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Strategic Utilization of Online Travel Agencies: An In-Depth Qualitative Study from the Hotel Industry's Perspective

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Abstract

The rapid digitalization of the tourism industry has transformed how accommodation businesses reach and engage increasingly digital-oriented travelers. Amid the rapid growth of tourism in Bali and the rising dominance of digital-native travelers such as Generation Z, Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) have become central channels for accommodation marketing. This study explores how hotels and villas in Bali strategically utilize OTAs as part of their digital marketing strategy. Using a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with seven hotel and villa marketing representatives across the Gianyar and Badung regencies, supported by field documentation, and analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that all informants rely on multiple OTA platforms, most frequently Booking.com, Agoda, Tiket.com, and Traveloka, to widen market reach, overcome geographic limitations, and secure transactions. OTAs were perceived as highly effective in increasing visibility, occupancy, and sales, particularly among younger travelers. However, hotels face challenges such as managing multiple platform systems, dynamic pricing pressure, and digital trust concerns. These findings highlight the importance of integrating OTA optimization with strong digital branding to enhance accommodation competitiveness.

Keywords

Digital Marketing, Generation Z, Online Travel Agencies, Tourism.

1. Introduction

The tourism and hospitality industry in Indonesia, particularly in major destinations such as Bali, has experienced continuous growth in recent years (Subadra, 2024). Foreign tourist visits reached 3.37 million in the fourth quarter of 2024, representing a 10.3% increase compared with the same quarter in 2023. Domestic tourism also increased by 18% in 2024 compared with 2023 (Secretary of the Indonesian Cabinet, 2025). This growth has increased demand for travel-related services, particularly accommodation, encouraging hotels to adopt more dynamic and digital marketing approaches (Afren, 2024).

A major component of this digital transformation is the increasing use of Online Travel Agencies (OTAs), such as Agoda, Pegi-Pegi, and Traveloka. OTAs provide travelers with convenient access, accommodation comparisons, and extensive information, while offering hotels broader market visibility (Hermawan et al., 2021). Their importance is particularly relevant to Generation Z, a digitally oriented cohort that values convenience, speed, and seamless digital integration (Sony & Suwannarat, 2024). Generation Z travelers tend to independently search for travel information, compare accommodations, and make online bookings rather than relying on traditional travel agents (Nemec Rudež, 2023). Their growing participation in domestic and international tourism makes them an important market segment for hotels (Makanyeza et al., 2021). Platforms such as Traveloka are particularly relevant because their user-friendly interfaces and seamless booking processes correspond with Generation Z's digital behavioral preferences (Tarigan et al., 2022).

However, the increasing reliance on OTAs also creates a phenomenon gap for hotels in Bali. Although OTA platforms can expand visibility and facilitate bookings, hotels may face high commission fees, intense price competition, and limited control over brand identity on third-party platforms (Wijaya et al., 2021). Dependence on OTAs may therefore create challenges in maintaining differentiation and balancing third-party distribution with direct marketing. At the same time, changing Generation Z preferences require hotels to develop increasingly agile and digitally competent marketing strategies (Fernández et al., 2020). These conditions highlight the interconnectedness between OTA-based marketing practices, access to Generation Z consumers, hotel visibility, occupancy and sales, and the challenges of maintaining effective and sustainable marketing practices.

These conditions indicate an interconnected relationship between OTA-based marketing strategies, Generation Z preferences, hotel visibility, and business performance. Hotel presentation and interactivity on OTA platforms can shape trust, perceived value, attitudes, and booking intentions, suggesting that effective OTA management may strengthen hotel visibility and access to Generation Z consumers and support bookings, occupancy, and sales (Shaputra et al., 2023). However, these benefits must be balanced against commission costs, price competition, and limited control over brand presentation, making the integration of OTA and direct marketing important for sustainable performance.

Despite previous studies discussing OTA use, online booking behavior, and Generation Z travel preferences, a research gap remains regarding how hotel marketers in Bali actually formulate and implement OTA-based marketing strategies within their broader marketing activities. Existing research provides limited qualitative insight into how marketers perceive OTA effectiveness, manage platform-related challenges, and balance OTA dependence with direct marketing efforts when targeting Generation Z. Thus, understanding these practices from the marketers' perspectives is important because the effectiveness of OTA marketing may depend not only on platform availability but also on how hotels strategically integrate these channels into their overall marketing activities. The novelty of this

study lies in its qualitative examination of OTA-based and direct marketing practices from the perspectives of hotel marketers in Bali, while simultaneously considering Generation Z as a target market, perceived effectiveness in generating visibility and sales, and challenges associated with OTA implementation. Rather than focusing solely on OTA adoption or consumer booking behavior, this study connects these dimensions to the practical decision-making and experiences of hotel marketers.

Accordingly, this study explores the marketing strategies currently employed by hotels, including the use of OTA platforms, their effectiveness in reaching target audiences and increasing occupancy and sales, the challenges associated with OTA-based marketing, and opportunities to improve both direct and OTA-based marketing practices in line with best practices and current industry trends. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, this study aims to identify current OTA-based marketing strategies, explore their perceived effectiveness, examine implementation challenges, and develop actionable insights for more effective and sustainable marketing practices in Bali's hospitality industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1. E-Tourism and Online Travel Agencies

E-tourism, or electronic tourism, refers to the use of digital technologies and internet-based platforms to facilitate, manage, and enhance tourism services and activities (Kononova et al., 2020). It integrates Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) across various stages of the tourism experience, including information search, accommodation and transportation booking, payment, and customer support (Koliouska & Andreopoulou, 2023). Guo et al. (2021) found that through websites, mobile applications, social media, and online platforms, e-tourism enables travelers to access up-to-date information and arrange their travel conveniently and efficiently. Leung (2022) noted that the continued development of ICT has further transformed e-tourism into smart tourism, where connectivity and real-time data increasingly shape service delivery.

Within the hospitality sector, e-tourism plays an important role in connecting accommodation providers with potential customers across geographic boundaries. Halkiopoulos et al. (2020) and Sumawidari et al. (2025) note that hotels utilize digital tools to enhance visibility, engage with guests, and facilitate reservations through OTAs and direct booking channels. Hermawan et al. (2021) note that, as digital intermediaries, OTAs connect accommodation providers with a broad online consumer base by offering price comparison, wider market visibility, and convenient booking processes. They also support travelers' decision-making by aggregating accommodation options and streamlining reservations. For hotels, OTAs have become an important distribution channel for reaching markets beyond their immediate geographic areas and influencing reservation performance (Fernández et al., 2020; Jolene, 2023). Moreover, trust reflected in OTA reviews and service quality can strengthen purchase intention through brand trust (Putra & Pangaribuan, 2025).

2.2. Digital Marketing in the Hospitality Industry

Digital marketing has become a core instrument through which hospitality businesses promote their services, reach target markets, and maintain competitiveness, with social media and online platforms increasingly shaping how travelers search for and evaluate accommodation options (Afren, 2024). According to Sakas et al. (2022), the hospitality industry has consequently shifted from traditional promotional methods toward integrated, multichannel digital strategies that emphasize accessibility, real-time interaction, and data-driven decision-making. The growing use of social media marketing in tourism further demonstrates how digital platforms can strengthen communication with potential visitors and influence their intention to visit (Baber & Baber, 2023; Widianoro et al., 2024). Through these

channels, hotels can communicate directly with potential guests, expand market reach, and respond more quickly to changing consumer preferences. However, digital marketing also presents challenges, including platform dependency, changing algorithms, and the need for continuous adaptation to different digital environments (Veleva & Tsvetanova, 2020).

Contemporary hospitality marketing therefore increasingly emphasizes data-driven and customer-centric approaches to remain relevant and effective (Camilleri, 2020). The integration of digital transformation with electronic word-of-mouth also highlights the growing importance of digital technologies in shaping consumer perceptions, trust, and marketing effectiveness within the tourism industry (Azzahra et al., 2025). Elmachtoub et al. (2021) note that one important application is dynamic and personalized pricing, which enables accommodation providers to adjust rates according to fluctuations in demand and market conditions. Such practices allow hotels to optimize their digital presence while responding more precisely to customer needs and competitive pressures. Moreover, the development of digital marketing capabilities can contribute to sustainable competitive advantage by strengthening a hotel's ability to utilize digital technologies and respond to market changes (Hossain et al., 2021).

2.3. