

Investigating stimulating factors for customer booking intentions on brand websites

Marit de Vries * & Niels Klein Poelhuis

Hotel Management School Leeuwarden, NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands

*Correspondence: Marit.de.vries@nhlstenden.com

ABSTRACT: Customers have ample opportunities regarding channels to use to book a hotel room: offline and online. In the online world, the options are using the hotel's website, referred to as the brand website, or third party internet sites like online travel agencies (OTAs). The primary objective of this article is to explore the motivators and factors that influence customers in booking hotel rooms through a brand website. Additionally, the study aims to derive insights from the exemplary practices employed by online travel agencies that contribute to their significant share in capturing online bookings. This study relies on the opinions from 110 participants who frequently reserve their hotel accommodations through Booking.com, booking more than once annually for leisure or vacation purposes. Using an online booking channel requires that the booking tool is perceived as user-friendly and trustworthy and offers a comparison of prices. The benefits of a loyalty programme, integration with other travel-related services and hotels paying commissions are the least important to customers. The primary motivator to book via a brand website is the personal contact and the best price. To achieve this, the hotel needs to make sure that the website is easy to use, offers possibilities for comparison of prices and reviews, is mobile friendly and accepts other payments besides credit cards. Currently, a primary disappointment is the quality of the brand website and, therefore, being perceived by the customer as not user-friendly. Hotels should analyse their brand website's five elements: room price, payment options, user-friendliness, trustworthiness, reputation and visuals to encourage bookings and enhance customer experience.

KEYWORDS: digital marketing strategy, online booking behaviour, online price comparison, OTA website, requirements brand website

Introduction

Research by De Vries (2022) compared the contents of two online travel agency (OTA) websites with two brand websites to see what customers perceive as necessary information. Based on literature seen from the customer perspective, this gave an insight into which type of website is most often lacking the highest preferred information to be displayed. The most preferred information from a customer perspective is based upon values derived from the theory of consumption values (TCV) by Sheth et al. (1991), which have been transformed by Talwar et al. (2020) into purchase intention towards OTAs and combined with the 'existing-importance evaluation model' of six information dimensions (facilities, surrounding area, customer contact and communication, reservation price, company and management of the website) created by Salem and Čavlek (2016). This resulted in adding "Content items online hotel distribution channels", which originates from the previous research by De Vries (2022), to the supplemental materials. The current article is the next step in this research and asks the customer to indicate what is most important to them according to information presented on an OTA or brand website and needed to convince them to book via an OTA or brand website. The focus lies on influencing customer behaviour,

which, according to Sheth et al. (1991), is related to functional value and here it is explicitly related to using an online hotel booking channel. Furthermore, we ask: which motivators and factors must be present to book via an OTA or preferably a brand website?

Literature review

The customer decision-making process

Park et al. (2019) share the buying habits of people who plan their trips online, focusing on their choices when booking hotel rooms online where the sample originates from two United Kingdom universities and the location to book is in Paris. The work by Park et al. (2019) is based on the information processing theory and the choice-set model. The steps a customer takes to make a choice are shown in the latter model: the awareness set includes all the products the customer knows about; the consideration set includes the products they are thinking about buying; and the action set includes the product they buy. It is stated that these sets are affected by both internal factors (e.g. personal experience) and external factors (e.g. information gathered), with external factors having a more significant effect. The way the choice is made also matches the way utilitarian (rational) people choose, which is in line with the ideas of functional value

(Sheth et al., 1991), monetary value and quality of benefit value (Talwar et al., 2020), as explained by De Vries (2022).

Xu and Luo (2023) study the consideration set and how it is changed by online searches and click-through rates. Customers' or the industry's scores, the place where the price is ranked and customer reviews can all help at the click-through stage. Before making a reservation, people go through this thought step and review a lot of information, like reviews. Park et al. (2019) also found that knowing the product and individual experiences significantly impact people's decisions to book online. These things are essential at various stages of the decision-making process. Price, facilities, location, hotel reviews and pictures are essential at various times. According to Garcia et al. (2022), people who shop online are also more likely to book hotels online. This shows that comfort with online shopping is linked to hotel booking behaviour.

Customer behaviour in online hotel booking behaviour

According to Kyomba et al. (2022, p. 64), customer behaviour deals with "the study of the factors that influence the reason why individuals act in a particular way". This is the basis for customers to determine their wants and needs and, in the end, purchase an item or service.

Choices for using a specific booking channel relate to the amount of money a customer has to spend, the impact of the transition cost (the time involved to gain knowledge versus the benefit gained), price, balance between price and quality, destination, location of hotel, product/service quality, environment, promotional offers and a mix of positive and negative reviews (Ullah et al., 2019; Lata & Kumar, 2021; Khan et al., 2022). For example, after their promotional campaign to directly book with the hotel, an increase in reservations via the brand website at Marriott was established by offering customers a friendly website where transparency and lower prices were offered (Kyomba et al., 2022).

