of online companies and its impact on customers' Re patronage intention. The study investigated the role of consumer hope as a potential mediator between brand equity and customer re-patronage intention. The present study also examined whether customer satisfaction and commitment have any influence on the association between brand equity and re-patronage intent. Apart from that, the study also checked their relationship (i.e., satisfaction and commitment) concerning consumer hope and re-patronage intention. Further, the study scrutinized the moderating role/effect of self-efficacy in the connection between consumer hope and satisfaction and consumer hope and commitment.

The results largely support the hypothesized relationships of the proposed model. This section discusses each of the objectives concerning the findings of the study obtained thus far.

Business plan of actions based on consumer understanding in present market scenario have become a basis of driving distinction as there is a probability of generating an exclusive

brand by fostering involvement and an emotional bond with the consumer (Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Berry et al., 2002; Pentina et al., 2011). Numerous fastest-growing sectors in the international economy are connected with observational consumption (Oh et al., 2007). Tourism is an example with a great projection, where involvements are essential (Uriely, 2005).

Consumers evaluate their experience in online platform in relation to their exchanges with the brands, which expedite favorable perception of the quality of the service, the quality of the hotel, in this case in accordance with the relationship created. The exchange that customers encounter with the brand in actual time trigger online experiences that impact the view of brand equity (Chen, 2012; Christodoulides and De Chernatony, 2004).

The main objective of the study was to examine the impact of brand equity on customer Re-patronage intention. The study highlights that brand equity is certainly a precursor of customer Re-patronage intention which has gotten scant attention in the literature. Customers are most likely to be affected by the superior brand value created through strong emotional bonding and prompt service responses. In addition, they are also influenced by superior experience which enhances their trust that leads to re-patronizing the brands.

To generate valuable brand equity, motels and lodge should provide a delightful consumer experience to distinguish them from their rivalry (Kumar et al., 2013; Berry and Carbone, 2007). Marketing strategies depending on customer experience have become a base for competitive difference, developing the prospective to generate a distinctive brand image by consumer involvement and emotional bond (Schwager, 2007; Berry et al., 2002; Pentina et al., 2011).

On the other hand, trust has both affective and cognitive elements (McAllister, 1995; Dowell et al., 2015). The affective element of trust depends on the ardent attachment between service provider and is developed through interpersonal mutuality, approaches, attention, and

interest for the service provider (Akrou et al., 2016). Particularly, a trust may be built by assessing the emotional attachment people possess concerning that entity (George and Jones, 1998). These passionate feelings impact the content of perception, comprising the info that people recollect, appear to, choose, grasp from and interpret (Forgas and George, 2001), eventually impacting the insights of that person's dependability (Akrou et al., 2016).

Direct experience with the website in the previous interaction helps secure a privilege for customers through enhancing attachment and understanding regarding transactions that occurs over the site. Thus, incessant consumers have a preferable equation of what to look for from the site, which may be interpreted into the trust following the early buying occurred. When online service providers show in such a way that develops customer trust, the apparent risk related to the website is possibly decreased, allowing customers to make assertive estimates concerning their future actions (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). The Findings of the study is consistent with the previous studies conducted in hospitality settings on hotel-consumer relationships (Gupta, Dash, & Mishra, 2019).

The study also investigated the relationship between brand equity and consumer hope. The result discloses that brand equity is also a significant predictor of consumer hope and the present study makes the first attempt to address this relationship. In an online context, customer assessment of the values in terms of features and performance plays a vital role in generating hope concerning the brand.

The present study advances the extent of customer hope and its research in the literature related to online marketing by scrutinizing its precursors in the online context. Hope as definite affecting feedback is anticipated in the current scenario of the circumstances of online shopping that are insecure and require such strong energy (Fazal-e-Hasan et al., 2019). the study reveals the pivotal role of subsequent deliberations (hope) in consumer governing the relationship.

Studies related to consumers' buying of creative brands online have emphasized on their positive influence on repurchase goal and mostly disregard the act of certain emotions like hope.

Each and every value was insisted to enhance consumer faith in the brand alongside buying-oriented consequences, thus generating hope to a great extent such that the results would be attained (e.g., Sweeney and Soutar, 2001).

Trust on the contrary refers to affection of vulnerability, which are intensified in online platforms by the distant mode of the association with the e-retailer. According to Bart et al. (2005), online brand's website is similar to the retailer's store where consumer develop perceptions of trust influenced by online exchanges. Building trust on the site reduces the feelings of susceptibility and confidence is continually evolved. Formation of impression will have a decisive role in the effecting of consumer hope. Moreover, highly valued brands (specially technology driven brands) are the key predictor of consumer hope in the context of online buying (Fazal-e-Hasan, Ahmadi, Kelly, & Lings, 2019).

The study also examined the conciliating role of consumer hope, satisfaction, and commitment in the association between brand equity and re-patronage intention. The result reveals that consumer hope, satisfaction, and commitment partially mediate the relationship between the two. The results validate the existence of a total mediating variable, Hope, concerning the impact of brand equity on consumer re-patronage intention. Concerning Brand Equity, the role played by satisfaction and commitment is similar but with a partial mediation of hope relating to the influence of Brand Equity on Re-Patronage intention. Thus, for the Brand Equity, as the principal route appears, bound by aroused hope then passes through satisfaction and commitment then Re-patronage intention.

The brand value through the online booking experience generates some positive perceptions about the brand. Hence brand's website attributes showcase all the facets of the brand equity like Online Experience, Emotional Connection, Trust, Responsive Service Nature and order Fulfillment likely to make the brand strong and let it perform better. We postulated that these dimensions that constitute the brand equity will lead to customer patronage intention through consumer hope, satisfaction, and commitment.

A brand's reliability is subject to consumer's assumption regarding the brand's future actions, specifically the brand shall not act in such a way that hinders customers' impression. The hope is customer's acquired experience regarding the brand's underlying features like integrity, ability, and benevolence. Distinctly trusted brands are contemplated to perform consistently with righteousness in a fashion that does not conflict with customers' interests in future endeavors. The perceived goodwill of impacted brands likely let customers nurture the encounters of certain emotions. The expectations of the brand's integrity implicit in the trust will stimulate positive emotions of hope.

Customers who trust their brand (Online brand) have positive feelings toward the brand and are likely to be more satisfied with the brand (Marinkovic and Obradovic, 2015) which will also increase the likelihood of their repurchase intention. When consumers fulfill their desires, they are more likely to expect positive outcome in reference to future exchanges, i.e., they turn out to be more hopeful about the future dealings and ultimately, repurchases occur (Fazal-e-Hasan et al., 2018). Affective commitment on the other hand drives to generate marketing relationship which lasts longer and remain stable because customers tend to have a positive relationship with the brand(s) they recognize themselves. Affective commitment is also proved to be strongly connected to trust.

The relationship between commitment and repurchase or re-patronage intention is positively associated. The higher their customer's level of commitment towards a brand, the higher their inclination toward the repeat purchase of the same brand.

The consumers who are affectively committed to the service providers unquestionably get back to them for future transactions. In fact, a study conducted by Hennig-Thurau (2004) related to travel agencies and media retailers, furnished pragmatic evidence of the significant impact of emotional commitment, which is a similar concept to affective commitment, on rebuying intention. In the hospitality platform, Mattila (2001) presented that affective commitment induce greater extent of defiance to flip food service providers, as well as it is claimed to have a positive influence on repurchase intent, which is in line with the studies conducted by Li et al. (2016), Jones et al. (2007), and Chih et al. (2015).

Moreover, committed customers are not only desired to stay as customers but at the same time augment their level of buying, both appropriately and in certain volume. Several circumstances support established that customer commitment influences increased purchase intentions.

The study further determined the mediating influence of consumer satisfaction and consumer commitment in the association between consumer hope and re-patronage intention. The empirical result shows that customer satisfaction and commitment partially mediate the relationship between the two. Consumer's online purchase behavior has largely overlooked the functions of positive feelings for example satisfaction and hope that customers pursue to accomplish. Equity theory suggests that parties in an agreement beseech for carrying an equal proportion of their investment in anticipation of proportionate gain out of the investment. Consumer hope is likely to assist in precipitating the worth of involvement having a desire that, buying-oriented goals shall be attained, which will yield satisfaction.

