

## Consumer Trust and Online Travel Purchase Decisions in Digital Tourism: A Systematic Literature Review

Carnaval Rego Rio Sidabutar<sup>1</sup>, Mochammad Fahmi<sup>2</sup>, Akmil Asril<sup>3</sup>, Bayu Wardhana<sup>4</sup>

Universitas Bali Internasional Muhammadiyah<sup>1234</sup>

Email: officialrego79@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

Digital tourism increasingly depends on consumer confidence in platforms that mediate intangible, information-intensive, and security-sensitive transactions. However, the literature remains fragmented regarding the antecedents and behavioral functions of trust in online travel purchasing. This systematic literature review identifies the principal trust-related antecedents, examines the direct and mediating roles of trust, and maps unresolved research gaps. Following PRISMA 2020, 309 records were identified, 207 were screened after preliminary removal, 56 full-text reports were assessed for eligibility, and seven empirical studies were included in the thematic synthesis. The evidence clusters into three sets of trust-forming conditions: platform and service quality, social and informational cues, and consumer- or context-specific risk perceptions. Trust generally predicts purchase or repurchase intention and frequently mediates the effects of platform quality, authenticity, and flow experience. Nevertheless, its statistical influence is not uniform; in some settings, ratings, reviews, and e-service quality exert stronger effects. The evidence base is dominated by cross-sectional, single-platform studies and provides limited insight into post-purchase behavior and cross-market variation. Future research should employ comparative, longitudinal, and multi-platform designs and distinguish more clearly between trust as an antecedent, mediator, moderator, and outcome. For practitioners, transparent information, robust security, reliable service, and credible review systems remain central to sustainable digital tourism.

### Keywords:

consumer trust;  
digital tourism;  
online travel  
purchasing;  
purchase  
intention;  
systematic  
literature review

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56442/ijble.v7i2.1522>

## INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has undergone substantial digital transformation, with online travel agencies, booking platforms, and mobile applications now mediating a large share of information search, comparison, and purchasing activities. This transition has shifted decision-making from traditional intermediaries to technology-mediated transactions in which consumers evaluate providers, prices, and service attributes without direct interpersonal contact. Consequently, the effectiveness of digital tourism markets depends not only on technological access and convenience but also on consumers' willingness to rely on platforms and providers that they cannot physically assess before purchase.

Trust is particularly important in tourism because travel products are intangible, temporally distant from the point of payment, and difficult to evaluate before consumption. Consumers must often make advance payments while facing uncertainty regarding information accuracy, service delivery, privacy, cybersecurity, and dispute resolution. These characteristics intensify information asymmetry and perceived risk, making trust a central mechanism through which consumers reduce

uncertainty and convert favorable platform evaluations into purchase intentions.

Empirical research supports this role while also showing that trust is embedded within a broader network of technological and relational factors. In online travel environments, platform affordances and technology readiness influence purchase intention, while trust can shape the relationship between purchase intention and e-loyalty (Shariffuddin et al., 2023). Likewise, perceived ability, benevolence, integrity, and overall trustworthiness influence consumers' willingness to use online travel agencies in rapidly digitalizing tourism markets (Mollik et al., 2024). These findings indicate that trust is neither an isolated attitude nor a uniform predictor; rather, its role depends on the platform, transaction, and consumer context.

Despite growing empirical attention, the literature remains conceptually fragmented. Meta-analytic evidence from general e-commerce shows a robust positive association between trust and online purchase intention, but tourism-specific transactions involve distinctive experiential, temporal, and intangible characteristics that are not fully represented in broader e-commerce models (Bulsara & Vaghela, 2023). Research on online reviews further demonstrates that credibility, content, and reviewer-related cues shape purchasing decisions, yet this evidence is rarely integrated with tourism-specific trust mechanisms (Kang et al., 2022). Similarly, research on e-trustmarks and website reputation has established pathways to loyalty and purchase intention, but these mechanisms have not been consistently situated within digital tourism ecosystems (Nguyen et al., 2023).

This review addresses that fragmentation by systematically consolidating empirical evidence on consumer trust and online travel purchase decisions. Its contribution is threefold. First, it organizes trust-related antecedents into coherent conceptual categories. Second, it differentiates the direct, mediating, and context-dependent functions of trust across digital tourism settings. Third, it identifies methodological and theoretical gaps that limit the comparability and generalizability of current findings.

