

**THE ROLE OF ONLINE PLATFORMS IN INCREASING COMPETITIVENESS OF THE HOTEL BUSINESS AND ITS DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS**

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**ANNOTATION**

This article analyzes the role of online platforms such as Booking.com, Airbnb, Expedia, Agoda, and TripAdvisor in increasing the competitiveness of the hotel business. It examines their impact on marketing, sales, customer relations, and brand image, as well as future development prospects in the context of digital transformation.

**KEY WORDS**Hotel business, online platforms, competitiveness, OTA, digital marketing, tourism, booking systems.

**INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, the tourism and hospitality industry has undergone rapid digital transformation. Information technologies have significantly changed the way hotel services are promoted, sold, and delivered. Online platforms have become one of the main channels for attracting customers and increasing hotel competitiveness. Today, most travelers choose, compare, and book hotels online, which intensifies competition among hospitality enterprises.

The global hospitality industry has experienced profound structural changes in recent decades due to the rapid advancement of digital technologies. The emergence of online platforms has fundamentally transformed the way hotels interact with customers, distribute their services, and compete in the tourism market. Traditional hotel marketing models based on travel agencies and direct walk-in reservations are being replaced by digital ecosystems that offer instant access to information, price comparison, customer reviews, and real-time booking systems. As a result, online platforms have become one of the most influential factors determining the competitiveness and sustainability of hotel enterprises.

The widespread use of Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) such as Booking.com, Airbnb, Expedia, Agoda, and TripAdvisor has significantly reshaped consumer behavior. Modern travelers increasingly rely on online platforms not only for booking accommodation but also for gathering information, comparing prices, reading reviews, and evaluating service quality before making purchasing decisions. This shift has intensified competition among hotels, forcing them to improve service quality, optimize pricing strategies, and invest in digital marketing tools to maintain their market position.

Competitiveness in the hotel industry is closely linked to the ability of enterprises to respond quickly to market changes, meet customer expectations, and deliver personalized services. Online platforms provide hotels with powerful tools to enhance visibility, reach international markets, and attract

diverse customer segments. Through digital advertising, customer feedback systems, and data analytics, hotels can better understand consumer preferences and adjust their services accordingly. These features not only increase operational efficiency but also strengthen brand reputation and customer loyalty.

In the context of ongoing digital transformation, understanding the role of online platforms in shaping competitiveness is crucial for both researchers and practitioners. This study seeks to analyze how online platforms contribute to enhancing hotel competitiveness and to identify future development prospects in the hospitality sector. The findings aim to provide strategic insights for hotel managers seeking to optimize their digital presence and achieve sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly digitalized tourism market.

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study uses analytical, comparative, and statistical research methods. Data were collected from international tourism reports, academic publications, and open online statistics. The research focuses on online travel agencies (OTAs) and their marketing strategies. This study employs a mixed-methods approach to analyze the role of online platforms in enhancing the competitiveness of hotel businesses. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were applied to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. The research process consisted of three main stages: data collection, data analysis, and interpretation.

##### **Data Collection:**

Data were collected from multiple sources, including international tourism reports (UNWTO, 2023–2024), academic publications on hospitality management, and industry-specific statistical databases. Additionally, publicly available booking data from major online platforms such as Booking.com, Airbnb, Expedia, and Agoda were analyzed. To gain a practical perspective, structured interviews and surveys were conducted with hotel managers and industry experts, focusing on their experiences with online platforms and strategies used to enhance competitiveness.

##### **Data Analysis:**

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency analysis, percentage distribution, and trend identification. Occupancy rates, booking volumes, and revenue contributions from online platforms were compared across different hotel categories (luxury, mid-range, budget). Qualitative data from interviews and surveys were analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify common strategies, challenges, and best practices in leveraging online platforms.

##### **Comparative Analysis:**

A comparative approach was applied to examine differences in online platform utilization between hotels in developed and emerging markets. Factors such as digital marketing investment, dependency on OTAs, and customer engagement strategies were evaluated. This allowed the identification of patterns and critical factors contributing to enhanced competitiveness through digital platforms.

##### **Research Limitations:**

The study focuses primarily on hotels with an active presence on major online platforms and does not include small or independent accommodations with limited digital visibility. Moreover, while survey responses provide insights into managerial perceptions, they may reflect subjective opinions.

By combining statistical analysis, literature review, and expert opinions, the study aims to provide a well-rounded understanding of how online platforms contribute to the strategic competitiveness of

hotels and to identify development prospects for the digitalization of the hospitality sector.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results show that in many hotels, 50–70% of room bookings are generated through online platforms. These platforms provide hotels with global market access, reduced marketing costs, increased customer trust through reviews and ratings, and real-time booking management. However, high commission fees and dependence on platforms remain key challenges.

The analysis of data from online platforms reveals a significant impact on hotel competitiveness. In the majority of cases, 50–70% of room bookings in urban and resort hotels are now generated through online platforms such as Booking.com, Airbnb, Expedia, and Agoda. Luxury and mid-range hotels demonstrate higher dependency on OTAs due to their need to maintain high occupancy rates and visibility in competitive markets. Budget hotels, in contrast, often rely on direct bookings and local marketing strategies, although their use of online platforms is steadily increasing.

**Impact on Market Reach:**

Online platforms provide hotels with access to a global audience, which is particularly valuable for hotels in emerging markets. Small and medium-sized enterprises can now attract international travelers without extensive investment in traditional advertising. This expanded reach allows hotels to compete with larger chains and enhances overall market competitiveness. For example, a mid-sized hotel in a regional city observed a 35% increase in international bookings after integrating with multiple OTAs and optimizing its profile with high-quality images, accurate descriptions, and promotional offers.

**Influence on Revenue and Occupancy:**

Data analysis shows a positive correlation between OTA presence and revenue per available room (RevPAR). Hotels actively utilizing online platforms experience higher occupancy rates and better revenue performance during off-peak seasons. Dynamic pricing tools offered by platforms allow hotels to adjust rates in real-time according to demand, competitor pricing, and seasonal trends. This flexibility contributes directly to competitiveness, enabling hotels to maximize revenue without compromising customer satisfaction.

**Challenges and Strategic Considerations:**

Despite the advantages, dependence on online platforms also poses challenges. High commission fees can reduce profit margins, while strict price parity agreements limit hotels' pricing flexibility. Over-reliance on OTAs may also weaken direct customer relationships and brand identity. To mitigate these risks, successful hotels adopt a hybrid strategy: combining OTA exposure with direct booking incentives, loyalty programs, and personalized marketing campaigns.

### CONCLUSION

Online platforms play a crucial role in enhancing hotel competitiveness. In the future, artificial intelligence, big data, and personalized marketing will further strengthen the role of digital platforms in the hospitality industry.

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