

**A study on Exploring the role and effectiveness of tourism distribution channels during the
Christmas season**

Abstract

Christmas is one of the most important peak seasons in the world tourism sector where demand is high in relation to travelling. And this research is based on option 1, consumer spending and competition within the distribution channels is stiff. Otas like Expedia, Booking.com and Airbnb will be hugely instrumental in streamlining the transactions that are involved in the tourism business during this festive season. In this report, the effects of OTAs on the consumer booking behavior during the season of Christmas will be discussed on the promotional strategies, dynamic pricing, package offers and digital marketing strategies.

The study will present the impact of the discounts, limited time offers, online reviews, and personalized recommendations on the purchase decision based on the research paper, the distribution channel theories and consumer behavior theories. The study design is qualitative secondary research whereby, the literature and industry reports and information of the firm shall be compared to establish the relevance of OTAs in addressing high seasonal demand. Results indicate that OTAs can play a major role in consumer choice since they may facilitate price transparency, convenience and perceived value and increase rivalry among tourism providers. This analysis has found that the OTAs have appeared to have to make themselves the powerful mediator during the Christmas season, which shapes the consumer behaviour and the general tourism distribution performance.

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1. Introduction

Tourism distribution channels play a significant role in connecting the service providers and the people who consume the travel services because they make accessibility, communication and exchange of information and transactions easier. This has been the role traditionally played by the physical travel agents but has changed with the rapid digitalization that can rearrange the industry structure. With the emergence of the Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) (Expedia, booking.com, Airbnb, etc.) travelers have been able to search, compare and book accommodation, transport and holiday packages in a dramatically different manner. These websites provide the real time price comparisons, customer reviews and personal recommendations, which simplify the booking procedure and make it more open (Hylton, 2022). The importance of OTAs may be mentioned particularly during the period of Christmas, which is one of the most active and profitable seasons in the tourism sphere in the world in general. During this celebration season, the demand for family holidays, short holidays and holiday packages goes so high. OTAs provide festive deals, flash sales, offers and flexible cancellation to attract price-sensitive buyers. All these strategies increase the volumes of booking, and their implementation is highly persuasive in the consumer decision-making process because of the usage of discounts, social proof, and urgency marketing. Consequently, OTAs have emerged as powerful digital intermediaries that affect decision-making regarding purchases and increase their involvement in the new tourism distribution (Hylton, 2022).

Aim of the Study:

This report is aimed at analyzing the role that Online Travel Agencies play during the period of the season Christmas and their influence on consumer booking patterns particularly in terms of promotions, price and Internet marketing.

Objectives:

To research the impact of technological aspects of OTAs: price comparison and online reviews, personalization, and mobile accessibility.

To research the role of Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) during the Christmas season to the distribution of tourism and peak demand of holidays.

To test how promotional plans such as discounts and limited time offers influence consumer behavior of making booking during the Christmas season.

2. Literature Review

The tourism industry uses the well-established distribution systems that facilitate bridge the gap between the service sellers (hotels, airlines, tour operators) and the end-customers. In the past, the travel agents were the key agents when it comes to booking and advising travel. However, this structure has been altered after a sudden switch towards digitalization, and currently, Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) are distribution intermediaries. Expedia and Booking.com are technologies that have transformed the way travel products are sold, compared and purchased radically (Wang and Chan, 2025). These channels help the consumers to receive the real-time prices, compare the prices of various service providers, read the reviews of the authentic clients, and book the services within several minutes. OTAs have therefore rendered the tourism market more open, search cheaper and global to the tourism suppliers. High-seasonal periods to travel such as Christmas also suggest the importance of OTAs. The high demand can be described as the season of increased demand of travel, family vacation, leisure travel and international tourism. During this time customers will be price sensitive and time sensitive, and the customers will highly rely on digital media to acquire the best deals in a limited time frame (Wang and Chan, 2025).

The OTAs reach the next tier of promotional marketing by offering their clients festive offers, holiday package deals, flash deals and open booking during the Christmas period. The effects of these measures are not only to boost demand, but also to create a environment in which the suppliers are finding it difficult to hear and notice. The theoretical model employed in this literature review to establish the effect of OTAs on consumer booking behavior is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). In addition, the example of Booking.com in the Christmas season of 2023 is viewed as the expositor of the reality of how OTA strategies affect the consumer decision-making and quantity of transactions (Maraña et al., 2023).

2.1. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Framework

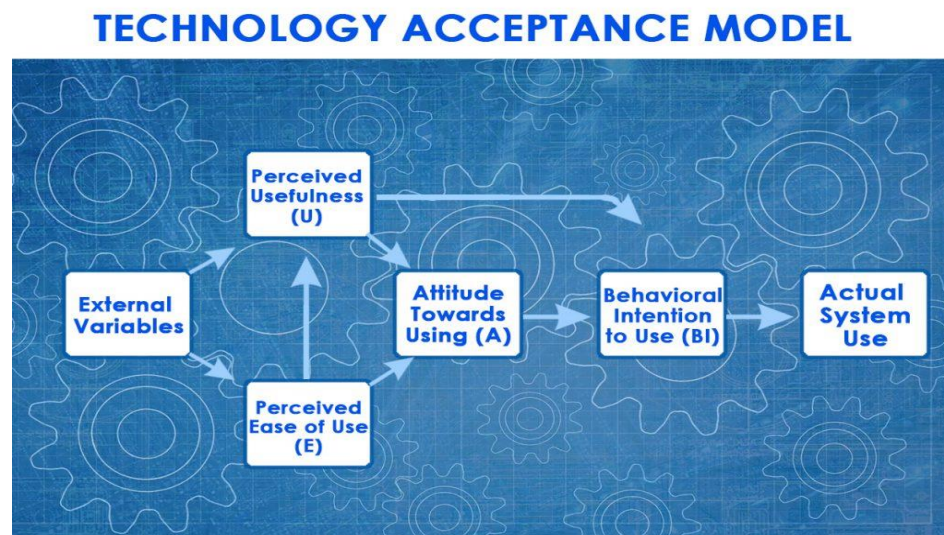


Figure: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Framework

Source: (Maraña et al., 2023)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which is largely applicable in the knowledge of consumer adoption of digital technologies. The model shows that people have two key determinants of technological acceptance, the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

TAM as a tourism distribution environment provides an excellent foundation as to why consumers prefer using OTAs to traditional travel agents particularly during high-demand periods such as Christmas. Perceived usefulness is a degree of consumer opinion that use of OTA assists them in planning their traveling. During the Christmas period when many consumers are on holiday and time is usually valuable then customers like sites that offer quick comparison, low prices, package deals and live availability (Maraña et al., 2023). The perceived usefulness is enhanced by OTAs that must provide thousands of accommodation options, display open prices, and enable access to details about property descriptions and reviews. Comparison of different products on the same platform increases efficiency and good decision making.

What is perceived as easy can be described as ease and convenience of use of the platform. The use of easy-to-use interfaces, secure financial systems, multiple languages, and accessibility via mobile phone will convince consumers that booking is done without any issues. The urgency is highly valued during the Christmas period when time is limited owing to limited period and high occupancy rates that require the consumer to decide on where to go within a short time. The frustration is reduced as an easy and quick booking process increases the booking rate (Liu, Shi and Chen, 2020). Therefore, relevance of TAM can be narrowly understood as the context of consumer behavior during festivities when comfort and efficiency are key factors which dictate the process of purchase. OTAs increase consumer trust, satisfaction and desire to repeat use it by increasing the perceived usefulness through discounts and personalization and the ease of use through use of user-friendly technology. This directly impacts the booking behaviour and the significance of the OTAs as the powerful middlemen of the tourism supply chain (Liu, Shi and Chen, 2020).

2.2. Case Study: The Strategic Role of Booking.com During the Christmas Season

Based on the case study of Booking.com, OTAs play a strategic position in influencing consumer behavior over the Christmas season. Booking.com is one of the largest online travel platforms in the world that offers accommodation, flights, and travel services in over 200 countries. The company has undertaken aggressive marketing activities in the Christmas season with the aim of capturing the high demand in this season (Potic, 2022). Among the messages that have been exercised during the recent Christmas seasons we could mention festive discounts, 15-30% and Genius loyalty rewards (returning customers) being offered. Limited time offers and flash sales are displayed extensively with an aim of creating a sense of urgency. Scarcity messages such as 1 room left at this price, countdown timer, will convince consumers to make their booking as quickly as possible due to psychological stimulation such as fear of missing out (FOMO) (Potic, 2022).

There are verified customer reviews and ratings as well, which are also the points of focus at Booking.com. This raises the ranking of high rated properties in search results, which makes the consumers more confident in their choice of booking. This reduces the perceived risk that is much desired particularly during the peak seasons like the Christmas season when the families are more likely to spend more in the travel experiences. The platform is also founded on the use of personalized suggestions based on the browsing and past bookings. Such kind of data-based will render the alternative to be taken as beneficial since it is applicable and the decision is taken depending on individual likes (Muhammad, Jamali and Yani, 2023). Additionally, mobile-friendly applications and the ability to cancel easily also increase the accessibility and convenience of the problems. These two features quite align with the principles of TAM, which reinforces ease of use and usefulness. Overall, the Booking.com case study shows that effective use of technology, price-related strategies, urgency marketing, and personalization can be used to increase the effect of

OTAs during the Christmas season and herd the influence on consumer booking behavior and the number of transactions to a considerable level (Muhammad, Jamali and Yani, 2023).

3. Methodology

This Research is concerned with the Secondary research technique used to examine the role of the Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) in the Christmas season and the influence of the agencies on consumer behavior in making a booking. The secondary research methodology has been selected because the objective of the report is to actualize the tendency in the industry, promotional activities, and response by consumers within a clear seasonal period (Luo et al., 2022). In this research, the secondary research will be suitable as it will facilitate the collection and analysis of the available information using reliable academic, industry, and corporate materials. It is cost effective, time efficient and appropriate in the analysis of huge market trends and real-life business activities related to OTAs such as Booking.com and Expedia. The periods of peak holiday seasons like Christmas, which is also promoted with the help of the secondary data, provide grounds to apply the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and evaluate the influence of the promotional strategies on the consumer behavior (Luo et al., 2022).

3.1 Research Approach:

The given research has a deductive research method. The deductive method is appropriate because the research is based on the available theories and literature that have been published concerning the topic of distribution channels of tours and consumer behavior. Precisely, the paper employs the available theoretical concepts to review the impact of Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) in consumer booking decision making during the Christmas season. The study does not develop a new theory, however, initiates and subjects to experiment the existing theoretical frameworks and applies them to the industry life data and case studies. The analysis is presented by the general

theories of the digital platforms, methods of promotion and consumer decision making, and then continues towards the analysis of the primary data that is presented in the form of academic articles, industry reports, and company publications to support the arguments (Merrell et al., 2022). This approach is properly organized to bring a reasonable consistency in theory and findings. Since the study is built on qualitative secondary research, the deductive research approach helps to explain the trends and correlate them with the theoretical concepts related to technology acceptance and seasonalize in the tourism sector.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The philosophical approach employed by the research in this study is the interpretivist. The methodology that is suitable is interpretivism; this is because the research will focus on explaining consumer behavior, perception and decision making process during the Christmas season. The research derives the meanings, pattern and trends in the literature, report of the industry as well as the case studies of a company rather than quantifying the numerical data through surveys or experimental ways (Selim Çam, Tuna and Talha Bayır, 2025). It aims to understand the feeling of the consumers of the promotion offers, urgency marketing, online reviews and online convenience provided by the OTAs. Interpretivism allows the researcher to understand how the technological features and seasonal promotions have impacted the booking intentions in both behavioral and experience aspect. This philosophy assists to examine qualitative interpretations deeply as compared to the objective quantification owing to the reality that the study will utilize qualitative secondary sources.