The review is guided by three research questions: (1) Which platform, informational, and consumer-related factors are most consistently associated with trust in online travel purchasing? (2) Through which direct, mediating, or context-dependent mechanisms does trust influence purchase and repurchase intentions? and (3) Which thematic and methodological gaps should guide future research on trust in digital tourism?

Accordingly, the study aims to identify and classify the principal trust-related determinants reported in previous research, synthesize the mechanisms through which trust affects consumer decisions, and develop an evidence-based agenda for future investigation. The analysis focuses on the relationships among platform quality, social information cues, perceived risk, trust, purchase intention, satisfaction, loyalty, and repurchase behavior.

The review offers both theoretical and managerial value. Theoretically, it clarifies how trust operates across different stages of the digital tourism decision process and exposes inconsistencies in its conceptualization. Managerially, it identifies actionable trust-building mechanisms—including information reliability, system security, service quality, authentic communication, and credible review management—that can reduce uncertainty and strengthen sustainable consumer

relationships.

## METHODS

This study employed a systematic literature review to synthesize empirical and conceptual evidence on consumer trust and online travel purchase decisions. Systematic review procedures were selected because they provide a transparent and reproducible basis for locating, screening, and integrating prior research. The reporting structure followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 framework, which organizes study selection into identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages (Page et al., 2021). The review process was also informed by management-research guidance emphasizing explicit decisions regarding search, selection, synthesis, and reporting (Sauer & Seuring, 2023).

The search used combinations of terms related to consumer trust, online purchase decisions, online travel agencies, hotel-booking platforms, tourism e-commerce, and digital tourism. The initial search identified 309 records. Before formal screening, 102 duplicate or clearly irrelevant records were removed, leaving 207 records for title and abstract screening. Ninety-five records were excluded at this stage because they did not address the review's substantive scope, and 112 reports were sought for full-text retrieval.

Fifty-six reports could not be retrieved in full text, leaving 56 reports for eligibility assessment. Studies were eligible when they examined trust or closely related trustworthiness constructs within a tourism-specific digital purchasing context, reported a sufficiently transparent research design, and provided findings relevant to purchase, usage, loyalty, satisfaction, or repurchase outcomes. Forty-nine reports were excluded: 26 did not focus on consumer trust in tourism-specific digital transactions, and 23 lacked sufficient methodological transparency or empirical relevance to the review objectives.

Seven empirical studies met all eligibility criteria and were included in the final thematic synthesis. Additional publications identified through backward citation searching were used only to establish the theoretical and methodological context of the review; they were not treated as primary studies and were not included in the PRISMA study count. This distinction resolves the separation between the seven synthesized studies and the broader set of references used to frame the article.

For synthesis, the included studies were charted in a structured matrix covering publication year, platform and market context, theoretical basis, method, sample, trust-related variables, principal findings, and contribution to the review questions. Thematic comparison was then used to identify recurring antecedents, direct and indirect mechanisms, contextual contingencies, and post-purchase outcomes. Because the studies used heterogeneous constructs, models, and outcomes, the evidence was synthesized qualitatively rather than through statistical meta-analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The PRISMA-based selection process reduced the initial pool of 309 records to seven empirical studies suitable for thematic synthesis. Figure 1 summarizes the number of records retained or excluded at each stage and provides the reasons for

full-text exclusion.

