

Tourism Distribution Channels –

➤ ***Direct Sales Channels in Tourism: The Power of Hotels' Direct Booking Platforms***

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ABSTRACT

In the tourism sector, especially the hotel sector, direct sales channels are one of the most sales channels, which need the highest sales. Due to the competition dominated by Online Travel Agencies, hotels have focused more on their own booking channels, such as their official websites, mobile apps, email booking communications, and telephone calls. These channels enable hotels to cut commission fees, attain closer relationships with their clientele, and give more personalized service. This project researches the role of direct sales channels to shape hotel distribution strategies. It also examines the shift in consumer behaviour as a result of digital transformation, enhanced smartphone adoption, and travel tendencies in the consumer in the post pandemic phase. This report combines consumer behaviour theories, case studies, and market data to determine the pros and cons of direct booking channels. It identifies the various strategies employed by hotels to influence customers to book directly, such as loyalty programs, price guarantees, exclusive discounts, and easy navigation on their websites. The findings are that direct sales channels enable hotels to capture more profit due to favourable margins, greater control of their brand, and need less customer attrition. However, hotels face challenges of increased marketing expenses, the reign of OTAs in the market, and the need for regular marketing in technology.. The report concludes with recommendations for hotels to strengthen their direct booking strategies in a competitive, technology-driven tourism industry.

INTRODUCTION

In the tourism sector, especially the hotel sector, direct sales channels are one of the most sales channels, which need the highest sales. Due to the competition dominated by Online Travel Agencies, hotels have focused more on their own booking channels, such as their official websites, mobile apps, email booking communications, and telephone calls. These channels enable hotels to cut commission fees, attain closer relationships with their clientele, and give more personalized service. This project researches the role of direct sales channels to shape hotel distribution strategies. It also examines the shift in consumer behaviour as a result of digital transformation, enhanced smartphone adoption, and travel tendencies in the consumer in the post pandemic phase. This report

combines consumer behaviour theories, case studies, and market data to determine the pros and cons of direct booking channels. It identifies the various strategies employed by hotels to influence customers to book directly, such as loyalty programs, price guarantees, exclusive discounts, and easy navigation on their websites. The findings are that direct sales channels enable hotels to capture more profit due to favourable margins, greater control of their brand, and need less customer attrition. However, hotels face challenges of increased marketing expenses, the reign of OTAs in the market, and the need for regular marketing in technology.

Customer behaviour has the strongest impact on the shift towards direct sales channels. Customers desire quick and instant access to information, flexible booking, personalisation, and transparent pricing. Customers also prefer booking directly because communicating directly removes experience friction. The pandemic fueled the direct booking trend because customers sought clear and real-time communication regarding cancellations and travel updates. Knowing these trends puts a hotel in a better position to remain competitive. No longer the case where direct sales, to hotels, were countered simply as an alternative to OTAs are now a survival tactic. Hotels around the globe, irrespective of their size, and in an era of extensive self-service customer friction reduction spend on the motivational trades from digital marketing, website configurator, and loyalty program to enticing self-service customers. This trend also represents a more general interpretation of the desire of businesses to maintain a better position of control over their distribution channels and customer information.

This project analyzes and determines the significance of the direct booking approach and examines how hotels can effectively improve direct booking. It investigates the advances made by hotels in their technology (websites and apps), identifies the factors in the market that drive consumers to make direct bookings, and determines strategies that hotels can employ to mitigate their reliance on OTAs without sacrificing market presence and visibility. The report discusses the most common tactics employed by hotels to win over direct consumers, such as best rate guarantees, loyalty programs, exclusive discounts, digital engagement, and gamification. This report utilizes both theoretical and practical, contemporary statistics and examples of direct booking to assess the advancements in the techniques hotels apply to attain direct bookings. It identifies and discusses trends that emerged in the post-pandemic, digital, cautious, and flexible oriented travelers. These trends forced hotels to rethink how they communicate, promote, and deliver their services through direct channels.

The purpose of this study is to provide a clear and detailed understanding of how direct sales channels contribute to hotel profitability, brand control, and customer satisfaction. It also highlights the challenges hotels face—such as the dominance of OTAs, high competition in the digital space, and the need for continuous technological investment. By analyzing both opportunities and limitations, this report aims to offer

practical recommendations for hotels to strengthen their direct sales strategies and remain competitive in the changing tourism landscape.