Direct bookings can be established by launching loyalty programmes, offering new products and services and creating a website with good information. The website needs to meet the following criteria: convenience; reliability; speed; information; price; reward for booking; structure; layout; content; appearance; good location; reasonable price; and good service (Ullah et al., 2019; Faliha et al., 2021; Kyomba et al., 2022). The quality of an online reservation system considerably influences trust and whether the tool will be used to book the hotel room (Faliha et al., 2021). Many customers consider booking a hotel room as a high-risk decision because they are not sure about the quality of the product (Lata & Kumar, 2021). Trust consists of the dimensions of reliability and integrity and is impacted by the information available on the website, while an online purchase involves more risk than offline buying. This specific type of trust is referred to as "e-trust" by Lata and Kumar (2021). The impact of the quality of the information and the source's credibility on the intention of booking a hotel room online is proven in the study of Lata and Kumar (2021). The presence of more positive than negative reviews increases the willingness to book a hotel online and positively impacts the trust in a hotel. Customers trust in a hotel is built on three elements, according to Faliha et al. (2021, p. 412): "1) trust in the website, 2) trust in the information provided, and 3) trust in fulfilling orders and service delivery". In general, trust significantly impacts booking a hotel room online. In addition, security issues like sharing personal and credit card

information heavily impacted online bookings ten years ago. Therefore, the emphasis on data security and transparency in how a company deals with sensitive customer information is essential (Kyomba et al., 2022). Trust is here influenced by the perception of security regarding data handling and online payment systems of the online booking tool (Anutarawaykin et al., 2023).

One of the main goals in hospitality is customer satisfaction; therefore, it is essential to understand which elements contribute to customer satisfaction when using an online booking site (Decena & Delfin, 2022). Customers keep using OTAs due to the broad assortment of products offered based on price, the user-friendly application and having guest reviews at the same place (Kyomba et al., 2022). Reviews are also referred to as electronic word of mouth (eWOM), being described as an expression of customer (dis)satisfaction (Ullah et al., 2019).

Once a customer has stayed at a hotel, the competition between an OTA and the brand website starts, where an OTA most often benefits from the quality of service on the channel. On the other hand, hotels need to benefit from the direct contact established with the customer and enhance the customer perception of value, leading to a customer booking a return visit via the brand website (Garcia et al., 2022).

Digital marketing strategy

The strength of an OTA lies in the fact that these companies operate on a much larger scale in investments and developments in the technological area than small and medium enterprises can (Garcia et al., 2022). As part of digital marketing tactics in the hospitality industry, innovative technology applications are being used to make services more useful by using online reservation systems as channels of distribution and online customer reviews as marketing tools, which increases sales opportunities worldwide (Faliha et al., 2021). For the hospitality industry, OTAs have become essential communication tools due to the constant development of information technology, which has further developed how travel services are acquired (Park et al., 2019). Hotels integrate business operations through online booking channels, OTAs, or brand websites and mobile applications (Hermanus & Indradewa, 2022; Kyomba et al., 2022). Elements such as functionality and usability impact the intention to purchase a hotel reservation again via mobile payment (Garcia et al., 2022).

Criteria for a preferred online booking channel

Three main factors that affect the online hotel booking decision are: (1) channel characteristics; (2) website features; and (3) individual characteristics. Channel characteristics relate strongly to the technology adaption model and include the following elements: navigation, convenience, and easy-to-price comparison (Park et al., 2019). Website features refers to the contents and types of information available, like the ability to compare products with each other, hotel rating by customers, ease of use, technological convenience and reliability, privacy of customer information and being reputable (Ullah et al., 2019; Faliha et al., 2021). Individual characteristics relates to either the decision made based upon the utilitarian orientation (functional value), or the hedonic orientation (emotional value) towards the product to be acquired (Park et al., 2019).

Providing information is best done using textual information in the utilitarian orientation, while the hedonic orientation

is best served with pictorial information (Park et al., 2019). Information overload on a website has a negative impact on a customer's booking decision due to a lower conversion rate. This can be avoided by adding heuristic cues, simple strategies to form a judgement, badges (textual labels) or photographs (visual cues). Here, the visual cue is preferred because it is easier to process by a customer and therefore takes less cognitive effort to understand the message. The power of visual cues is related to customers being able to place themselves in the location, imagining themselves as part of the photo already (Xu & Luo, 2023).

Research question

This study aims to identify the motivators evident in customer behaviour that impact the intention to book a hotel room through a brand website. The outcomes will be compared with the "Content items online hotel distribution channels" table (Appendix 1) to establish cohesion.

Design

A cross-sectional survey was used in a descriptive research design, while the focus of the research is on behaviour, and relevant data is collected in a set timeframe (Kesmodel, 2018). More specifically, an analytical study was applied to find out how people experience — or what drives them — during the booking process of a hotel room. For this, a survey was constructed with 22 questions shared in the third quarter of 2023 via social media channels Instagram and LinkedIn, and the instant messaging and voice-over-IP service WhatsApp. Ideally, the sample should have been hotel guests who had stayed in a hotel, however, this sample was not available. Therefore, the above-mentioned channels were used. In the end, there were 110 respondents' answers after removing two invalid responses in which only two questions were answered.

Overall, the inquiries presented may seem superficial and lack sufficient substance; however, they serve as an extension of the previous article by De Vries (2022) which conducted the initial examination of booking websites. The data obtained from the present study relates to a customer requirement and forms the foundation of a subsequent article that will examine two website configurations and incorporate the findings of the research in both articles. The main question of the present study is as follows: "Do you consider booking via the brand website instead of via an OTA after having stayed in a specific hotel?"

Findings

The 110 respondents are 54.6% female, 44.6% male, and 0.9% indicated "other" as gender. The age category 43 to 58 years old (37.3%) was predominant, followed by respondents of 18 to 26 years old (35.5%). There were three peculiar respondents in the age category between 11 and 17 years old and two respondents in the age category of 78 years and older. Only one out of 110 persons filling out the survey was not Dutch, being Romanian. The preferred booking channel used, without specifying the reason for booking, is Booking.com (68.0%). Followed by the brand website (21.8%) and then the other channel (3.6%). The reason for booking a hotel room is linked to the channel used and categorised by age (Table 1).

Eighty per cent the respondents booked a hotel room for leisure or vacation purposes. The age categories 11–17, 36–42, 69–77, and 78 years and older, all booked only for leisure or vacation purposes. In the age category of 27–35 years old, the preference lay in using brand websites when booking for leisure or vacation. As for 69 years and older, only brand websites or other channels were used to book a hotel room. Of the 110 respondents, 88 booked a hotel room for leisure or vacation purposes, followed by business travel ($n = 14$). For booking a room, Booking.com is the preferred channel, with 71% for business travel and 66% for leisure or vacation. The brand website is second choice for both bookings. The factors listed in Table 2 are essential in influencing the choice of a booking channel.

The total column shows that the channel's user-friendliness or ease of use is most important for 74 respondents (67.3%). The trustworthiness and reputation of the booking channel are in second place. Third, price is an essential factor, though, when only looking at the "very important" score, the price would be in first position (46 respondents). This category was followed by other payment options than credit cards (34 respondents) and a shared third position for user-friendliness/ease of use of the channel and trustworthiness and reputation of the booking channel.

The factors listed in Table 3 are defined as being of low importance or not at all important in influencing the choice of a booking channel.

The fact that hotels need to pay commission to an OTA is of no importance for 74 respondents (67.3%), followed by whether the channel is integrated with another travel-related service like flights or car rental (66.4%), scoring highest when only looking at "not at all important". Lastly, the benefits received from a loyalty programme do not affect the choice of booking channel.

Once a customer has found a hotel on an OTA, is the customer still willing to book the hotel room via the brand website? (Figure 1) The highest score with "yes, I often consider booking via the brand website after comparing hotels on an OTA" is seen in the age category of 18–26 years old, with thirteen respondents. In the age category of 43–58 years old, 21 respondents stated "sometimes, depending on the specific circumstances or offers". Interestingly, in the age category of 18–26 years old, eight respondents stated, "No, I rarely or never consider booking via the brand website after comparing hotels on an OTA". In the age category of 43–58 years old, it was stated (four respondents) that this is "not applicable; I typically book directly through the brand website without using an OTA for comparison". It is highly likely that this is in line with the outcomes seen in Table 2, where six respondents indicated booking via the brand website.

What happens once a customer has stayed in a hotel? Does the customer still book via an OTA or not? (Figure 2) In the age category 18–26 years old, one respondent did not share an answer. With 10 respondents indicating "yes, I often consider booking the next stay via the brand website after having stayed in a hotel", this is the highest score and is in the age category of 43–58 years old. Here, most respondents also indicated that "sometimes, depending on the specific circumstances or offers on the brand website" they booked via the brand website (24 respondents). The group of 18–26 years old was most firm in the answer "no, I rarely or never consider booking via the brand website after having stayed in the hotel" (8 respondents). The age categories 27–35 years old and 43–58 years old share the

TABLE 1: Comparison of age, the reason for booking a hotel room, and the channel used (Measurement: ordinal; $N = 110$)

Age (years)	Booking reason	Booking channel	Number	Channel use by age group (%)
11-17	Leisure or vacation	Booking.com	1	33.3
		Brand website	1	33.3
		Phone	1	33.3
18-26	Leisure or vacation	Booking.com	29	74.4
		Brand website	5	12.8
		Booking.com	3	7.7
27-35	Leisure or vacation	Brand website	2	22.2
		Other	3	33.3
		Booking.com	2	22.2
36-42	Business travel	Booking.com	1	11.1
		Stopover during travel	1	11.1
		Booking.com	1	11.1
36-42	Leisure or vacation	Booking.com	4	57.1
		Brand website	3	42.9
43-58	Leisure or vacation	Booking.com	19	46.3
		Brand website	5	12.2
		Other online travel agencies	2	4.9
	Attending events or conferences	Phone	1	2.4
		Booking.com	1	2.4
		Booking.com	8	19.5
	Business travel	Brand website	1	2.4
		Other	1	2.4
		Stopover during travel	2	4.9
		Other online travel agencies	1	2.4
59-68 years old	Leisure or vacation	Booking.com	3	42.9
		Expedia.com	1	14.3
		Brand website	1	14.3
		Phone	1	14.3
		Booking.com	1	14.3
69-77 years old	Business travel	Booking.com	1	14.3
		Brand website	1	14.3
69-77 years old	Leisure or vacation	Brand website	1	50.0
		Other	1	50.0
≥78	Leisure or vacation	Brand website	2	100

TABLE 2: "Very important" and "Important" factors influencing the choice of a booking channel (Measurement: scale; $N = 110$)

Factor influencing choice booking channel	Very important	Important	Total	%
User-friendliness/ease of use	33	41	74	67.3
Trustworthiness and reputation	33	37	70	63.6
Price	46	23	69	62.7
Information about hotel and surroundings	23	39	62	56.4
Review	23	34	57	51.8
Compare prices	23	33	56	50.9
Other payment options than credit card	34	21	55	50.0

TABLE 3: "Low importance" and "Not at all important" factors influencing the choice of booking channel (Measurement: scale; $N = 110$)

Factor influencing choice booking channel	Low importance	Not at all important	Total	%
Pay commission to OTA	33	41	74	67.3
Integration of other travel-related services	31	42	73	66.4
Loyalty programme	44	22	66	60.0

sentiment of "not applicable, I typically book directly through the brand website" with two respondents.

When considering booking a hotel room after having either compared it on an OTA or having stayed in the hotel already is still not positive, it is essential to find out which motivators there are to (not) book via an OTA or brand website. For this, the responses to four survey questions were used, to which a sentiment analysis was applied, resulting in clusters, keywords and the sentiment itself. Not all respondents answered

these questions, therefore *N* is deviating from the initial 110 respondents.

Price and direct booking benefits is the largest cluster, indicating that pricing and discounts are significant factors, with a predominance of the neutral sentiment. The cluster of *cost efficiency* focuses on the ease and convenience of using OTAs, displaying a strongly positive sentiment. The *financial considerations* cluster suggests that generally financial aspects

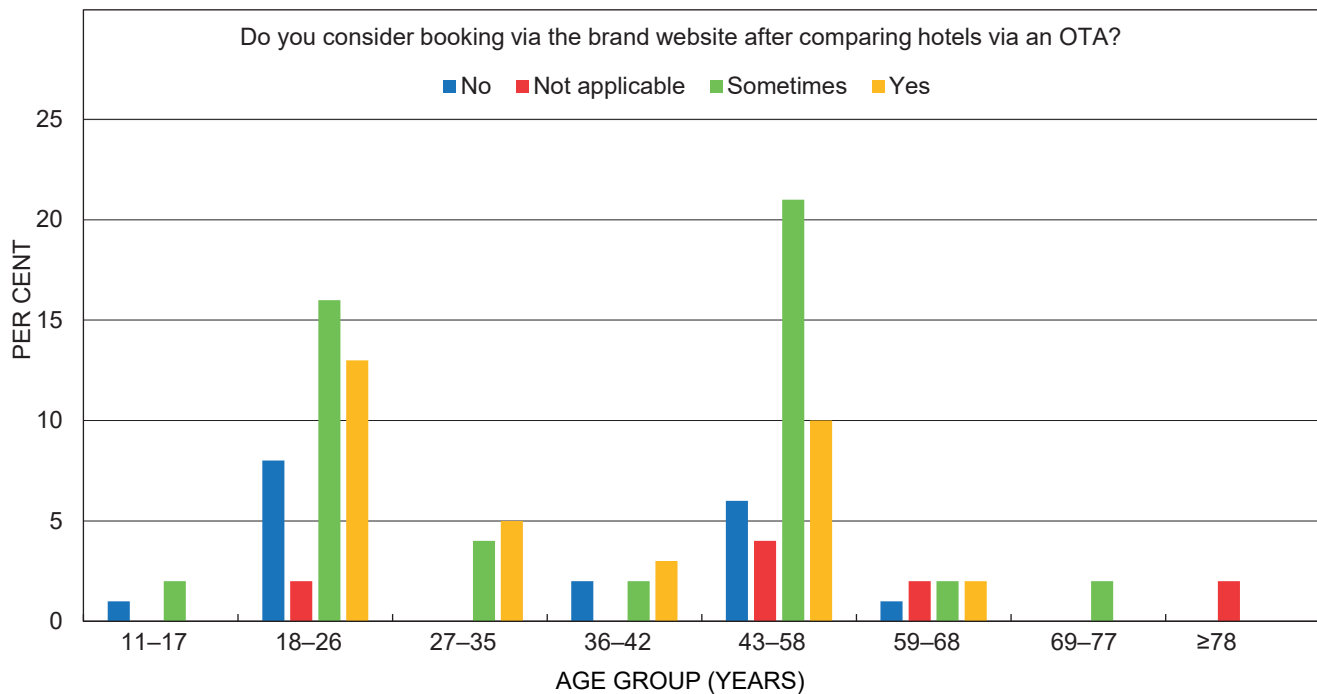


FIGURE 1: Do you consider booking via the brand website after comparing hotels via an OTA (Measurement: ordinal, *N* = 110)