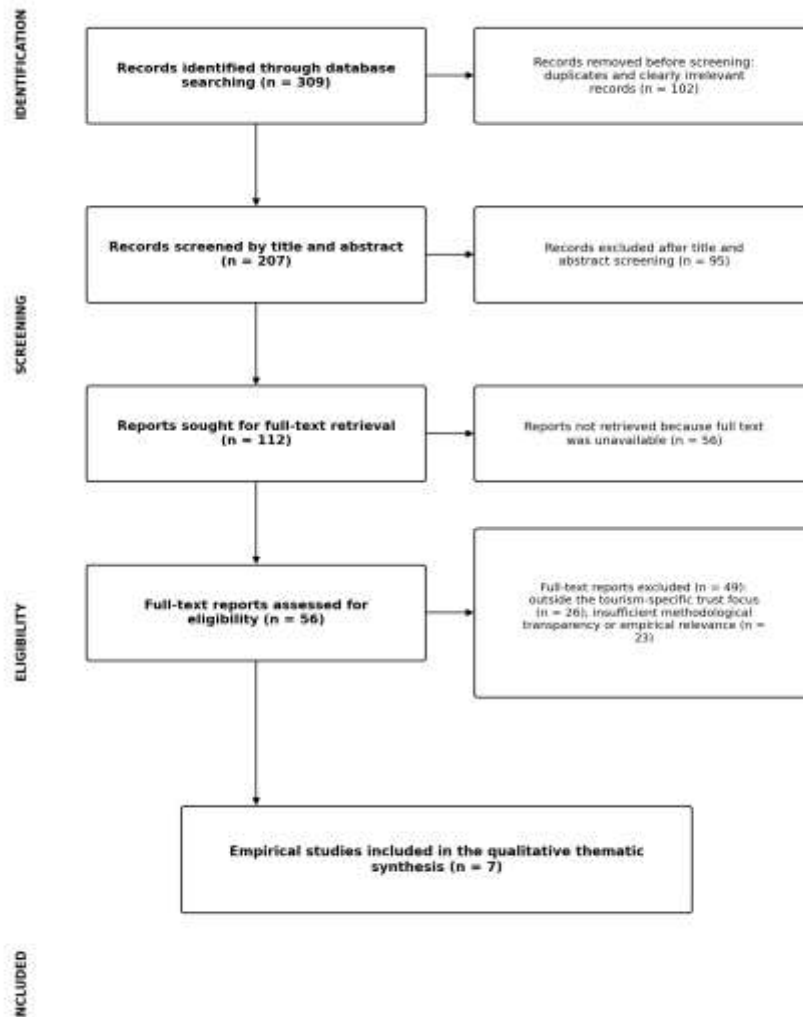


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow of study identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for study selection.

The seven included studies were all quantitative and were conducted in platform-specific settings, including hotel-booking applications, online travel agencies, online hotel-booking platforms, and tourism live-streaming commerce. Sample sizes ranged from 50 to 884 respondents, and the predominant analytical techniques were structural equation modeling and multiple regression. This concentration on cross-sectional survey designs provides consistent evidence about associations but limits causal inference and the assessment of changes in trust over time. Table 1 summarizes the contexts, methods, findings, and analytical contributions of the included studies.

*Table 1. Characteristics and thematic contributions of the seven included studies.*

| No. | Study                     | Context and method                                            | Sample                    | Principal findings                                                                                                                                | Contribution to synthesis                                                                                        |
|-----|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Lata (2021)               | Hotel booking through smartphone apps; PLS-SEM                | 379 hotel guests in Delhi | Perceived trust significantly predicted booking intention; effort expectancy, facilitating conditions, and habit were not significant.            | Establishes trust as a direct predictor and links confidence to accurate, current, and reliable app information. |
| 2   | Salameh et al. (2022)     | Online hotel-booking platforms; cross-sectional survey        | 884 respondents           | Perceived benefits, system quality, and service quality predicted intention; review usefulness did not moderate the intention–usage relationship. | Shows that trust-related judgments are embedded in platform quality and service performance.                     |
| 3   | Islam et al. (2024)       | Hotel booking among Indian solo female travelers; S–O–R model | 218 respondents           | eWOM improved brand reputation, engagement, and booking intention; perceived risk moderated the eWOM–intention relationship.                      | Highlights social information cues and perceived risk as context-specific conditions in trust formation.         |
| 4   | Liu et al. (2022)         | Tourism e-commerce live streaming; SEM                        | 357 consumers             | Interactivity and authenticity increased flow experience and trust; flow and trust mediated purchase intention.                                   | Demonstrates trust as an experiential mediator in an emerging tourism-commerce format.                           |
| 5   | Tam et al. (2024)         | Online travel purchasing; integrated attitude–behavior model  | 251 respondents           | Loading speed, security, and visual appeal improved website quality; website quality, trust, and brand image explained intention.                 | Connects technical platform attributes with trust and purchase intention.                                        |
| 6   | Kaban and Stevanus (2023) | Tiket.com online travel agency; multiple regression           | 50 customers              | Ratings, reviews, and e-service quality significantly predicted purchase decisions; trust was positive but not significant.                       | Provides a contrasting case in which heuristic and service cues outweigh the independent effect of trust.        |
| 7   | Kurniawan et al. (2022)   | Online hotel-room booking and repurchase; SEM                 | 183 respondents           | Trust and service quality contributed to satisfaction, which partially mediated repurchase intention.                                             | Extends the evidence from initial purchase to satisfaction and post-purchase behavior.                           |

## Thematic Synthesis

### ***Dominant Trust-Related Antecedents in Online Travel Purchasing***

The evidence can be organized into three broad categories of trust-related antecedents. First, platform and service attributes include information reliability, system quality, service quality, security, loading speed, and visual appeal. Reliable and current application information strengthens consumer confidence and booking intention (Lata, 2021), while perceived benefits, system quality, and service quality support intention to use online hotel-booking platforms (Salameh et al., 2022).

Website security and technical performance also shape website quality, which operates jointly with trust and brand image to explain purchase intention (Tam et al., 2024). Second, social and informational cues—including ratings, reviews, eWOM, authenticity, and interactivity—reduce uncertainty by providing observable signals about providers and experiences. eWOM is especially influential when consumers perceive elevated personal or situational risk (Islam et al., 2024), whereas authenticity and interactivity strengthen trust in live-streaming environments (Liu et al., 2022). Third, consumer and market conditions determine the relative weight assigned to trust. In the Tiket.com case, trust was positively associated with purchase decisions but was statistically weaker than ratings, reviews, and e-service quality (Kaban & Stevanus, 2023). Trust should therefore be understood as a context-dependent mechanism that interacts with technical quality, social proof, perceived risk, and platform maturity.

### ***Trust as a Mediating and Context-Dependent Mechanism***

The synthesis shows that trust operates both as a direct predictor and as an intervening mechanism. In smartphone-based hotel booking, trust directly predicts behavioral intention (Lata, 2021). In tourism live-streaming commerce, however, interactivity, authenticity, and entertainment shape internal consumer states, and trust mediates their effects on purchase intention alongside flow experience (Liu et al., 2022). A similar pattern appears in online travel purchasing, where loading speed, security, and visual appeal enhance website quality and where trust and brand image help translate favorable platform evaluations into behavioral intention (Tam et al., 2024). Trust also remains relevant after the initial purchase: service quality and trust contribute to customer satisfaction, which in turn supports repurchase intention (Kurniawan et al., 2022). Moderation must nevertheless be interpreted carefully. In Islam et al. (2024), perceived risk—not trust—moderates the relationship between eWOM and booking intention. By contrast, broader tourism evidence models trust as a moderator of the relationship between purchase intention and e-loyalty (Shariffuddin et al., 2023). These distinctions indicate that future studies should specify whether trust is conceptualized as an antecedent, mediator, moderator, or outcome and should avoid treating these roles as interchangeable.

### ***Research Gaps, Review Limitations, and Future Directions***

Several gaps emerge from the evidence. First, the literature is dominated by cross-sectional, single-country, or single-platform surveys; comparative and longitudinal designs are rare. Second, most studies focus on purchase intention rather than verified transactions, continued use, loyalty, or repurchase, leaving the post-purchase stage underdeveloped. Third, trust is operationalized inconsistently—as a predictor, mediator, moderator, or dimension of trustworthiness—which complicates cumulative theory building. Fourth, evidence on cultural, demographic, and market-level boundary conditions remains limited, despite variation in the significance of trust across studies. The present review is also constrained by the small number of eligible studies and by heterogeneity in constructs, samples, and outcomes, which precluded meta-analysis. Future research should adopt multi-platform and cross-market comparisons, longitudinal or experimental designs, behavioral outcome measures, and explicit tests of alternative trust roles. Systematic reviews should also report database coverage, search dates, complete search strings, protocol information, and

quality-appraisal procedures in sufficient detail to maximize replicability.

## CONCLUSION

This systematic review demonstrates that consumer trust is a central but context-sensitive component of online travel purchasing. Across the seven included studies, trust directly predicts purchase intention in some settings, mediates the effects of platform quality and experiential cues in others, and contributes to satisfaction and repurchase behavior after the initial transaction. Its influence is not universally dominant: ratings, reviews, e-service quality, and other heuristic cues can exert stronger effects when consumers have access to credible alternative signals. The most consistent trust-building conditions are reliable information, system and service quality, security, authentic communication, and credible social information.