Therefore, the study posits that consumers who are hopeful in their pursuit of gaining satisfaction will show a greater inclination toward repeat buying of select brands online. Moreover, Wang and Wu (2012) observed that consumers who are usually satisfied with the service dispensed by the providers are likely to have a favorable stance and greater repeat purchase tendency. The present study falls in line with previous studies “The mediating impact of customer satisfaction in relation of brand equity and brand loyalty” (Kataria & Saini, 2019)

The study also found that consumer commitment partially mediates the association between consumer hope and re-patronage intention. Social exchange theory implies that, with the hope of attaining some gains from a brand, consumers will sense a desire to return that gain which fosters to carry out an esteemed association with the brand (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002) which may further yield in commitment. Further, affective commitment is mirrored in a consumer’s emotional bond, which motivates them to continue a reciprocal trusting and association with service provider (Sashi, 2019). Existent research conducted on consumer behavior has suggested that consumer hope or positive emotions have a positive impact on consumer buying behavior (Dabhlokar & Bagozzi, 2002). Brodie et al., (2013) observed that a consumer's emotional state arising out of interactive communication with a brand can generate a positive (or negative) affective commitment to the brand. (Bacon, 2017) also hinted that experiences that are backed by emotions are often about motivation and commitment.

The study further sought to examine the intervening function of self-efficacy in the association between consumer hope and satisfaction as well as consumer hope and commitment. The result reveals that, self-efficacy act as a potential moderator between hope and satisfaction.

Self-efficacy may play a key role in determining a customer's ability to respond to the functionalities of an online travel website. Customers' capability of doing all the task(s)

necessary to book from an online travel website is also associated with how he or she perceives and cope with the system. Coping is highlighted as "The cognitive and behavioral attempt exercised to govern particular internal or external demands those are evaluated as challenging or surpass the expedient of an individual" (Folkman, & Lazarus, 1984. P.141). According to the TAM (technology acceptance model), PEU (perceived ease of use) is established as a distinguished percipient attempt linked with the utilization of technology (Gefen et.al., 2003; Agarwal et.al., 2000).

Customers with low level of self-efficacy are not likely to carefully observe features given in a travel website because of inadequacy regarding their skills. Moreover, they are predisposed in less demanding efforts (Gist,1987) hence they are reluctant to embrace newer and more creative features (I.e, predictive search, and google Maps integration). On the other hand, customers with high self-efficacy will likely utilize the features given by the website. Customers' anticipation of goal outcome (successfully booking a service applying innovative features) will differ to their level of self-efficacy because customers may rely on that their specific way of applying activities will yield unequivocal results yet if they bear major doubts about their capability of performing the essential task(s), the corresponding information will not have any impact on their booking behavior. Therefore, people with moderate or high self-efficacy levels will have a high expectancy of attaining goals through goal-oriented planning (Pathways) and will or motivation (Agency).

Further, when the benefits are exaggerated via biased information processing under the condition of strong hope, the cost-benefit ratio declines. Equity theory suggests that satisfaction is a result of matching one's input and output or cost and benefit in economic terms (Au et. al., 2008), and decreasing the cost-benefit ratio will lead to higher satisfaction. This moderating impact further implies that the positive influence of consumer hope on customer satisfaction is

further strengthened when the level of self-efficacy is high nevertheless it may be weakened when the self-efficacy level is low.

The study further demonstrated that consumer self-efficacy does not possess any influence on the relationship between consumer hope and commitment. A possible reason for this may be that, although a consumer's efficacy level positively impacts the consumer's hope which leads to satisfaction hopeful consumers are less likely to engage with a brand for a long and enduring relationship, particularly in the online travel context.

Consumers who undertake travel are not usually dependent, confined, or inveigled when looking for, booking, or choosing travel agencies (Fullerton, 2003). The present study suggests that mere satisfaction is not adequate to generate customer re-patronage intention rather developing an emotional bond is more crucial (Jones & Sasser, 1995). Satisfaction is essential in determining a consumer's future behavioral intention (i.e., re-patronage intention) but may lose its importance as the consumer's re-patronage intention starts to place through some other mechanism and affective commitment is seemingly one of those mechanisms.

Hope is goal oriented whereas self-efficacy is performance oriented. Hope is more related to futuristic behavior, for example, a person's attaining their goal by employing pathways (goal-directed planning) and agency (will) whereas self-efficacy is more associated with the outcome of one's action. Efficacy beliefs should be weighed based on a distinguished evaluation of one's ability which may differ corresponding to the actions of a particular domain along with various levels of tasks demanded in the prevailing condition.

Commitment may be delineated as a strong affection toward carrying a wishful bond with the service firms (Alteren and Tudoran, 2016; Boateng and Narteh, 2016). It can be delineated as the affecting response that a customer bear concerning a service provider. Commitment is basically considered as a significant outcome of favorable relational exchange which

will fetch mutual benefits for both parties. Compelling customers to be committed, the firm needs to employ three value propositions namely economic value (i.e. rebates, price discounts, price bundling), social value like interpersonal relationship with the firm's personnel, and resource value (i.e. brand, uncommon products, tailor-made service) that provide superior value or psychological ease. The power of customers' commitment bank on their perceptual exertions framed by the seller. A person's goal attainment will culminate in positive feelings of satisfaction but it may not imply that he or she will carry the relationship with the brand for a long time. (Jones, Fox, Taylor, & Fabrigar, 2010) has observed that, Affective commitment is the powerful and most significant indicator of discretionary and focal customer feedback and affective commitment usually not or perhaps difficult to develop.

5.2 Theoretical Contributions

The present study makes a significant contribution to academia in both marketing literature as well as literature related to Doctoral studies in several ways. This study has examined the influence of brand equity on consumer re-patronage intention in the online travel context. The study also checked the relationship between brand equity and consumer hope. The study further tested the intermediating role of hope, satisfaction, and commitment in connection between brand equity and re-patronage intention. Moreover, consumer satisfaction and commitment are also being investigated as mediators between consumer hope and re-patronage intention. Finally, the study scrutinized the intervening role of self-efficacy on the association between consumer hope and customer satisfaction and consumer hope and customer commitment. Exploring these distinguished relationships thus warranting significant additions to the academic literature.

The proposed model of the study was developed underneath the affect theory of social exchange, hope theory, and equity theory. While the affect theory of social exchange explains, depending on the social structure and feelings from the exchange and encourages how the actors feel and perceive their collective activity or their shared group association and/or the relationship, few other theories have been undertaken to examine consumer's perceived brand evaluation and their relationship. The present theses also incorporate another theory namely the technology acceptance model, relevant to consumer brand relationships and together could well be described the study's hypothesized relationships. This suggests that the descriptions of the hypothesized relationships from these distinct theoretical viewpoints are not discrete and, instead, collegial with presumption and the manifestation of one theory generating a new viewpoint implanted within the bases of another theory. Therefore, the study exhibits the probability of theoretically consolidating the interpreters and the resulting outcomes of brand equity of online brands and its influence on customer re-patronage intentions of select online travel brands (companies) through empirically testing a comprehensive model.

Affect theory of Social Exchange has been proved to a significant and relevant in describing the consumer-brand relationship and hence it's a significant contribution to explaining the theoretical background of the same.

Online booking has grown significantly in the recent past due to rapid technological flourishment, price transparency, and secure platforms (Nedergaard and Gyrð-Jones, 2013; Denegri-Knott, 2006; Rosqvist and Hiselius, 2016). While the previous studies have hinted the key role of consumer hope in online brand consumption, very few studies attempt to examine its role in the consumer-brand relationship specifically its mediating role between online brand equity and customer re-patronage intention. It is proposed that consumer hope is not able to get attention as it brings new insights into customer views and approaches towards consumer-brand associations and their consequences in the online travel context.

Customers develop a sort of emotional bond with the long-serving online travel portals by every time choosing these portals for booking. When customers book their desired services through these travel portals, they hope that the brands will keep their promises and fulfill their expectations as they are trusted brands. Additionally, prompt and quick responses to their queries and providing effective solutions can make these brands more reliable and trustworthy. These buying results, total satisfaction, commitment and trust to the brand are regarded as purposes of purchase that customer desires to attain. Hope escalates when customers predict that, the images and descriptions shown on the travel agency's website are the exact reflections of a reliable brand in the sense that, they are to receive good deals and services by booking through these websites. The findings of the study ascertained that consumer hope firmly predicted customer satisfaction, and commitment towards the brand(s) while they booked through their online portals. In other words, the more hope the customers possess about the brand that they will deliver the services as expected, the more pleased and attached they would be concerning the brand.

The present study also extends prior research emphasized on the association between satisfaction and re-patronage intentions (Zeithaml, 1988; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Cronin et al., 2000; Wakefield and Baker, 1998; To et al., 2007; Arnold and Reynolds, 2003; Carpenter, 2008), by uncovering support for significant and positive impact of satisfaction on re patronage intentions. Additionally, the study also found that consumer's affective attachment has a profound influence on his/ her re-patronage intention towards the online brands. This finding is consistent with earlier studies indicating a positive relationship between passionate attachment, which is a related conception of affective commitment, and repurchase intent. Hennig-Thurau (2004). By far, these relationships of online travel have not been explored before and thus signifying its worth in Doctoral Theses as well as in marketing literature.

Additionally, the present study extends the online consumer behavior literature by incorporating self-efficacy as an influencer in the association between consumer hope and customer satisfaction and consumer hope and customer commitment. Although previous research has investigated the role of internet self-efficacy on university student's internet attitudes (Peng, Tsai, & Wu, 2006), and the role of computer self-efficacy on the formation of e-satisfaction and re-purchase intention (Lee, Choi, & Kang, 2009), but no studies have so far explored the connection between consumer hope and satisfaction and consumer hope and commitment with self-efficacy as a moderator in the single framework. Self-efficacy indicates they believe that someone can efficiently and effectively perform a specific task (Bandura, 1997). With the proliferation of the internet and rapid evolution of artificial reality, online travel is growing at a faster pace, specifically in the urban areas traveling is becoming a more regular phenomenon as customers undertake travel for various purposes. People with high self-efficacy will be hoping that they will be succeeding in booking any services through online travel portals which is more likely to yield satisfaction. On the contrary, people who are low on self-efficacy will be less hopeful in supplanting their tasks which would be less satisfactory.

5.3 Practitioner Implication

From a practical point of view, the present thesis deals with consumer brand relationship outcomes which will enable managers to better identify customers' requirements for developing and maintaining the relationship with them by comprehending what improved steps will convey to the customer's perceptions about the brand. The present study is also directional for managers by facilitating them in decision-making through understanding the crucial role of brand equity in strengthening consumers' re-patronage intention towards the brand. Further, the present work is pertinent as top brands in the online travel context face new

challenges and stiff competition where innovative pathways can drive economic acceleration, new beginnings, and prosperity of a nation.

This present thesis suggests that online travel agencies should make their website more user-friendly with comprehensive information that enables travellers to book their desired service easily and conveniently. Apart from fulfilling purely economic and functional values managers also need to focus on building a strong emotional connection through affection and closeness with the consumers (Berry, 2000). Brands that build on the strong emotional connection are always stand out and considered powerful and successful. Brands also need to put stress on employing chat boxes, instant messaging through WhatsApp, a 24x7 hotline in response to customers' queries, or quick solutions for any problems. The managers also need to ensure the minimum waiting time for customers to get connected with the representative and obtain the desired solution. Apart from that, while booking, customers leave their personal information. Managers need to be concerned about keeping this information confidential and also ensuring secure and safe transactions. These will attain consumers' trust in the brand. Additionally, managers need to make sure that, customers get a good deal and that their expectations are fulfilled. Overall, ensuring all these aspects can reflect a good online experience for customers. Price is the most crucial factor that every traveller looks into while booking so rather than emphasizing zero convenience fees or using promo codes the online travel brands should come up with an all-inclusive competitive price (Hotel room price or airline ticket price). Moreover, similar to online retailing context, online travel brands must involve and engage their customers in an appealing, encouraging, and pleasurable website scenario to capture competitive edge over other brands.

Moreover, ensuring the same would lighten risk and raise the feelings of hope that the service will be delivered as portrayed by the brand. Massive promotion and branding through various online platforms would enhance consumers' feelings of hope (Icha,2015).

Additionally, it is assumed that, customers are likely to employ their time and effort in probing, assessing, and contrasting online brands as well as pursuing course of actions to achieve virtual buying-oriented goals (Chiu et al., 2014). These paths are likely to embrace searching for online brands to provide lucrative deals, smooth transaction arrangements, and offer combo packages and related service facilities. These techniques will enhance customers' faith in attaining their purposes relating to purchase and successively increases online buying outcomes like satisfaction and commitment.

In this robust and online travel marketplace, companies must have to recognize consumers' pulse and what makes them satisfied. Inculcating core equity values and customer satisfaction ultimately drives customers to become more committed to the brands and in turn improve their patronizing intention. Therefore, online travel agencies should continue to attempt to be more closely connected with the customers, be responsive, preserve personal information and ensure secured transactions to have consistent customer satisfaction.

Online customers' re-patronage intention can be enhanced effectually when the matter related to technology-related personal variation for example self-efficacy and related concern is taken care of. For instance, for customers with impeccable technology anxiety (i.e. aged people), the online travel agencies should emphasize designing easy-to-navigate websites which will encompass comprehensive information to intensify their feelings of hope leading to higher customer satisfaction levels and, ultimately boost their re-patronage intention. The online travel agencies should aim at augmenting customer satisfaction levels through lucrative designing of web site with quality information. However, this suggestion certainly does not

indicate the satisfaction regarding the website systems which is of less importance as the system is crucial for generating real info. The study findings also have insights for OTC's managers whose business goal is to keep their potential online customers, with indications for extended website portion and representation. Customers course of satisfactory and successful booking and buying from the similar site improves efficacy levels as well as reduce the levels of worry with vigorous proficiency expertise's due to the experience raises through self-efficacy (Igbaria & Iivari, 1995), and whose development results in diminishing anxiety (Thatcher & Perrewe, 2002). Hence, with the growing number of existing customers, managers should focus on designing and developing interactive and modernized features for example one-click system of Amazon and the order-tracking system of Federal Express Corporation. The study findings also have ramifications for marketers. The effects of data and information and other content on the website along with system satisfaction that constitutes overall satisfaction may significantly vary in terms of anxiety levels across ages. online travel agencies that emphasize customer gratification for retaining should strive to classify customers assuming their efficacy levels and should roll out marketing activities for different group. For instance, a marketing scheme may be designed for persons with lower self-efficacy and higher anxiety levels with emphasis on reliable information, more personalized characteristics, and relevance to augment their satisfaction levels which may ultimately result in their re-patronizing intention.

5.4 Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Research Directions

The objective of the current thesis was to examine the re-patronage intention of consumers in the online travel context in India. The study also sought to scrutinize the association between brand equity and consumer hope. Likewise, the study tested the mediating role of consumer satisfaction and commitment in the association between brand equity and consumer re-patronage intention in parallel mediation settings and check their (i.e., satisfaction

and commitment) mediating impact on consumer hope and re-patronage intention. Additionally, the study also attempted to examine the intervening role of self-efficacy on the relationship between consumer hope and satisfaction as well as consumer hope and commitment.

To establish the aforementioned research objectives, the study proposed seven direct, five mediating, and two moderating hypotheses. The study findings suggest a significant impact of brand equity of online companies on consumer re-patronage intention. The result also implies the significant effect of brand equity on consumer hope. The findings further indicate that; all the mediators have a partial mediation impact in respect of their relationship between the constructs. The results further confirm that self-efficacy acts as a potential moderator in the relationship the consumer hope has with satisfaction however the study finds no moderating impact of self-efficacy on the association between consumer hope and commitment.

While the current research has noteworthy implications, it contains certain limitations and offers some avenues for future research.

The respondents of this study were chosen based on their willingness and availability thus there could be a bias in the selection of the respondents.

The study is quantitative in nature. Future studies may conduct by applying the qualitative method or may collaborate Qual-Quant technique (Both quantitative and qualitative methods) to shade more deep insight into the study and to generate more comprehensive results.

Privacy and security are the two most important aspects that raise trust in the brand's website. While comparing with several western countries, the online travel business is at a nascent stage in India hence more emphasis should be given to these two aspects that the present study overlooks. Future research may take up these two issues and conduct a fruitful study.

Online reviews or eWOM are a significant aspect in determining consumer online purchase behavior. While reserving a hotel online, consumers frequently come across the issue of uncertainty regarding the hotel's quality on the list (Agag and El-Masry 2016; Shin et al. 2018). Hence, they particularly search for a product or service-oriented indications for example brand, features, price, and online reviews before finalizing the booking decision (Bigné, William, and Soria-Olivas 2020; Ert and Fleischer 2019; Kim et al. 2019). Future studies can incorporate eWOM or online reviews as a potential mediator.

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Appendix- I

Questionnaire

I, **Salahuddin Ahmed** pursuing Ph.D. in School of Management Studies, University of Hyderabad. As part of my study, I need to collect Data in the form of given Questions below and collect opinions of the select travel web sites. All questions are being measured using 5-point rating scale and respondent has to tick or check (✓) appropriate number as their opinion for respective question. **Responses will be used for academic purpose only.**

I humbly request you to give your valuable opinions and fill-up the entire questionnaire.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

1) Respondent's Name (OPTIONAL):

2) Gender: A) Male ☐ B) Female ☐

3) Age: A) 20-29 ☐ B) 30-39 ☐ C) 40-49 ☐ D) 50 & Above ☐

4) City: A) New Delhi ☐ B) Mumbai ☐ C) Hyderabad ☐ D) Kolkata ☐
E) Others ☐

5) Occupation: A) Business Person ☐ B) Self-employed ☐ C) Homemaker ☐
D) Retired ☐ E) Government Employee ☐ F) Student ☐ G) Private Employee ☐
H) Others ☐

6) Qualification: A) Matriculation and below ☐ B) Higher Secondary ☐
C) Under Graduate ☐ D) Graduate ☐ E) Post Graduate ☐ F) Others ☐

Next Few Questions are about your travel experience

7) Which is your preferred website for booking service(s)

A) Make my Trip ☐ B) Yatra ☐ C) Clear trip ☐ D) Ease my trip ☐
E) Ixigo ☐ F) others: ☐

8) Please indicate the frequency of travels:

A) Once in a month ☐ B) Bi monthly ☐ C) Quarterly ☐ D) Half Yearly ☐
E) Yearly ☐

9) Purpose of your Travel

A) Business ☐ B) Tourism ☐ C) Pilgrimage ☐ D) Leisure ☐
E) Medical ☐ F) Others: ☐

10) Travel Destination

A) Domestic ☐ B) International ☐

11) Your preferred way of travelling (Domestic)

A) Bus ☐ B) Train ☐ C) Airlines ☐

12) Your choice of hotel while travel

A) Budget ☐ B) Economy ☐ C) Two Star ☐ D) Three Star ☐
E) Four Star ☐

13) How often do you visit travel website?

A) Very Often ☐ B) Often ☐ C) Sometimes ☐ D) Rarely ☐
E) Never ☐

Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; - (SDA) 2 = Disagree; - (DA) 3 = Neutral; - (N)
4 = Agree; - (A) 5 = Strongly Agree; - (SA)

	SDA	DA	N	A	SA
Brand Equity of an online Firm	1	2	3	4	5
Emotional Connection					
1. I feel connected with the type of people who usually book through this web site.					
2. I feel like I am attached with this online travel company as it really cares about me.					
3. In my opinion this online travel company really knows me.					
Online experience					
1. This online travel company's web site provides easy to follow search paths.					
2. I never got distracted when navigating through this web site.					
3. I obtained the necessary information I wanted without any delay.					
Responsive Service Nature					
1. This online travel company is very keen on instant reply to customer needs.					
2. This OTC's web site provides visitors the option to call and also offers sms facility.					
3. This online travel company is reliable for their Promises.					
Trust					
1. I trust this OTC for keeping my personal information safe.					
2. I can rely on this OTC in doing transaction.					
3. This online travel company's website is credible to me.					
4. I trust the service information provided in this travel website.					
Fulfilment					
1. I got my desired service(s) from this OTC's web site					
2. The service was delivered within least time.					

3. The service was transparent and no hidden or extra cost was incurred later.					
Hope					
1. Even when others get discouraged I know I can find a way to book the desired service through this travel web site					
2. My past experience have prepared me well to choose and book the desired service through this OTC web site.					
3. I hope that this this travel web site through which I booked will benefit me.					
4. I hope that this website through which I booked lead to obtain the desired service.					
5. The travel web site through which I booked is ideal					
Satisfaction					
1. I think I did the right thing by booking through this travel web site.					
2. I am satisfied with my decision to visit this travel web site					
3. I feel that my encounter with this travel website has been pleasant					
4. My choice of booking through this travel web site was wise one					
Commitment					
1. This travel web site has a great deal of personal meaning for me.					
2. I feel a strong sense of identification with this travel web site.					
3. The level of my emotional attachment to this travel web site is high.					
Self-Efficacy					
1. I could use travel web site only if there is any help facility for assistance.					
2. I could use this travel web site if someone else had helped me to get started.					
3. I could use travel web site if someone showed how to do it first.					
Re-Patronage Intentions					
1. I look forward to book from this travel web site in the future.					
2. I always intend to visit this website again.					
3. No matter how often I visit this travel website, I always look forward to book services from this site					

*****THANK YOU*****

The impact of Brand Equity and Consumer Hope on Consumer's Re-Patronage Intention – A study on Online Travel

by Salahuddin Ahmed



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What do online reviews communicate? An evidence from emerging economy

Online reviews

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Abstract

Purpose – Online brand is becoming a popular and major gateway for consumers for booking various services specifically when they travel for several purposes. The present study aims to explore whether exposure to two separate yet similar modes of communication intervene consumer's brand trust and their subsequent loyalty intention toward the brand. The study further aims to investigate whether consumer's price consciousness has any influence on association between brand trust and brand loyalty in the process of decision-making.

Design/methodology/approach – The present study follows a different approach to data collection. The data have been retrieved from online brand (Oyo) page on Facebook through Google Form application. In all, 289 useable responses were retrieved from the travelers aged between 18 and 30. Structural equation modeling using SPSS 25.0 and Amos 26.0 has been applied to examine the effects of brand communication and online reviews on brand loyalty through brand trust.

Findings – Empirical evidence supports that even after having strong brand communication, online reviews play a crucial role in consumer's brand loyalty through brand trust. The study further reveals that price consciousness acts as a significant moderator in the relationship between consumer's brand trust and brand loyalty.

Practical implications – The current research contributes to the online brand and marketing knowledge by empirically showing the pertinence of consumer-brand relationship in an online brand context through a parsimonious model by examining how the two distinct mechanisms of communication influences consumer brand trust and loyalty intention.

Originality/value – The parsimonious framework of consumer-brand relationship adds to explicating the dual marketing challenges of communication and to draw a positive consumer response (i.e. consumer brand loyalty). The study attempts to examine the impact of two distinct yet identical modes of communication which facilitate shaping consumer brand trust that reinforce the strategic value of the circumstance and equips it with solid theoretical structure within an endeavor of the strategic significance of online brand managers.

Keywords Brand loyalty, Online reviews, Brand trust, Price consciousness, Brand communication, Online brand

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Recently, booking through online travel portals has achieved a remarkable height. Today's consumers are extensively looking into online booking platforms (Expedia, Oyo rooms, make my trip, etc.) to reserve hotel rooms, tour packages, booking restaurants and flights (Liu and Zhang, 2014; Team, 2016). The rapid surge in the Internet and widespread usage of smartphones in India has accelerated hotel booking through an online platform and its practices in the recent past. In 2018, expenditure on accommodation through online booking in India was about 26%, which was around 33% in 2021. The various initiatives and measures taken by major players have opened many avenues for this online accommodation booking market segment, which is projected to grow remarkably over the years. This widespread use of the Internet and smartphones enables organizations to serve innovatively