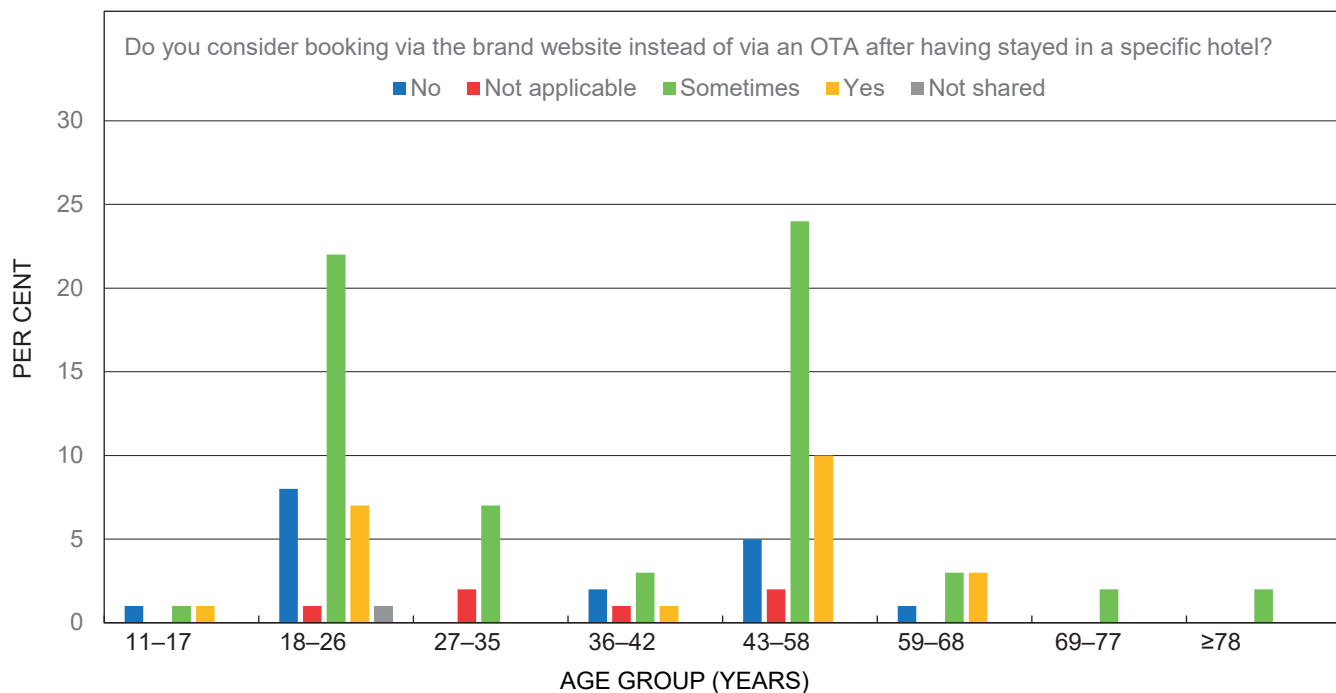


FIGURE 2: Do you consider booking via the brand website instead of an OTA after staying in a specific hotel? (Measurement: ordinal, *N* = 110)

play a role in choosing OTAs, with a balance of neutral and positive sentiments (Table 4).

What is an important reason for not booking via an OTA? Here, the clusters of *financial considerations* and *price and direct booking benefits* blur a bit since both have price elements. The *financial considerations* relate to the statements made by respondents that they wanted the money to go directly to the hotels and not to OTAs. In the *price and direct booking benefits* cluster, all statements, including commission, are combined. In conclusion, most of the respondents gave a justification for not booking via an OTA because of commission costs (Table 5).

The same journey is applied to the brand website; what does or does not motivate you to book via a brand website? (Tables 6 & 7)

The benefits of better prices and direct booking are shown in the *price and direct booking benefits* cluster, which relates to the fact that often there is a better direct contact, and no commission costs to be paid by the hotel. In the *financial considerations* cluster, again, the fact that respondents were willing to have the money (commission) earned by the hotel come back. Loyalty is hardly mentioned here, in line with the statements made in Table 3, where loyalty is shown as of low importance.

The highest position is for *price and direct booking benefits*, where the positive sentiment relates to the ease of booking and paying for a hotel room via an OTA and not with a brand website. Furthermore, *cost efficiency* indicates that prices on brand websites are generally higher. The *financial considerations* scored the lowest. Interestingly, the inferior quality of the brand website is often mentioned and added to the *familiarity and personal preference* category.

