

Comparative Analysis of State Tourism Websites of India: An Application of WEBQUAL Framework

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ABSTRACT

After globalization and internet revolution there is drastic change in the pattern of travel as well as in the way people enquires or gathers information about a particular destination. The whole world has become accessible at a point of click. Today's generation is more technology and internet friendly. Around 80% of the perspective tourists start their research on internet. Their decision making is influenced by the information available on the internet. Therefore, lot of researchers and marketers have paid attention to the online travel portals. Government of different states have also realised the importance of this and they are spending huge resources not only for designing but also for updating their websites. An effective website should attract the customers, builds positive image of the destination and finally should contributes in positive decision making about the destination. Different researchers have developed different parameters for the evaluation of the website like usability, accessibility, quick response to the queries, attractiveness, information quality etc. The purpose of this study is to analyse and compare the state tourism websites of India based on the 11 criteria selected for evaluating website. Twelve states were selected and the study was carried out between March 2014- Sept 2014 by two independent researchers. It was concluded that Gujarat, Kerala and Karnataka are ranked excellent in the 11 criteria's as they have outstanding information quality, ease of understanding, emotional appeal, visual image, innovativeness, customer service etc. whereas Goa is ranked poor among the 12 states as it lacks in providing relevant and necessary information and is poor in terms of other selected parameters. The paper also discusses various strategic directions for state tourism websites.

Keywords: *Tourism, Website Evaluation, State Government Portals.*

Introduction

Tourism is a social activity which is influenced by the curiosity of human nature to travel or to explore new things. Tourism industry is one of the most progressive industries which have the maximum potential of employment generation and contribution towards the GDP across the globe. Travel and tourism contribution equates to 9.5% of the total economy GDP, one in eleven of worlds total jobs, 4.4% of total investment and 5.4% of worlds export (WTTC, 2014). Tourism is not a new phenomenon. People are travelling from ancient times but there is a change in their

pattern of travel. Earlier, only a few daring people indulged in travelling since it was considered burdensome because of lack of knowledge and information of the place. In travelling one should be aware of the place of travel, culture, people climate etc. thus making tourism an information intensive industry.

Another characteristic of tourism industry which makes it dubious is its intangible nature and this can be minimized by providing information via commercial brochures, tourism website etc. Tourists like other customers seek information before travelling and today in the era of internet around 80% of the prospective tourist starts their research on internet, particularly the tourism websites of the place of travel. An effective and well maintained website is the need of the hour. Therefore state governments have realized the urgency and need of maintaining their state tourism website and hence are spending a huge amount and resources for designing a good website.

After globalization and the technological revolution of 1990's particularly the arrival of internet, the scope of tourism has expanded, which further has brought many new opportunities as well as challenges for the tourism and hospitality industry. Internet and tourism goes hand in hand. Most of people consult online before they plan their travel. Internet is beneficial for both customers as well as suppliers as it is cost effective, geographical boundary less, generates high revenue but still very little research is done on evaluating the parameters for effective tourism websites in India. So it is very important to study the parameters which makes a website effective and helps to promote destination by attracting customers. The purpose of this study is to analyse and compare the state tourism websites of India.

Literature Review

The decision of the tourist is influenced by two factors internal experiences i.e their own past experience and the external information which we get on internet, websites or online blogs, brochures etc. (Peterson, Balasubramanian & Bronenberg, 1997). After the launch of E-tourism in 1980's there is a change in tourism globally as an industry (Porter, 2001). E-Commerce is more efficient and performs the same functions as of the traditional markets (Malone et al., 1987).

Since tourism involves networking and cooperation between different enterprises and business, internet plays an important role to connect them and work in synergy. Moreover many guests/ tourists interaction are now handled through internet (Sevrani & Elmazi, 2008). World Wide Web is one of the important service provided by the internet that has great effect on tourism industry (Burger, 1997; Clyde & Landfried, 1995).

