

# Awareness and Usage of Online Travel Booking Platforms among College Students in Coimbatore City

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## Abstract

This study investigates the awareness and usage patterns of online travel booking platforms among college students in India. With the rapid growth of digital technologies and the increasing penetration of smart phones, the travel booking landscape has transformed significantly. This paper explores the factors influencing students' choices, their preferences for specific platforms, and the challenges they face while using these services. Data was collected through structured questionnaires distributed to 50 students from various colleges in Coimbatore. The analysis reveals key trends in platform preferences, booking frequency, and the impact of promotions and deals on decision-making. The findings provide valuable insights for travel service providers looking to better cater to the student demographic.

**Keywords:** *Online Travel Booking, College Students, Digital Platforms, Travel Preferences, India*

## Introduction

The Indian travel and tourism industry has experienced substantial growth in recent years, driven by the increasing adoption of digital platforms for booking travel services. The rise of online travel agencies (OTAs) like MakeMyTrip, Yatra, and Cleartrip has revolutionized how travelers plan and book trips. This transformation is particularly significant among college students, a demographic known for its tech-savviness and preference for digital solutions. The convenience, real-time pricing, customer reviews, and diverse options available on these platforms have made them the preferred choice for many young travelers.

With the increasing penetration of smartphones, digital payments, and improved internet connectivity, the Indian online travel market is poised for continued growth. According to a report by KPMG, the Indian hospitality sector is expected to grow at a CAGR of 16.1%, making it a vital contributor to the economy. College students, as digital natives, play a significant role in this growth, often relying on online platforms for convenience, cost savings, and personalized travel experiences. This study aims to examine the awareness, usage, and factors influencing the adoption of online travel booking platforms among college students in India.

## Statement of the Problem

Despite the rapid growth of online travel booking platforms, there is limited research on the awareness, usage patterns, and challenges faced by college students in adopting these digital solutions. This study aims to bridge this gap by understanding the factors that influence platform choice, the impact of digital literacy, and the barriers to widespread adoption among young travelers.

## Objectives of the Study

- To assess the level of awareness about online travel booking platforms among college students.
- To examine the factors influencing the choice of online platforms for booking travel services.

- To identify the most commonly used online travel booking platforms among students.
- To analyze the challenges and barriers faced by students while using these platforms.
- To provide recommendations for improving student engagement with online travel booking services.

### Limitations

- The study is limited to a small sample size of 50 students, which may not be representative of the broader college student population in India.
- Data collection was confined to Coimbatore, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other regions.
- The study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to response biases.
- The analysis was primarily descriptive, lacking deeper statistical insights.

### Literature Review

Several studies have examined the impact of digital technologies on travel behaviors. Jang et al. (2014) highlighted the convenience and cost-effectiveness of online travel platforms, which have shifted consumer preferences away from traditional travel agencies.

Similarly, Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2009) emphasized the importance of user-generated content (UGC) and social media in shaping booking decisions.

In the Indian context, studies by Saurabh and Gupta (2017) found that college students often rely on peer recommendations and word-of-mouth when selecting travel platforms. This study builds on this literature by focusing on the awareness and usage patterns of college students in India.

### Research Methodology

The research employed a descriptive design, focusing on primary data collected from 50 college students in Coimbatore. A structured questionnaire was used to gather information on platform awareness, usage frequency, and decision-making factors. The data was analyzed using simple percentage analysis to identify key trends and insights.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of the respondents, including age, gender, and education level. Tables 2-6 present detailed insights into platform usage patterns, booking preferences, and the factors influencing student choices.

Aspect	Key Findings
Age Distribution	66% of respondents are 18-20 years old, 28% are 20-22 years, 2% are below 18, and 4% are above 22.
Gender Distribution	78% male, 22% female.
Educational Qualification	92% are undergraduates, 8% postgraduates.
Frequency of Platform Use	32% rarely use platforms, 30% occasionally, 10% frequently, 2% always.
Most Commonly Booked Services	38% prefer train or bus tickets, 16% book hotels.
Device Preference	68% use smartphones, 18% use laptops, 4% use multiple devices.

## Findings and Discussion

The findings indicate that price discounts (26%), ease of use (30%), and availability of reviews (28%) are the primary factors influencing platform choice. Additionally, social media advertisements (36%) and peer recommendations (28%) significantly impact students' platform awareness. However, many students still face challenges like technical glitches, hidden charges, and trust issues, indicating a need for improved platform design and transparency.

Moreover, students prefer platforms that offer flexible booking options, personalized recommendations, and secure payment gateways. The data also reveals that students primarily use smartphones for travel bookings, highlighting the importance of mobile optimization for travel platforms.

## Suggestions

To enhance the adoption of online travel booking platforms among college students, the following steps are recommended:

- **Student-Centric Promotions:** Travel platforms should offer exclusive discounts and packages tailored to the needs of students, including last-minute deals and group travel offers.
- **Improved User Experience:** Platforms should focus on intuitive interfaces, quick load times, and seamless booking processes to reduce user frustration.
- **Enhanced Trust and Transparency:** Addressing common concerns like hidden charges, secure payment options, and reliable customer support can build user trust.
- **Leverage Social Media:** Utilizing social media influencers and targeted ads can effectively reach the student demographic.

## Conclusion

The study highlights the growing reliance of college students on online travel booking platforms for convenience, cost savings, and personalized experiences. However, several challenges still hinder widespread adoption, including technical issues, trust concerns, and hidden fees. By addressing these barriers and focusing on user-friendly designs, travel platforms can significantly enhance their appeal to this critical consumer group. Future research should expand the sample size and explore the impact of emerging technologies like AI, chatbots, and voice search on student travel behaviors.

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