Contribution and discussion

Customer decision-making process

Most of the respondents booked a hotel room for leisure or vacation purposes. Booking.com is the preferred channel, followed by the brand website, and is most popular with customers who book a hotel room several times a year (75.8%). The location to stay for leisure or vacation purposes is often new; therefore, the hotel itself is usually unknown. Therefore, hotels need to be added to the awareness set of the choice-set as discussed by Park et al. (2019) to add some hotels to the consideration set. It is seen that as soon as the customer has stayed in a hotel and considers the hotel again for their next stay, according to Garcia et al. (2022), the hotel needs to focus

TABLE 4: Motivators to book via an OTA (measurement: ordinal, $n = 96$)

Cluster Name	Keywords	Negative	Neutral	Positive	n	%
Price & direct booking benefits	hotels, OTA, prices, reasonable, discount	3	41	16	60	62.5
Cost efficiency	easy, hotels, know, place, price	0	0	18	18	18.8
Financial considerations	price, good, best, hotels, booking	0	10	6	16	16.7
Familiarity & personal preference	ease, OTAs, cheapest, option, easy	0	0	1	1	1.0
Loyalty & brand affiliation	hotels, hotel, usually, OTA, available	0	0	1	1	1.0

TABLE 5: Motivators to not book via an OTA (Measurement: ordinal, $n = 74$)

Cluster Name	Keywords	Negative	Neutral	Positive	n	%
Financial considerations	need, booking, direct, know, prices	3	19	13	35	47.3
Price & direct booking benefits	commission, pay, hotels, hotel, directly	2	8	3	13	17.6
Familiarity & personal preference	hotel, money, direct, book, contact	0	4	9	13	17.6
Cost efficiency	price, better, website, brand, direct	0	5	5	10	13.5
Loyalty & brand affiliation	website, cheaper, brand, price, room	0	2	1	3	4.1

Table 6: Motivators to book via a brand website (measurement: ordinal, $n = 87$)

Cluster Name	Keywords	Negative	Neutral	Positive	n	%
Price & direct booking benefits	price, direct, better, contact, commission	2	22	22	46	52.9
Financial considerations	hotel, money, spend, better, willingness	0	12	11	23	26.4
Cost efficiency	cheaper, brand, directly, commission, bit	0	10	1	11	12.6
Familiarity & personal preference	know, place, year, probably, book	0	0	1	1	1.1
Loyalty & brand affiliation	loyalty, programme, good, brand, option	0	3	3	6	6.9

TABLE 7: Motivators to not book via a brand website (measurement: ordinal, $n = 73$)

Cluster Name	Keywords	Negative	Neutral	Positive	n	%
Price & direct booking benefits	prices, easy, cheaper, pay, room	9	13	14	36	49.3
Cost efficiency	price, hotel, room, website, direct	0	10	3	13	17.8
Familiarity & personal preference	website, booking, brand, easy, hotel	2	6	2	10	13.7
Loyalty & brand affiliation	OTA, hotel, time, price, prices	0	3	5	8	11.0
Financial considerations	easier, OTA, book, website, hotel	0	3	3	6	8.2

on increasing the customer perception of value towards to hotel and to book the next visit via the brand website. As an incentive to "see you again soon", hotels may present the most appealing offers on their website and distribute special codes to guests at check-out or through the post-stay survey, thereby influencing the consumer decision-making process.

Specific factors influencing choice of booking channel

As seen from the results in Table 2, the factors influencing the choice of a booking channel are price, trustworthiness and reputation, user-friendliness/ease of use, and other payment options than credit cards. In their research, Park et al. (2019) emphasise the importance of channel characteristics (price) and website features (user-friendliness/ease). The quality of an online reservation system considerably influences trust and, in the end, whether the tool will be used to book the hotel room. In addition, the quality of the website (structure, layout, content, appearance) and its reliability impact online hotel room reservations (Faliha et al., 2021).

The primary motivators to book via an OTA, shown in Table 4, relate to ease of use, comparison and reviews, which is in line with the results from the factor shared above and with the statement by Park et al. (2019) mentioning that things like price, facilities, location, hotel reviews and pictures are all essential at different times.

The factors influencing the choice of a booking channel the least are paying commission to an OTA (Table 3), integration of other travel-related services, and the benefits of a loyalty programme. The fact that customers are unaware that hotels need to pay commission to an OTA might be seen as the hotel's choice to cooperate with an OTA as part of their digital marketing strategy. As part of digital marketing tactics in the hospitality industry, innovative technology applications are applied to make services more useful by including online reservation systems as distribution channels and online customer reviews as marketing tools, increasing sales opportunities worldwide. The goal of including digital marketing in the company's strategy is to guide customers better in the online booking journey (Faliha et al., 2021). On the other hand, mentioned as one of the elements having a negative impact on booking via an OTA is the fact that hotels need to pay commissions. Here, a contradiction in the results shown in Tables 3 and 5 is seen.

The most interesting point here is that customers do not care about the loyalty programme's benefits. While Kyomba et al. (2022) state that direct bookings can be established by launching loyalty programmes and by establishing new products and services, hotels can compete much better with OTAs.

The results that indicate whether a customer is considering booking via a brand website after comparing hotels via an OTA, and the outcome of still booking via an OTA once the customer stays in the hotel are inconclusive. There is a willingness to consider it, but the results do not demonstrate any actual move from the OTA towards the brand website. The following can be concluded by moving towards the motivators to book via a brand website, which is the ideal situation. The primary motivators are better personalised contact, better price and no commission to be paid. The improvement of the brand website is needed because it is often experienced as not being convenient to book on the site due to inferior quality and not always having the best deal (Tables 6 & 7). De Vries (2022) states that the top three elements of information to be present according to customers

on a distribution channel are: 1) reservation-price information; 2) customer contact and information; and 3) facilities information (Salem & Čavlek, 2016), labelled as the functional value (Sheth et al., 1991).

The steps a customer takes to make a choice are shown in this model: the *awareness* set includes all the products the customer knows about; the *consideration* set includes the products they are thinking about buying; and the *action* set includes the product they buy. It is stated that these sets are affected by both internal factors (like personal experience) and external factors (like information gathered), with external factors having a more significant effect. The way the choice is made also matches the way utilitarian (rational) people choose, which is in line with the ideas of functional value (Sheth et al., 1991), monetary value and quality of benefit value (Talwar et al., 2020), as explained by De Vries (2022).

A hotel could proceed with the following measures: select a panel of customers representing various generations and market segments to evaluate its brand website; have them mark their experience with the website using the information in Appendix A (Table 8). Then, construct a test website in which the aforementioned components, including visuals, are integrated and evaluated across different layouts.

Limitations

The main limitation is that the surveys have not been filled out by customers who visited a specific hotel, which makes their sample less homogeneous, and needs to be considered in interpreting the results. The sample size gives a decent insight into the customers' intentions.

Implications

When a hotel wants to persuade a customer to book their next stay via the brand website, the hotel needs to make sure to offer the customer the best technological experience possible using ease of use of the website and booking tool, including a mobile application. The possibility of comparison (price and hotels), seeing the ratings by customers (reviews) and companies (score 8 out 10 on Booking.com), the trustworthiness of the company and the website, as well as other payment options besides credit card are all important factors. Lastly, using images to let the customer dream of the experience in advance, accompanied by short textual cues, is essential. It is suggested that hotels not stop the use of OTAs as a distribution channel; instead, use them wisely in the digital marketing strategy to keep the billboard effect present.

ORCID iDs

Marit de Vries — <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8027-3169>

References

- Anutarawaykin, T., Joysa, J., Li, C., & Nuangjamnong, C. (2023). Factors influencing online hotel booking intention of individual tourists in Bangkok. *AU-HIU International Multidisciplinary Journal*, 3, 80–101. <http://www.assumptionjournal.au.edu/index.php/auhiu/article/view/7507>

- Decena, K. E. F., & Delfin, M. G. (2022). Factors affecting the usage of online booking sites: Comparative analysis on agoda, booking, and hotels. In *Proceedings of the 7th North American International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management* (pp. 672–682). Industrial Engineering and Operations Management Society International.
- De Vries, M. (2022). What can hotels learn content wise from online travel agency websites?. *Research in Hospitality Management*, 12(3), 294–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/22243534.2023.2202489>
- Faliha, N., Siti, A. E., Kusdi, R., & Andriani, K. (2021). Online reservation system and online customer review: Its Impact on brand image, trust and hotel booking decision. *International Journal of Economics, Business and Accounting Research*, 5(4), 409–425 .
- Garcia, G., Dos Anjos, S., & Doğan, S. (2022). Online travel agencies and their role in the tourism industry. *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 10(3), 361–386. <https://doi.org/10.30519/ahtr.865546>
- Hermanus, J., & Indradewa, R. (2022). Perceived value and attitude with trust as mediating variable toward intention to booking hotel online. *American International Journal of Business Management*, 5(03), 76–83. <https://www.ajbm.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/1537683.pdf>
- Kesmodel, U. S. (2018). Cross-sectional studies — what are they good for? *Acta obstetrica et gynecologica Scandinavica*, 97(4), 388–393. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aogs.13331>
- Khan, A., Khan, F. U., Israr, A., & Zardari, S. (2022). Determinants of customer satisfaction in online booking hotels: Evidence from Asian countries. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 40(2), 773–785. <https://pjss.bzu.edu.pk/index.php/pjss/article/view/884>
- Kyomba, M. N., Spencer, J. P., & Muresherwa, G. (2022). Indirect versus direct bookings: Hotel customer motivations for online reservations at travel agencies in the Cape metropolis. *Acta Universitatis Danubius: Œconomica*, 18(5), 58–76. <https://dj.univ-danubius.ro/index.php/AUDOE/article/view/1934>
- Lata, S., & Kumar, A. (2021). What determines tourist adoption of hotel websites for online hotel bookings?: An empirical analysis by taking e-trust as a mediator. *International Journal of Asian Business and Information Management*, 12(3), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJABIM.294101>
- Park, S., Yin, Y., & Son, B. G. (2019). Understanding of online hotel booking process: A multiple method approach. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 25(3), 334–348. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356766718778879>
- Salem, I. E. B., & Čavlek, N. (2016). Evaluation of hotel website contents: existence-importance analysis. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 7(4), 366–389. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTT-04-2016-0020>
- Sheth, J. N., Newman, B. I., & Gross, B. L. (1991). Why we buy what we buy: A theory of consumption values. *Journal of Business Research*, 22(2), 159–170. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0148-2963\(91\)90050-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0148-2963(91)90050-8)
- Talwar, S., Dhir, A., Kaur, P., & Mäntymäki, M. (2020). Why do people purchase from online travel agencies (OTAs)? A consumption values perspective. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 88, 102534. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102534>
- Ullah, I., Rukh, G., Zhou, J., Khan, F. U., & Ahmed, Z. (2019). Modelling customer satisfaction in online hotel booking. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 48, 100–104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.012>
- Xu, X., & Luo, Y. (2023). What makes customers “click”? An analysis of hotel list content using deep learning. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 114, 103581. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103581>

Appendix A — Table 8: Content items online hotel distribution channels

TCV (Sheth 1991)	OTA Consumption Values (Talwar, et al., 2020a)		Existing-importance evaluation model (Salem & Čavlek, 2016)	
FUNCTIONAL VALUE	MONETARY VALUE	reasonable pricing	D) Reservation-price information	D1. Av. of prices/rates
		compare prices	D) Reservation-price information	yes/no
		promotional offers	D) Reservation-price information	D4. Availability of packages/promotion
			D) Reservation-price information	D5. Availability of special offers
			D) Reservation-price information	D9. Group promotions/members
	QUALITY OF BENEFIT VALUE	convenience	A) Facilities information	A10. Free Wi-Fi
			D) Reservation-price information	D2. On-line availability
			D) Reservation-price information	D3. Availability of booking online
			D) Reservation-price information	D8. Currency converter
			F) Management of the website	F2. Multi-language
			F) Management of the website	F4. Availability of sign in
			F) Management of the website	F5. Possibility of downloading
			F) Management of the website	F8. Help
	consistency in offering benefits	D) Reservation-price information	yes/no	
high level of benefits	D) Reservation-price information	yes/no		
EPISTEMIC VALUE	INFORMATION VALUE	Information on offers	D) Reservation-price information	D4. Availability of packages/promotion
			D) Reservation-price information	D5. Availability of special offers
			D) Reservation-price information	D9. Group promotions/members
			F) Management of the website	F1. Photo album/photos
			F) Management of the website	F3. Photo video/virtual tour
		Information on promotions	D) Reservation-price information	D4. Availability of packages/promotion
			D) Reservation-price information	D5. Availability of special offers
			D) Reservation-price information	D9. Group promotions/members
			F) Management of the website	F1. Photo album/photos
			F) Management of the website	F3. Photo video/virtual tour
	Terms & conditions use of tool	D) Reservation-price information	D6. Information about types of cards accepted	
		F) Management of the website	F6. Availability of terms of use	
	INFORMATION VALUE	n/a	A) Facilities information	A1. General description for the site
				A2. Description of facilities
				A3. Description for room facilities
				A4. Description for different activities/entertainment
				A5. Description for dining room(s)
				A6. Description for bars
				A7. Description for conference halls
				A8. Description for reception facilities
				A9. Description for shops/gifts
n/a		B) Surrounding area information	B1. Area short description	
			B2. Availability of map	
n/a	C) Customer contact and communication	C1. Address		
		C2. Availability of telephone information		
		C3. Availability of fax information		
		C4. Availability of e-mail address		
		C5. Complaint form		
		C6. Feedback form		
		C7. Frequently asked questions		
		C8. Newsletter		
		C9. Announcements		
		C10. Awards		
C11. Press				
C12. Questionnaire				

continued on next page

TCV (Sheth 1991)	OTA Consumption Values (Talwar, et al., 2020a)	Existing-importance evaluation model (Salem & Čavlek, 2016)	
	n/a	E) Company information	E1. Information about us/brand E2. Information about employment E3. Availability of hotel policy E4. RSS (Really Simple Syndication)
CONDITIONAL VALUE	PREFERENCE VALUE	Free cancellations	D) Reservation-price information
		Promotional incentives	D) Reservation-price information
		Listing of more properties	D) Reservation-price information
N/A	MODERATING VARIABLE	Visibility (intentions towards in case of e-commerce, mobile service, mobile payments, adaption technology)	F) Management of the website
			A) Facilities information
			A11. Mobile applications
			C) Customer contact & communication
			C13. Recommendations
		C) Customer contact & communication	C14. 24-hour chat room
		C) Customer contact & communication	C15. Social media
		F) Management of the website	F7. Search engines/links
	Privacy /Security concern (physical on location, and online with information-privacy concerns (sharing personal and financial data))	F) Management of the website	yes/no