With the increasing use of internet it has become very important for the countries to maintain a well designed and competent website (Kaplanidon & Vogt,

2004). A well designed and maintained website will reach to larger number of people which will be more beneficial for the businesses (English Tourism Council, 2002; Rita, 2000). Website can be used as a marketing tool, it increases the brand identity and also helps in market research (Armstrong & Kotler, 2009). The prime role of a website is to provide complete information of the product and company to its consumer (Hallerman, 2009). Now with the help of tourism websites, people can easily have access to all the information like accommodation, transportation, activities etc. They can get in touch with the suppliers and service providers directly which brings down the intermediary cost. Hence it becomes cost effective and time saving (Antonioli, Magda & Baggio, 2002). Direct contact making, quick research and response, low distribution cost, and opportunity to buy the best deal by comparing the prices are some of the important factors, why people prefer to use internet over traditional purchasing (Eisenberg & Eisenberg, 2005).

The success of website is dependent on its functionality and usability (Lu & Yeung, 1988). The characteristics of website which makes it an effective website are:- clear, adequate and updated information, user friendly and easy to understand, quick response to queries and feedbacks (Hamil & Gregory, 1997). Factors crucial for the success of tourism websites are- the provision of maps, visa information, do's and don'ts of the place, information about currency, distances, culture, weather etc and also the availability of sufficient photographs and videos (Zhou & DeSantis, 2005). The tourism websites should not be static, boring or dull instead they should be innovative and attractive (Lazariuis et al., 2002; Albert et al., 2004).

Some of the other success factors for E-commerce include-ease of use, support from the management, linking the websites with good search engines, ensuring that the website meets the needs of the people, provision of reliable and updated information (AI-Mashari & AI-Sanad, 2002). Usability, accessibility, quick response to queries and feedbacks through mail or online chats, attractive website using animation, images and videos, provision of customized packages, online completeness i.e providing all the required information with the facility of online booking and payment and ensuring security of the payments are some of the critical factors for evaluating a website (Park & Gretzel, 2007).

Different researchers have felt the need and importance of evaluating the websites. Website evaluation can be described as a process of understanding the user requirements and ensuring the website provides relevant and updated information which is helpful for the users (US Dept of Health and Human Services, 2002). The websites must not be overloaded with the information because excessive information can create a lot of confusion can drop the quality of decision taken by the people (Biswas, 2004).

Parameters for effective websites

David (1995) identified eight parameters for the evaluation of websites: Authority, information, organization approaches, text format, information source, scope and expounding, technical element, price and availability, user support system. Besty Richmond (1996) put "10C" indexes for evaluation i.e content, credibility, critical thinking, copyrights, citation, continuity, censorship, connectivity, comparability and content.

Further Harris (2010) recognised eight standards for website evaluation- "The existence of quality control or not, readers object and purpose, timeliness, rationality and doubtful areas like false statement objectiveness, world view, quotations". Jim (1998) put forward five evaluation criteria- "accuracy, authority, timeliness, objectiveness and comprehensiveness"

Barnes & Vidgen (2007) prepared a questionnaire called 'WEBQUAL' to evaluate websites in which the questions were divided into 5 groups- "usability, empathy, design, information and trust". According to Zi Lu and Jie Lu (2002), websites are evaluated on following basis: a) the extent to which a website fulfils customers need and answers all the queries. This includes the information and the content of the website not only about the organisation but also about the product and services, the provision of online transaction and also the innovation used in services and website. B) How much cost / money is need to operate and maintain a website- how much cost effective it is. c) To what extent it has satisfied a customer in terms of security, cost, value, demand, information, reliability etc. D) What is the success rate of a website- it is based upon factors such as ease of use, easy to search, updated information, design of website.

WTO (2008) in conjunction with the European travel commission stated that an effective quality website should be Accessible, easy to use, and trustworthy. Information such as contact us, about us, privacy policy and terms of the site which helps to convey the security in website should be mentioned. Website should provide tools such as planning trips, routes and offers customised travel plan to meet the need of travellers. Website should provide and combine different services like information, contact, transaction etc.

Chowdhary & Sharma (2014) have discussed the importance of websites for DMO's. Further they have identified the variables which are crucial for the success of websites and they are: Quality of web content, Website Interactivity, Ease of Navigation, Visitor no. Tracking, Multi-Lingual websites, providing testimonials. However they only analyse the presence or absence of these parameters while evaluating the websites.