Theoretically, the field requires clearer construct definitions and models that distinguish trust as an antecedent, mediator, moderator, and outcome. Empirically, future studies should move beyond cross-sectional intention models toward comparative, longitudinal, and behavioral designs that examine loyalty and repurchase across platforms and markets. For practitioners, trust should be treated as an operational capability rather than a purely perceptual outcome. Transparent product information, secure transactions, responsive service, authentic platform communication, and well-governed review systems are essential to reducing uncertainty

## Declarations

**Acknowledgements:** The author thanks academic reviewers and colleagues who may provide comments during the journal submission process.

**Funding:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

**Competing interests:** The authors declare no competing interests.

**Data availability:** The dataset may be requested from the corresponding author subject to institutional permission and confidentiality requirements.

## References

- Bulsara, H. P., & Vaghela, P. S. (2023). Trust and online purchase intention: A systematic literature review through meta-analysis. *International Journal of Electronic Business*, 18(2), 148–164. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJEB.2023.130155>
- Islam, M. T., Pandey, U., & Kumar, J. (2024). Electronic word-of-mouth and Indian solo female travellers' hotel booking intention: Moderating role of perceived risk. *International Social Science Journal*, 74(254), 1593–1609. <https://doi.org/10.1111/issj.12529>
- Kaban, L. M., & Stevanus, L. (2023). The antecedents of purchase decision at online travel agent (Tiket.com). *Quantitative Economics and Management Studies*, 4(4), 697–709. <https://doi.org/10.35877/454RI.qems1672>
- Kang, M., Sun, B., Liang, T., & Mao, H.-Y. (2022). A study on the influence of online reviews of new products on consumers' purchase decisions: An empirical study on JD.com. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 983060. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.983060>

- Kurniawan, A. S., Widowati, R., & Handayani, S. D. (2022). Integration of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) on hotel room repurchase intention using online hotel room booking applications. *Jurnal Manajemen Teori dan Terapan*, 15(1), 77–90. <https://doi.org/10.20473/jmtt.v15i1.34935>
- Lata, S. (2021). What determines consumers' intention for hotel bookings through smartphone apps?. *ASEAN Journal on Hospitality and Tourism*, 19(3), 167–184. <https://doi.org/10.5614/ajht.2021.19.3.01>
- Liu, X., Zhang, L., & Chen, Q. (2022). The effects of tourism e-commerce live streaming features on consumer purchase intention: The mediating roles of flow experience and trust. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 995129. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.995129>
- Mollik, M. S., Rahman, S. M., Rahat, M. R., Kulsum, C. U., & Sagir, S. A. M. (2024). Does trustworthiness influence travel service use intentions at an online travel agency? A study on the digitalization of the tourism sector in Bangladesh. *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 52(1), 30–40. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.52103-1180>
- Nguyen, Q. H., Nguyen, T. T. A., Nguyen, L. T., & Tran, H. T. (2023). Impact of e-trustmark reputation on customer loyalty and online purchase intentions: Empirical evidence from an emerging country. *International Journal of Electronic Business*, 18(4), 466–492. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJEB.2023.134130>
- Page, M. J., Moher, D., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., ... McKenzie, J. E. (2021). PRISMA 2020 explanation and elaboration: Updated guidance and exemplars for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, 372, n160. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n160>
- Salameh, A. A., Al Mamun, A., Hayat, N., & Ali, M. H. (2022). Modelling the significance of website quality and online reviews to predict the intention and usage of online hotel booking platforms. *Heliyon*, 8(9), e10735. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e10735>
- Sauer, P. C., & Seuring, S. (2023). How to conduct systematic literature reviews in management research: A guide in 6 steps and 14 decisions. *Review of Managerial Science*, 17, 1899–1933. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-023-00668-3>
- Shariffuddin, N. S. M., Azinuddin, M., Yahya, N. E., & Hanafiah, M. H. (2023). Navigating the tourism digital landscape: The interrelationship of online travel sites' affordances, technology readiness, online purchase intentions, trust, and e-loyalty. *Heliyon*, 9(8), e19135. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e19135>
- Tam, C., Pereira, F. C., & Oliveira, T. (2024). What influences the purchase intention of online travel consumers?. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 24(2), 304–320. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14673584221126468>