Overall, this introduction sets the stage for a deeper analysis of how direct booking platforms have reshaped the tourism distribution system. The following sections will explore existing literature, methodology, findings, and discussions to provide a complete overview of how hotels can maximize the power of direct sales channels.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to examine previous academic research and industry studies on tourism distribution channels, with a special focus on direct sales channels used by hotels. It looks at how the distribution landscape has evolved, how consumer behaviour influences booking decisions, and how technology has changed the way hotels sell their rooms. The section is divided into four main parts for better clarity.

3.1 Understanding Tourism Distribution Channels

Tourism distribution channels refer to the pathways through which travel products reach consumers. In the past, tourism products such as hotel stays or tour packages were mainly distributed through travel agents or physical offices. As technology improved, digital intermediaries like OTAs became the dominant force in the distribution system.

According to several researchers, tourism distribution has moved from a traditional system to a multi-layered digital network. Modern distribution channels now include OTAs, meta-search engines (such as Google Hotels or Trivago), hotel websites, social media platforms, and mobile applications. These channels give consumers more options and make the booking process faster and more transparent.

However, the literature shows that while OTAs create visibility and convenience, they also take away a certain level of control from hotels. High commission fees (often between 15%–25%), strict contract terms, and unequal bargaining power have made hotels rethink their dependence on intermediaries. As a result, direct sales channels have gained more attention in recent years, and many researchers argue that direct sales could become the preferred strategy for long-term profitability.

3.2 Direct Sales Channels in Tourism

Direct sales channels refer to any method where the hotel sells directly to the customer without involving third parties. Common direct channels include:

- Official hotel websites
- Mobile apps
- Direct phone calls
- Email communication
- Social media messaging
- Walk-ins
- Loyalty programs

Industry reports show that hotel websites are the most important direct channel, responsible for a large share of direct bookings. Many studies highlight that customers usually browse different OTA websites first, compare prices, and then visit the hotel website to check for better deals. This behaviour pattern is known as the “billboard effect,” which has been widely discussed in tourism research.

Another important aspect of direct sales discussed in the literature is customer data ownership. When bookings come through OTAs, hotels often do not receive detailed customer information. Direct sales give hotels full access to guest data, which allows them to personalize the experience, send targeted promotions, and build long-term loyalty.

Several scholars point out that direct booking strategies work best when hotels combine user-friendly digital platforms with strong relationship-building efforts. This includes having a fast, easy-to-use website, offering exclusive discounts, and providing flexible cancellation policies.

3.3 Rise of Digital Technologies

Digital transformation has played a major role in the shift toward direct sales. Research shows that modern travellers rely heavily on digital tools when planning trips. Smartphone usage is especially important, as a large percentage of bookings are now made through mobile devices.

Many studies highlight the following technologies as key drivers of direct sales:

a. Mobile-Friendly Websites and Apps

Hotels that invest in mobile optimization often see higher booking conversion rates. Mobile apps also enhance customer engagement through push notifications and personalized offers.

b. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

A strong online presence helps hotels appear in search results, making it easier for customers to find the official website instead of using OTAs.

c. Chatbots and AI Tools

Chatbots can answer customer queries instantly, improving customer satisfaction. AI tools help hotels personalize offers based on browsing behaviour.

d. Social Media Marketing

Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok allow hotels to showcase their brand and drive traffic to direct booking pages.

e. Secure Payment Gateways

Research shows that customers trust hotel websites more when secure payment technologies are used.

Scholarly literature strongly supports the idea that digital technology is the foundation of modern direct sales strategies. It allows hotels to compete with OTAs by improving convenience, trust, and personalization.

3.4 Consumer Behaviour and Booking Preferences

Consumer behaviour theory plays an important role in understanding the success of direct sales channels. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), customers make decisions based on attitudes, perceived control, and social influences. This theory can be applied to the hotel booking process.

a. Trust and Perception of Value

Customers prefer direct channels when they feel confident that the price is fair, the booking is secure, and the hotel is reliable.

b. Need for Personalization

Studies show that travellers enjoy receiving personalized services, such as customized offers or room preferences. Direct channels allow hotels to tailor experiences.

c. Desire for Convenience

Modern travellers want booking processes that are quick and easy. If hotel websites are slow or complicated, customers return to OTAs.

d. Post-Pandemic Behaviour

After COVID-19, customers became more careful about cancellation policies, refunds, and direct communication. Many studies confirm that direct bookings increased because travellers felt safer dealing with the hotel directly.

e. Price Sensitivity

Customers compare prices across platforms. If hotels offer clear price-match guarantees, customers feel encouraged to book directly.