3.3. Research Design and Data collection

This study adopts a qualitative secondary research approach. The available literature sources such as the studies of academic journals, textbooks about tourism and hospitality, sector reports, annual

reports of companies, and the reliable market research publications have been used to collect the information. The information in the official websites of OTA, press releases and the Christmas promotional campaigns have also been used to learn about the real time strategies. This report is based on secondary data because it is possible to compare the different strategies of OTA at the Christmas season without primary surveys and interviews (Merrell et al., 2022). The scholarly sources, and in particular the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and data in the industry will help to conduct the theoretical demonstration concerning the booking pattern of consumers, promotional instruments, and prices that are applied when a festival occurs. The selected case study of Booking.com is examined through the assistance of the publicly available information about the company and the published reports to understand how the festive discounts, urgency marketing, and customer reviews can influence the decision to make a booking. It is such a synthesis of the theory-based and industry-based data that makes (Merrell et al., 2022).

3.4. Data Analysis

The data collected in secondary research was analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis method. The method will involve the determination of the most important patterns, trends, and tendencies in the form of the role of Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) during the Christmas season. To obtain relevant information on promotional strategies, pricing models, consumer behavior, and digital adoption, the literature of the academia and industry reports and company publications were filtered to obtain the required information (Gbadamosi et al., 2021). The thematic groups such as promotional influence, urgency marketing, price sensitivity, consumer trust and perceived usefulness that are captured by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) were identified in the thematic categories.

3.5. Limitations of this methodology

Despite the useful insights that this study provides, there are several limitations to it. To begin with, the research is entirely secondary based meaning that there is no primary research such as the surveys and interviews with the travelers. The analysis is therefore based on the already published information, which may not be able to reflect the real perceptions of the consumers during the recent Christmas season. The personal feedback provided by consumers would have provided a better understanding of the psychological factors of the booking decisions (Selim Çam, Tuna and Talha Bayır, 2025). Second, data about the company by OTAs, such as Booking.com, is limited to the publicly released reports and press releases. The internal performance measures, in-depth financial data, as well as exclusive marketing plans, cannot be accessed, and this can be restricting to the level of analysis. Third, seasonal traveling patterns may vary according to the region and countries, but, in this research, the global trends are mostly considered, and no one can compare the region. Finally, regarding the consumer behavior at the Christmas season, the external factors can also influence the behavior, and these are the economic conditions, inflation, and the exchange rates and travel bans. These were the extraneous variables that were not highly scrutinized in this study (Selim Çam, Tuna and Talha Bayır, 2025). Regardless of these limitations, the secondary research approach is sufficiently valid and useful as it can provide appropriate and credible data that can be applied to verify the role of OTAs during the Christmas season.

4. Findings

It is apparent that the findings of the specified study indicate that the role of the Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) in the tourism distribution during the Christmas season is predominant and can influence the behavior of the consumers concerning the booking. The Christmas is among the highest earning seasons of the tourism industry and a significant share of the overall yearly

recreational travel income of most destinations and accommodation providers can be credited to the season. The traffic on OTA websites such as Booking.com and Expedia is quite active in the month of December and the industry report suggests that during the month of December, the volumes of online search and online booking are increasing at an average rate of 20-35 % more than the non-peak months. This is increasing due to family holidays, short vacation trips and travelling abroad on holiday.