Loiacono, Watson & Goodhue (2007) identified 14 constructs described as following:

- a) Information Quality- One of the characteristics of tourism industry is its intangible nature which makes the decision making process difficult for the customers. According to Hanna J.R.P and Miller RJ (1997) Information creates an image in the mind of customers and helps in the purchase decision by reducing the risk involved, hence making it tangible. The information provided on the websites should be accurate, relevant and updated (Katerattanakul & Siau, 1999; Strong et al., 1997; Wang & Strong, 1996; Baraoudi & Orninkowski, 1988; Bailey & Pearson, 1983).
- Accuracy- Information should be reliable, free from errors and correct in all details. The authenticity of the information will help to built in the trust and will reduce the negative experiences of online purchase.
 - Relevant- Data on the website should provide solution to the problems of customers. This will contribute in satisfying the queries of the customers. It should not consist of any irrelevant data which can complicate the decision making process (Kalodikis & Yannakopoulos, 2008).
 - Updated- The website should contain the most recent information which enables the customers to know the current happenings and developments of the place. The new information should be posted timely to maintain the trust of people.

Thus a good information quality should be the major criteria while designing a website.

- b) Functional fit to task- This means the information and facilities available on the websites should support the user needs and requirements (Franz & Robey, 1984; Good Hue & Thompson, 1995; Su et al., 1998).
- c) Tailored Communication- Every customer has different and unique needs, so exact information is needed to fulfil their needs rather than just general information provided on the sites (Ghose & Dou, 1998; Steuer, 1992). Tailored communication means the provision of customising their own package. To cater to the individual needs of the customers, personalised attention should be given which can be done making the website interactive (chats and emails) (Park & Gretzel, 2007)
- d) Trust- A website would be considered as effective when a person gets reliable information with an assurance of security thus, a good website should take care of the privacy policy of customers so that they feel safe for performing transactions and for sharing other information (Gruman, 1999, Doney and Cannon, 1997 ;Hoffman et al., 1999).
- e) Intuitive operations –A website should be easy to use and learn for simple operations Davis, 1989; Benbunan-Fich, 2001).
- f) Response time- Time taken to respond to the customer queries is also an

important factor which creates a positive impact in the minds of customers. As poor response time can lead the customers to look for alternate options (Kaynama, 2000; Xie, Wang & Goh, 1998; Kettinger & Lee 1997; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988; Shand, 1999; Machlis, 1999 ; Seybold, 1998). Quick reply to mails or the facility of online chat will help to generate interest of the customers; they will spend more time on the site which can have a positive impact on their decision.

- g) Ease of understanding- All the people are not internet savvy. Thus a website should be designed in such a manner that it is easily accessed by all the age groups. It should be user friendly and easy to understand, the font should be clear and easy to read and it should have a proper navigation so that everybody is able to search the information they are looking for (Kalodikis & Yannakopoulos, 2008). Ease of use can be explained as: a) How convenient is it for customer to search and look for information (Kaynama & Black, 2000) b) How fast it is to get information that is speed of downloads (Cox & Dale, 2001) c) How efficiently it facilitates customer transaction (Kim & Lee, 2004; Novak et al., 2000)
- h) Visual appeal- A websites visual appeal affects the customers in how he perceives it, how he uses it and how he remembers it. An attractive website creates a good first impression and grabs the attention of customers (Park & Gretzel, 2007). A boring and dull website can act as a barrier for further information search. A website should provide pleasing affect to the visitor. They should enjoy browsing website. According to Liu & Arnett for a successful website visual appeal is an important criterion as it makes browsing pleasurable (Liu & Arnett, 2000).
- i) Innovativeness: Customers always look for creativity and uniqueness in their product. Innovation influences the minds of customers positively by increasing credibility, trustworthiness and attractiveness (Aaker, 2007; Keller & Aaker, 1995). Innovation in both hardware and software is must for a website to keep it dynamic and updated (Buhalis & Law, 2008).
- j) Emotional appeal: Emotional appeal targets the emotions of customers and hence builds some kind of connection with the providers. Emotions are gateway to the customer wallet. More a customer is involved emotionally more will be his willingness of purchase. A well applied emotional website design converts an ordinary website to brand loyal website. Emotions always influence customer decision. A website should attract customer emotionally. Many researchers have done empirical studies and found that emotional attitude of a visitor influence their revisit (Chuan & Chuan, 2007).

- k) **Consistent image:** Visual image of a website attracts and impress visitors. Even minute details speak to customers subconsciously and improve their experience. So a customer while browsing the website should not come across different size, colour, and angles which can cause distraction and hence reduces their interest. A website converts the intangible component of service industry into tangible one. It act as physical place where a visitors interacts. It should be non confusing and the content should be constructed consistently eg. Colour, font size, font design, graphics etc. (Kai, 2002).
- l) **Relative Advantage:** In the world of completion one should overpowers its competitors. So for a website to be effective it should be better than other portals providing same information as well as it should be convenient than other source of means providing same information (Seybold, 1998; Rogers, 1982).
- m) **Online completeness:** A customer always looks for convenient, reliable and time saving method of transaction. A good website should provide a provision for online purchase in an easy and user friendly manner. Satisfaction of customer is prime motive of website which depends upon information and the extent upon which a customer can complete online transaction (Kim & Kim , 2004). Customer should feel safe and secure while doing online transaction and this is the important criteria for website owner to design safe and comfortable environment for website (Chen, 2006).
- n) **Customer service:** While making a decision customer comes across many queries and problems which should be addressed quickly in an appropriate manner. A good customer service positively engages the customer and builds good relationship by continuously keeping in touch with them. This can be done by quick replies to their queries or online chats which will lead the customer to spend more time on the site and will increase the scope of purchasing from that particular firm. Li-Yi Ma & Yi Yang (2013) had identified customer service that is all the services which customer gets while visiting a particular website as an important criterion for evaluation of website.

Research Methodology

The study was carried out between March 2014- Sept 2014 by two independent researchers. Based on the literature review 11 criteria were selected for evaluating website (Loiacono, Watson & Goodhue, 2007). Each researcher independently rated them on the scale of 1-5 based on the content analysis.

Scale for rating: 1-very poor; 2-poor; 3-average; 4-good; 5-excellent

A total of 12 websites were chosen on the basis of mentioned statistics, 3 from each zone (east, west, north, south India.) which are mentioned below with URL links:

S. No.	Sates	Official website	Tourist arrivals(2013)	Domestic International
1)	J&K	http://www.jktourism.org/	13600000	60,845
2)	H.P	http://himachaltourism.gov.in/	14715586	414249
3)	Haryana	http://haryanatourism.gov.in/	6216724	220241
4)	Rajasthan	http://www.rajasthantourism.gov.in/	30298150	1437162
5)	Gujarat*	http://www.gujarattourism.com/	27412517	6650000
6)	Goa	http://www.goatourism.gov.in/	2629151	492322
7)	Kerala	https://www.keralatourism.org/	10857811	858143
8)	T.N	http://www.tamilnadutourism.org/	244232487	3990490
9)	Karnataka	http://www.karnatakaturism.org/	98010140	636378
10)	Odisha *	http://www.orissatourism.gov.in/	90,53,086	64719
11)	Bihar	http://www.bihartourism.gov.in/	21588306	765835
12)	Sikkim	http://sikkimtourism.gov.in/	576749	31698

*In Gujarat, the foreign tourist arrivals of 2012 are taken because the data of 2013 was not available.

*Similarly, In Odisha the tourist arrivals of 2012 are taken.

Findings

States/ Parameters		J&K	H.P	Haryana	Rajasthan	Gujarat	Goa	Kerala	TN	Karnataka	Bihar	Odisha	Sikkim
Information Quality	R1	3	4	3	5	5	2	5	4	5	4	4	4
	R2	2	4	3	4	5	2	5	4	5	3	4	4
Functional fit to task	R1	3	4	3	4	5	2	5	4	5	3	3	3
	R2	2	4	3	4	5	2	5	4	5	3	4	4
Tailored communication	R1	2	3	3	4	4	1	5	2	5	3	3	2
	R2	2	3	3	4	4	1	4	1	4	3	4	2
Response time *	R1	3	3	3	4	4	2	5	2	5	2	3	3
	R2	3	3	3	4	4	2	5	3	4	2	3	3
Ease of understanding	R1	3	4	4	5	5	2	5	4	5	4	4	4
	R2	3	5	4	4	5	2	5	4	5	4	4	4
Visual appeal	R1	3	5	3	5	3	2	5	3	3	4	3	3
	R2	3	4	3	5	3	2	5	3	3	4	3	3
Innovativeness	R1	2	4	3	4	4	2	5	5	5	4	3	3
	R2	2	4	2	4	5	2	5	4	5	3	3	3
Emotional appeal	R1	3	4	3	5	5	2	5	3	5	3	3	4
	R2	3	4	4	4	4	2	4	3	5	3	3	3
Consistent image	R1	3	4	3	5	5	2	5	4	5	4	3	4
	R2	4	5	4	4	5	3	5	4	4	4	4	4
Online completeness	R1	3	4	3	4	5	2	3	4	5	3	3	3
	R2	3	4	4	4	5	2	3	4	5	3	4	4
Customer service	R1	3	3	3	5	5	2	5	3	5	3	4	4
	R2	3	3	3	5	5	3	5	3	4	3	4	4

Results & Analysis

On the first parameter i.e. Information quality while evaluating the websites both the researchers have found that Kerala, Gujarat and Karnataka have excellent information quality as they provide all the necessary and required information in accurate and updated manner such as information about place, accommodation, transportation, how to proceed for bookings, do's and don'ts, route maps and so on followed by Odisha, T.N, Sikkim, H.P and Rajasthan which have good information quality. H.P do not have toll free number moreover they have not mentioned any tour packages, In Rajasthan there was error while searching for package tours, Odisha and Sikkim do not provide option to browse in different languages, Do not have query form and also don't have testimonials or provision where customer can read previous reviews. Tamil Nadu translates information only in two languages and testimonial does not open. Information quality of Haryana and Bihar are average as Haryana does not provide packages as well as lacks in providing sufficient accommodation information. In Bihar the information on the home page does not open properly although there is a good amount of information but is not easily accessed as in the home page the main Plan icon does not open. J&K and Goa are rated poor in information quality. J&K does not provide much information about Jammu and Leh it only emphasis on Kashmir. In accommodation it fails to provide any information about Leh. Packages are of Kashmir only, do not provide information about any permissions required or any travel tips. Goa website does not provide information about what to do / see / activities and accommodation in Goa.

Similarly Kerala, Gujarat and Karnataka have excellent functional fit to task as they provide detailed information about the place, accommodation, what to do and what not to do, ancillary services like ATM , Police, emergency contacts, itineraries and so on. Rajasthan, T.N and H.P. provides full information about the state, policy, programmes but do not provide package tour therefore is rated good in functional fit to task. Odisha and Sikkim have good functional fit to task as they provide all the detailed information about the place with important do's and dont's but Sikkim lacks in providing query form so that one could customise their trip. Haryana and Bihar scored average in functional fit to task as Haryana does not provide online packages and have few places for accommodation where as in the website of Bihar many links do not open. J&K, Goa are rated poor in functional fit to task as they failed to provide detailed and complete information about the places e.g. J&K does not provide accommodation facilities in Leh, Goa lacks in providing any information about what to see and do in Goa,

On the basis of our findings we conclude that Karnataka and Kerala have an excellent provision for tailored communication. In Karnataka there is option for phone number, email, comment form for individual query for example

accommodation, wildlife safaris, tour package and tourism department. It also has blogs which can help to customize the package on the experience of other travellers. Kerala provides toll free number, email, query form and also message board which have replies of queries posted by the customers and this can be accessed by everyone. Odisha, Rajasthan and Gujarat are rated good in tailored communication. Odisha provides toll free phone number, package tours, query form but the information is insufficient as compared to Kerala and Karnataka. Rajasthan has toll free number, query form, email but the customer care executive speaks only in Hindi language and moreover the direction to contact toll free number is also written in Hindi language on the home page of the website. Gujarat tourism website has their own customised packages with prices and they also provide toll free number and email on which we can call and talk to customer executives. Tailored communication of Haryana, HP and Bihar are average as in Haryana tourism website have live chat options, email, query form. In H.P there is option for email but they don't respond to query. J&k and Sikkim have poor tailored communication. There is no live chat option. In J&K tourism website the toll free number on home page is incorrect, there is no query form for tours or packages, no provision for online chats. In Sikkim there is no contact us tab on home page and when you contact on phone number which are also not toll free they direct you to call another number for further queries. Goa, T.N are very poor in tailored communication as in Goa there is no query form, no toll free number, no contact us tab on home page, no option for online chats. T.N also does not provide any of the option to customize the tour.

On evaluating tourism websites we found that Kerala and Karnataka have excellent response time as they respond quickly to the emails and phone calls. Kerala replies immediately on the message board followed by Rajasthan and Gujarat who have good response time as they answer to phone calls immediately and help you to access the website and customise package. J&K, H.P, Haryana, Sikkim and Odisha are rated average as in tourism website of J&K the toll free number on home page is incorrect but they respond to phone number mentioned on other pages and help the customer. H.P. also responds to email and phone number but not immediately. Haryana tourism website has the option for live chat but they do not respond in the chat. Sikkim also responds to toll free number but direct you further for more information. Odisha does not respond to phone call they only acknowledge the call by sending a message, but they respond by sending email to the query. Goa, T.N and Bihar have poor response time as there is no toll free number and query forms are available on the website. One has to look for contact details and the phone calls are not answered.

Gujarat, Kerala, Rajasthan, H.P and Karnataka are excellent on ease of understanding as they have mentioned every important information in the form of

sub tabs on the home page. So everything is easily accessible. Haryana, T.N, Bihar, Odisha and Sikkim are rated good in this parameter as the information mentioned in these sites are not as clear as in the websites which are rated excellent. In Sikkim and Tamil Nadu the 'Contact us' tab is not mentioned on the home page. In Bihar everything is systematically presented by it, the map of Bihar, information about individual places i.e the virtual tours, where to stay, how to reach etc. but at the same time many of the tabs do not open. J&K is rated average because the information is presented in a very haphazard manner. Goa is poor in this parameter since the important information is not available on the website.

Rajasthan and Kerala have excellent Visual appeal. These websites are very creatively designed and grab the attention of customers at once. They are colourful and pleasing to eyes, consist of videos and images, animations, clear and fancy fonts and no chaos on the homepage. Thus, encouraging the customers to browse further. H.P. and Bihar are good in visual appeal as they have an attractive websites, but in Bihar because of its technical issues, the customers may lose interest and look for alternatives. J&K, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Sikkim, Gujarat and Karnataka have an average visual appeal. Their websites do not have anything eye catching and are like any ordinary websites. Goa has a poor visual appeal because the website is not just ordinary but also lacks the basic information tabs.

Kerala, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are rated excellent in terms of innovativeness. The website of Kerala has all the required information on the homepage with a very systematic presentation. They have message board which consists of the queries asked by the users with the detailed suggestions. They have the facility of virtual tours which may interest a lot of tourist. Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have introduced their own mobile apps. Now the customers can access all the information through their mobile only. Karnataka tourism website have blogs to share the experience of different travellers, Media to make the customer aware of the international magazines in which their state tourism is promoted and mentioned, calendar which shows all the events of the month, Travel guide which tells about minute details of the state like coffee shops, ambulance, police, air charters, Std codes etc . Rajasthan, H.P and Bihar websites are good. They also have the facility of virtual tours as in Kerala. Haryana, Sikkim and Odisha are average followed by J&K and Goa which are rated poor because of no innovative features.

Rajasthan, Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka have excellent emotional appeal as they have good combination of written and pictorial information and lot of innovation in providing and presenting the information, which keeps the customer attached to them as they browse the website. H.P, Haryana and Sikkim are good in this parameter as Haryana has colourful website to attract, with the basic information and Sikkim has lot of information as per the requirement of customers to keep them

attached to the website. H.P. has videos, pictorial information to attract the customer. T.N, Bihar, Odisha and J&K have average emotional appeal as they have information but is not presented in attractive manner as done by other websites. In Bihar they have made the website attractive with virtual tours, picture, maps but dead links reduces the emotional connection between the customers and website. Goa is poor in emotional appeal as it does not provide much of information and also this is not in an eye catching manner.

Rajasthan, Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka, H.P are excellent in this parameter as the information is presented in an attractive manner. The icons / tabs can be easily seen and searched. While searching any information there is no distraction for the customer. Haryana, T.N., Odisha, Sikkim, Bihar and J&K have good consistent image as there is less distraction while searching for the information and the required information is easily searched and viewed. Goa lacks in consistent image as in Goa there are lots of tabs on the home page which are not relevant to the customers i.e tenders, circulars etc.

Gujarat and Karnataka websites are rated excellent in online completeness because they have the provision to book online accommodation and online packages. Karnataka has the provision to book the local taxi, bus, trains, travel portals, golden chariot luxury train. H.P, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu are also good as they provide the facility to book accommodation and transport services online. J&K, Bihar, Haryana, Kerala, Odisha and Sikkim are rated average and Goa is rated poor. J&K does not provide the facility to book hotels for Ladakh. Kerala website provides all the information about the packages and hotels but does not provide the facility to book online. Odisha and Sikkim websites do not have the facility to book packages online. Bihar provide facility to book online buses, hotels and cars but no option for online tour booking Goa do not have no provision for online bookings.

Gujarat, Rajasthan, Kerala and Karnataka provide excellent customer service. Kerala and Karnataka quickly respond to email and phone calls whereas Gujarat and Rajasthan respond excellently on phone to help the customer in browsing the website, choosing the package and customising the package. Sikkim and Odisha also have good customer service as they respond to the email and phone call but deviates to other offices which is time consuming. Tamil Nadu, J&K, H.P, Bihar and Haryana are average in customer service as some of the phone numbers are incorrect and they take time to reply to the email in comparison to Kerala and Karnataka. Goa has poor customer service as it does not mention number to contact and do not revert to email.

Conclusion

Websites plays an important role in decision making and act as a marketing tool. Government should give more emphasis on creating, maintaining and

promoting the websites of their states. In above study, 12 states are taken at random 3 from each zone: east, west, north and south and they are evaluated on 11 parameters. The result showed that the tourism websites of Gujarat, Kerala and Karnataka are on top of ranking as they are rated excellent on almost all the evaluating parameters. These websites are designed outstandingly, followed by Rajasthan and H.P. The above study also discussed the evaluating parameters individually for each state. This can be used by the State Government to compare their web portals with others and further help to make necessary amendments. As more and more travellers now a day's rely on websites for their travel decisions this study can help the State government to design their websites on the parameters that can help the travellers to access and understand their websites in easy manner, to provide all the necessary information required by the travellers in appropriate and authentic way so that they can make prompt decision and further attract more travellers.

Based on our findings we recommend that State Government should act collaboratively with different hotels, travel agents, transport providers, ancillary service providers such as police, hospitals, fire emergency etc to provide information about them on their website so, as to make website more tourist friendly. Different people from different countries understand different languages. Translation facility can help to reduce this gap. So a tourism website should provide provision of multi-language translation. All the important and necessary information should be available and accessed easily so they should be clearly available on home page. In the era of ICT online completeness is very important part of a website. Travellers usually look for authentic, simple process for online transactions. Government should also provide provision for such. A person sitting miles away do not have an idea of exact distance, time to travel from one place to another, weather condition, do's and don'ts, permits required. All the necessary information should be provided on the website so that traveller would not face any inconvenience and would further build their trust. No one likes to read information in the form of long paragraphs, so, much attention should be given to the presentation of information. It should be short and simple, in attractive manner such as eye catching pictures, soothing music, visual tours etc. Testimonials, online chats, news boards enhance trustworthiness, creditability of a website so government should pay attention to this also. This study has some limitations which gives us an opportunity for further research. Only 12 tourism websites of different states were evaluated, with the evaluation of more tourism websites the results may vary. Further the study is qualitative in nature with the thought reflexivity of the researchers; more relevant conclusions can be drawn with the quantitative evaluations

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