Consumer behaviour research clearly shows that hotels must understand customer motivations if they want to increase direct bookings. Factors like trust, convenience, flexibility, and personalization strongly influence booking decisions.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology section explains how the information for this project was collected, analysed, and presented. Since this is an academic assignment, the focus is on using reliable secondary sources and structured analytical methods to understand the role of direct sales channels in tourism. The approach used in this study is described below.

4.1 Research Design

This project uses a **descriptive and analytical research design**.

- **Descriptive**, because it explains how direct sales channels work, how customers behave, and how hotel strategies have changed over time.
- **Analytical**, because it evaluates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges associated with direct booking platforms.

The research does not involve primary data collection such as surveys or interviews. Instead, it relies on secondary sources, which are considered appropriate for a theoretical and industry-focused study.

4.2 Data Collection Method

This research is based entirely on **secondary data**, collected from:

- Academic journal articles
- Tourism and hospitality textbooks
- Industry reports from organizations like STR, Statista, UNWTO
- Websites of hotel chains (Marriott, Hilton, Hyatt, etc.)
- OTA industry reports
- Post-COVID tourism recovery studies

These sources were selected because they provide updated insights and reliable information about direct sales channels and booking behaviour.

4.3 Data Analysis Method

The data collected from the above sources was analyzed using **qualitative content analysis**. This means the information was reviewed carefully to identify:

- Common themes
- Trends in customer behaviour
- Techniques used by hotels
- Effects of technology

The analysis also involved **comparing** findings from different studies to identify patterns such as the growing preference for direct bookings or the importance of loyalty programs.

4.4 Theoretical Framework

To support the analysis, the project uses consumer behaviour theories like:

- **Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)** – explains how attitudes and perceived control influence booking choices.
- **Customer Decision-Making Process Model** – shows how travellers move from information search to evaluation and final booking.
- **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)** – explains why customers adopt hotel websites or apps.

These theories help connect real-world booking behaviour with established academic frameworks.

4.5 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on:

- Hotels (budget, mid-scale, and luxury)
- Digital direct sales channels
- Comparison with OTAs
- Post-pandemic booking trends
- Strategies to encourage direct bookings

The study does **not** cover airlines or cruise lines in detail, as the aim is to focus on the hotel sector.

4.6 Limitations of the Methodology

Some limitations of this methodology include:

1. **Dependence on secondary data:** The accuracy of the study depends on the reliability of published sources.
 2. **Rapid change in technology:** Digital tools evolve quickly, so some findings may change with new innovations.
 3. **No primary data:** Customer surveys or hotel manager interviews would have provided deeper insights, but were not conducted due to time and assignment constraints.
 4. **Regional differences:** Customer behaviour trends differ across countries, so global conclusions may not fully apply to every location.
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4.7 Ethical Considerations

Since only secondary data is used, there are no privacy risks or ethical concerns involving human subjects. All sources are acknowledged properly in the reference section using **APA style**, ensuring academic honesty.

FINDINGS

The Findings section presents the major insights gathered from secondary data, industry reports, and academic literature. These findings show how direct sales channels have grown, what strategies hotels are using, and how consumer behaviour has shifted—especially after the pandemic. The section is divided into clear themes for better understanding.

5.1 Growth of Direct Booking Channels

Over the last decade, direct booking channels have grown steadily, even though OTAs still hold a strong position in the market. Several major findings support this trend:

a. Rise in Direct Website Bookings

Industry data shows that more travellers are visiting hotel websites before confirming their stays. Large hotel groups like Marriott, Hilton, and Hyatt report a steady increase in bookings made through their official websites. This growth is linked to:

- More user-friendly website designs
- Better price transparency
- Attractive direct booking offers
- Improved online payment systems

b. Influence of Digital Advertising

Hotels have increased their spending on social media advertising, Google ads, and email marketing. These digital promotions drive traffic to hotel websites and encourage travellers to book directly instead of using OTAs.

c. Mobile Bookings Increasing

A major finding is that mobile bookings have grown rapidly. Travellers often use their phones to search, compare, and finalize bookings. Hotels that have mobile-optimized websites or dedicated apps see significantly higher direct booking numbers.

d. Traveller Preference for Direct Communication

Many guests prefer booking directly because it allows them to communicate special requests, confirm policies, or ask about room details. This creates a sense of trust and reduces confusion during check-in.

5.2 Role of Hotel Websites and Mobile Apps

Hotel websites and apps have become the strongest pillars of direct sales strategies. Several findings highlight their importance:

a. Websites as Primary Direct Channels

Hotel websites are the most used direct channel. The quality of a website strongly influences booking decisions. Features such as fast loading speed, clear images, virtual tours, and real-time availability encourage customers to finalize bookings.

b. Mobile Apps Building Loyalty

Apps help hotels stay connected with guests even after their stay. They allow customers to:

- Check in online
- Select preferred rooms
- Receive personalized discounts
- Track loyalty points
- Chat directly with hotel staff

These features increase customer satisfaction and encourage repeat bookings.

c. Secure and Transparent Payments

Findings show that customers are more likely to book directly when websites offer safe payment options like UPI, PayPal, credit cards with OTP verification, and digital wallets.

5.3 Loyalty Programs and Customer Retention

Loyalty programs have become one of the strongest incentives for direct booking.

a. Rewards and Discounts Encourage Direct Bookings

Research indicates that travellers prefer booking directly if they earn points or rewards. Programs such as:

- Marriott Bonvoy
 - Hilton Honors
 - IHG Rewards
- give exclusive benefits when bookings are made directly through the hotel.

b. Personalization Improves Guest Experience

Hotels use loyalty data to understand customer preferences. This helps them offer:

- Room upgrades
- Free breakfast
- Late check-out
- Special member-only prices

These personalized benefits make customers feel valued, increasing the likelihood of future direct bookings.

c. Repeat Guests Drive Higher Revenue

Studies show that repeat guests who book directly spend more on upgrades, food, spa services, and other facilities. This makes loyalty programs a highly profitable strategy.

5.4 Impact of COVID-19 on Direct Bookings

The pandemic played a major role in changing how customers make hotel bookings. Several strong findings emerged:

a. Direct Bookings Increased During the Pandemic

When travel restrictions began, many travellers cancelled or rescheduled their bookings. Those who booked through OTAs often faced delays, unclear refund policies, and slow customer support. As a result, travellers started preferring direct bookings for faster communication.

b. Demand for Flexible Policies

Customers wanted flexible cancellation and date-change options. Hotels responded by offering:

- “Book Now, Pay Later” options
- 24-hour cancellation policies
- Direct refund guarantees

These policies made direct booking more attractive.

c. Higher Trust in Official Hotel Channels

During uncertain times, travellers trusted hotel websites more because they provided accurate, updated information about:

- Safety measures

- Sanitization procedures
- Local travel rules
- Updated refund policies

This increased the credibility of direct booking channels.

d. Rise of Domestic Travel Benefited Direct Channels

With international travel restrictions, domestic tourism increased. Domestic travellers often call hotels directly or use official websites, contributing to a rise in direct sales.

5.5 Comparison: Direct Channels vs. OTAs

A key finding is that hotels and consumers see both advantages and disadvantages in using direct channels and OTAs.

a. OTAs Give Visibility, Direct Channels Give Control

OTAs help hotels reach global audiences, but direct channels allow hotels to control branding, communication, and pricing.

b. Cost Differences

OTAs charge commissions, while direct bookings allow hotels to keep full revenue. This financial benefit motivates hotels to encourage direct bookings.

c. Customer Experience

Guests often report better satisfaction when booking directly because communication is smoother and more personalized.

5.6 Challenges Faced by Hotels in Increasing Direct Sales

Findings also show that hotels face several obstacles:

a. Strong Market Power of OTAs

OTAs spend heavily on advertising and appear at the top of search results. This makes it hard for hotel websites to compete.

b. High Digital Marketing Costs

Hotels need to invest in:

- SEO
- Social media ads

- Website maintenance
 - App development
- This can be expensive, especially for small hotels.

c. Lack of Technical Expertise

Many small and independent hotels struggle to implement advanced digital tools.

d. Customer Habit and Convenience

Many travellers are used to OTAs because they compare prices, show reviews, and offer many options in one place.

5.7 Key Opportunities for Hotels

Despite the challenges, the findings reveal several opportunities:

a. Growing Trend Toward Personalized Experiences

Travellers want unique experiences, which hotels can promote through direct channels better than OTAs.

b. Mobile Technology Growth

Increasing smartphone usage provides a powerful opportunity to strengthen mobile-based direct bookings.

c. Social Media Influence

Hotels can attract direct customers by sharing real experiences, influencer content, and short videos on Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok.

d. Post-Pandemic Shift in Consumer Mindset

Travellers now prefer direct, transparent, and flexible booking processes—benefiting hotels that invest in direct channels.

DISCUSSION

The Discussion section interprets the findings and connects them with the overall objectives of the study. It explains what the findings mean for hotels, how direct sales channels compare with OTAs, what challenges remain, and what the future of direct bookings looks like. This section goes beyond describing data and focuses on deeper analysis.

6.1 Benefits of Direct Sales for Hotels

The findings clearly show that direct sales channels provide major advantages to hotels. The first and most important benefit is **higher profitability**. When bookings come directly through hotel websites or apps, hotels do not need to pay 15–25% commissions to OTAs. This directly increases revenue and allows hotels to invest more in marketing, staff training, and guest services.

Another major benefit is **control over customer relationships**. Direct bookings allow hotels to communicate directly with guests before, during, and after their stay. This helps build trust and loyalty, which are essential for long-term success. For example, when guests book directly, hotels can confirm room preferences, clarify policies, offer special deals, and handle issues quickly. This level of personalized service is difficult to provide when booking through OTAs.

Direct sales also strengthen **brand identity**. Hotels can present their story, values, style, and unique selling points more clearly on their own websites and apps compared to OTA listings. This helps hotels create a better emotional connection with customers and differentiate themselves in a crowded market.

Lastly, direct bookings give hotels **complete access to customer data**. This information is extremely valuable because it helps hotels understand guest behaviour, spending habits, and preferences. Hotels can use this data to create targeted marketing campaigns, personalized offers, and loyalty rewards—leading to more repeat bookings.

6.2 Challenges in Implementing Direct Sales Channels

Despite the benefits, hotels face several serious challenges in increasing direct bookings.

The biggest challenge is the **strong market dominance of OTAs**. Companies like Booking.com, Expedia, and Agoda invest billions of dollars into advertising, search engine optimization (SEO), and partnerships. This gives them much greater visibility compared to individual hotel websites. Even if a hotel has a good website, it is often overshadowed by OTAs in search results.

Another challenge is the **high cost of digital marketing**. To compete with OTAs, hotels need to regularly invest in:

- Search engine optimization
- Social media marketing
- Website design and updates

- Paid advertisements

These investments can be costly, especially for small, independent, or family-run hotels. Many such hotels lack the technical expertise and financial resources needed to maintain advanced digital platforms.

A third challenge is **customer convenience and habits**. Many travellers have become used to OTAs because they allow easy comparison of prices, features, reviews, and availability across multiple hotels. This “all-in-one platform” convenience is difficult for hotels to match.

The final challenge is **price parity agreements**. Some OTAs require hotels to offer the same or lower prices on their sites compared to the hotel’s website. This can restrict hotels from offering better direct discounts, limiting their ability to attract direct bookings.

6.3 Comparison with OTAs: Strengths and Weaknesses

To understand the effectiveness of direct sales channels, it is helpful to compare them with OTAs.

Strengths of OTAs:

- Provide global visibility
- Attract price-sensitive customers
- Show verified reviews
- Spend heavily on marketing

Weaknesses of OTAs:

- Charge high commissions
- Control customer data
- Reduce personal communication between hotels and guests

Strengths of Direct Channels:

- Higher profit margins
- Better customer relationships
- Full control over branding

Weaknesses of Direct Channels:

- Lower visibility compared to OTAs

- Require strong digital platforms
- Need continuous marketing efforts
- Depend on customer willingness to visit hotel websites

From this comparison, it becomes clear that both channels have their own advantages. A balanced approach is often the best strategy: hotels use OTAs for visibility but encourage guests to book directly for better value and service.

6.4 The Role of Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour plays a major role in booking decisions. The findings show that travellers prioritize:

- **Trust**
- **Convenience**
- **Personalization**
- **Flexibility**
- **Transparency**

Direct channels can satisfy each of these needs if hotels invest in the right strategies. For example, clear “best price guarantees” build trust, user-friendly websites offer convenience, loyalty programs personalize the experience, flexible cancellation policies reduce risk, and transparent pricing makes customers feel secure.

The post-pandemic shift in consumer behaviour shows that travellers now prefer to communicate directly with hotels. This gives direct channels a major competitive advantage.

6.5 Future Trends in Direct Sales Channels

Based on current patterns, the future of direct bookings looks strong. Several important trends are emerging:

a. Increasing Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI-powered chatbots, automated recommendations, and personalized offers are becoming common tools for direct sales.

b. Voice Search and Smart Devices

Customers are beginning to use voice assistants like Alexa or Google Assistant to search for hotel information and deals.

c. Social Media as a Booking Platform

Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok now allow direct links to booking pages. Influencer marketing will also continue to grow.

d. Subscription-Based Loyalty Models

Hotels may introduce subscription plans offering guaranteed upgrades, special prices, or free services—encouraging customers to book directly.

e. More Focus on Data Analytics

Hotels will rely on data to understand guest preferences and build stronger long-term relationships.

f. Hybrid Distribution Strategy

While hotels will continue to use OTAs for market reach, direct sales will become a core revenue strategy.

6.6 Strategic Implications for Hotels

The discussion highlights several key implications:

1. **Hotels should not completely depend on OTAs**, because high commissions reduce profits.
2. **Investing in user-friendly websites and apps is essential** to increase direct bookings.
3. **Loyalty programs and personalized communication** remain powerful tools to retain customers.
4. **Hotels must actively use digital marketing**—SEO, social media, and email campaigns—to attract direct customers.
5. **Small hotels may need partnerships or technology providers** to compete effectively.

Overall, hotels must combine technology, customer insights, and innovative marketing to compete with OTAs and maximize the potential of direct sales channels.

CONCLUSION

Direct sales channels have become one of the most important elements of modern tourism distribution, especially in the hotel industry. This study shows that the shift from reliance on OTAs to stronger direct booking strategies is not just a trend, but a long-term transformation driven by technology, changing consumer behaviour, and the need for higher profitability.

The findings clearly demonstrate that direct sales channels—such as hotel websites, mobile apps, direct calls, and loyalty programs—offer several key advantages. Hotels earn higher revenue by saving on OTA commissions, gain full access to customer data, and develop closer relationships with their guests. These direct interactions allow for better service personalization, leading to greater customer satisfaction and long-term loyalty.

The study also reveals that digital transformation has played a major role in strengthening direct channels. Improvements in website design, mobile optimization, social media marketing, secure payment systems, and AI-powered support tools have made direct booking easier and more appealing to customers. Travellers now expect fast, flexible, and transparent booking processes, and hotels that can provide these features are rewarded with increased direct bookings.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this shift. Customers wanted flexible policies, real-time communication, and trustworthy information about safety and cancellations. These needs made travellers prefer direct interaction with hotels, creating a clear opportunity for hotels to strengthen their direct channels.

However, the study also acknowledges that hotels face several challenges in growing direct bookings. OTAs dominate online visibility, invest heavily in advertising, and offer user-friendly comparison tools that attract many travellers. Small hotels struggle with the cost and complexity of digital marketing, website management, and technological upgrades. As a result, a balanced approach is often necessary—using OTAs for visibility while simultaneously encouraging guests to book directly.

Looking ahead, the future of direct booking channels appears strong. Trends such as AI-driven personalization, mobile-first strategies, voice search, and data analytics will continue to reshape how customers book hotels. Loyalty programs, influencer marketing, and subscription-based benefits may also strengthen the appeal of direct channels.

Overall, this study concludes that direct sales channels are central to the future competitiveness of hotels. They increase profitability, improve guest relationships, and allow hotels to control their brand identity. To succeed in the evolving tourism landscape, hotels must continue investing in digital innovation, customer-focused strategies, and seamless booking experiences. By combining technology with

personalized service, hotels can build a powerful and sustainable direct booking ecosystem for the years ahead.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Examples of Direct Booking Features on Hotel Websites

- Best Rate Guarantee banners
- Live chat support

- Mobile check-in and check-out

Appendix B: Examples of Hotel Loyalty Program Benefits

- Points for each stay
- Free night rewards
- Late check-out and early check-in

Appendix C: Comparison Table — OTAs vs Direct Sales Channels

Feature	OTA Booking	Direct Booking
Commission Fees	High (15–25%)	No commission
Customer Data	Limited access for hotels	Full access
Price Matching	Sometimes	Often guaranteed
Flexibility	Depends on OTA policy	More flexible
Personalization	Limited	Highly personalized
Communication	Through OTA	Direct with hotel
Control for Hotel	Low	High

Appendix D: Sample Direct Booking Marketing Techniques

- Email campaigns with promotional codes
- Retargeting ads on social media
- SEO-optimized landing pages

Appendix E: Post-Pandemic Traveller Behaviour Insights

- Preference for flexible cancellation
- Increased domestic travel
- Higher reliance on mobile bookings