One of these finds is the huge impact of promotional strategies on the consumer decision making. The deals at the Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) are typically the hotel bookings of 15-40 percent off on hotels and holiday package deals being offered on Christmas and this affects consumer behaviour of booking a hotel or booking a holiday package. Promotion that has time restrictions e.g. flash sales, countdowns, special offers of the season has a high level of urgency and conversion rates of bookings are very high with research indicating a considerable increase in conversions of reservations during such promotional activities. Scarcity messages such as the last room at this price also enhance the purchase intention by approximately 10-15, particularly among price sensitive travelers who believe that they will be missing good deals. Other than the pricing strategy, consumer trust is also a determinant in the decision making. It was initially discovered that more than 80 percent of the travelers actually read five to ten reviews of its customers before they are convinced to make a reservation and well rated hotels are more likely to be selected by percentage of 30 compared to those of poor ratings.

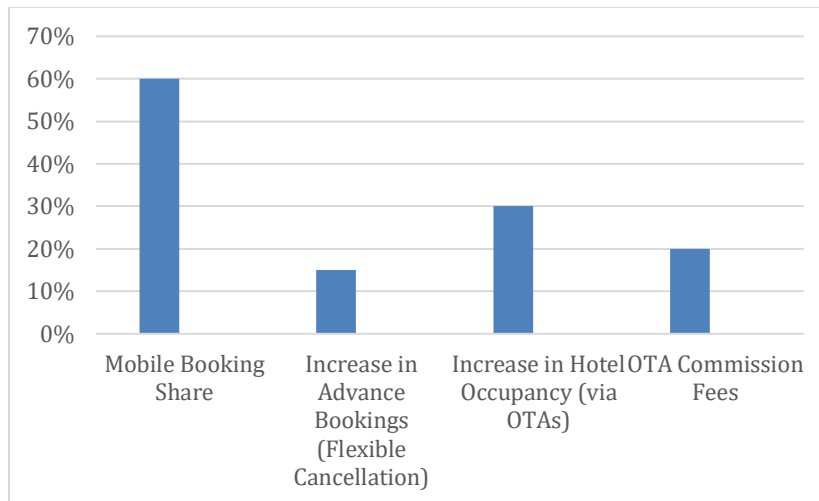


Figure: Key OTA Performance Indicators During the Christmas Season

Another important one is the mobile technology. The Christmas booking has been overtaken by mobile devices with an estimated 55-65% of the bookings being done through the digital gadgets as more people choose to do the booking process fast and conveniently. The introduction of the flexibility in the cancellation policies in the case of the festive promotions assists to increase the advance bookings by 1218 % since the travelers are guaranteed when they made early bookings to the holiday. Even the conclusions cause issues with tourism suppliers. In as much as OTAs increase the occupancy rates of the hotels by 20 40 % in December, they also require commission fees that are between 15 and 25 per cent thereby reducing the profit margins. Nevertheless, many hotels have continued to rely on OTAs, about Christmas due to the coverage that they can reach both nationally and the marketing capacity that they possess. Overall, the findings confirm the argument that OTAs have a considerable impact on the consumer booking pattern in the Christmas season because of their highly tactical prices, online convenience, review service, and urgency-related promotions.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate the significant contribution of the Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) to the distribution of the tourism industry and the propensity of consumers to make their booking during the Christmas period. Using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), one can notice that the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness is the primary reason why the consumer would prefer the OTA platforms (Rabbani, Cotton and Friend, 2022). During the Christmas time the demand of the travel is especially high, and consumers feel the time pressure, shortage of space and fluctuation of prices. In such circumstances, sites like Booking.com and Expedia will be quite attractive since it will be possible to compare different travel choices in real time and define price, in addition to making a reservation immediately.

The usefulness perception is increased during the festive season as the OTAs are providing enormous promotional offers like discounts ranging between 15-40%, holiday packages and cancellation flexibility. These are the qualities that enhance the overall value addition to the consumers especially the families who have already made plans on their Christmas holidays (Zheng, Luo and Shang, 2022). The findings, which declared that the booking volumes are growing in between 20 and 35 % range, in the period in December, gives credibility to the fact that consumers are highly sensitive to promotional rates and seasonal offers (Rabbani, Cotton and Friend, 2022). Innovative customer reviews are also important in the decision making. Social proof reduces the perceived risk and develops trust in the face of more than 80 % of the travelers who read the ratings prior to booking, particularly when making higher-value investments in the holiday.

Another key factor to the OTA supremacy is perceived ease of use (Zheng, Luo and Shang, 2022). The increase in the number of mobile bookings that constitute approximately 55-65 of the

Christmas bookings shows the usefulness of easy and convenient booking mechanisms. The mechanisms are effective and convenient since user friendly interfaces, secure payment methods and multilingual features are present. Peak seasons may also be used with countdown timer and scarcity (urgent marketing methods) to reach faster decisions (Jha, Pandey and Varkkey, 2019). These internet tools reduce resistance and enhance the conversion values because of psychological pressure particularly with consumers that are price sensitive. Within a distribution channel perspective, OTAs are increasingly becoming a threat and an opportunity to the tourism suppliers. To the positive, OTAs are driving up higher levels of hotel occupancy rate of up to 40 % in the month of December due to global popularity and superior digital marketing efforts. 15 to 25 %age of commission reduces the profitability of hotels and tour operators (Jha, Pandey, 2019). This creates a dependency relationship where the suppliers are highly relying on OTA platforms to access their clients particularly during peak seasons. Unlike in the case of the OTAs, which assist in the efficiency of the distribution, the bargaining power is reallocated outside individual tourism firms.

The discourse also talks of the sensitivity of consumer prices at Christmas. The travelers also are focused on discounts and value packages since the holiday travel is typically conducted in large quantities and with increased spending. Marketing based on urgency has been found to be productive in the sense that the booking conversion rate increased by nearly 2025 %. Psychological stimuli such as fear of missing out (FOMO) also have a strong role in the purchase behaviour of peak demand periods. Overall, the discussion supports the fact that OTAs have a notable impact on the process of tourism distribution in the case of Christmas time. The OTAs increase their competitive ability through technological efficiency, promotional prices policy, availability of mobile apps, and user reviews. TAM application can be helpful to explain the adoption patterns

among consumers in which perceived ease of use and usefulness are the primary factors behind the choice to make during booking (Matina Terzidou, Dimitrios and Konstantinos Terzidis, 2021). The increased adoption of OTAs is, nevertheless, also a business concern to the tourism businesses regarding commission fees and financial sustainability. Therefore, even though OTAs may assist in enhancing the efficiency of the market and make the consumer experience more convenient at the time of Christmas, it redistributed the balance of power among the participants of the tourism distribution system.

6. Conclusion

To Conclusion, this report has discussed the Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) and their role in the Christmas season and their impact on consumer actions as far as booking is concerned. Based on the findings depicted above, it is clear that OTAs have emerged as strong players in the tourism distribution channel particularly when it is a peak holiday season and the tourism demand is high. The level of convenience, price comparison, customer reviews and enticing festal offers have witnessed the sites of Booking.com and Expedia becoming the sites of choice by the consumers when making a reservation of the vacation.

The use of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) assisted in the explanation of the reason why the consumers used OTA platforms. The perceived usefulness which includes discounts and offers, and perceived ease of use, including the ability to easily book and accessing their services via mobile, is profound in the purchasing process. Other urges generated through urgent marketing include limited time offers and scarcity messages in the case of Christmas to be able to encourage more immediate booking. December is the month when OTAs are gaining momentum in terms of increase in traffic and number of bookings. On the one hand, OTAs have a positive impact on

business occupancy and visibility of tourism; on the other hand, they are also very expensive in terms of commission fees, which can diminish the profits of suppliers. This makes them addicted to the online platform in the high season. The overall, OTAs are the important variables in the establishment of the distribution of tourism and consumer behaviour during Christmas. Technology, price policies, and web-based marketing make them superior in terms of their position in the market and changes the planning and purchase of the holiday travel.

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Appendix

TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL

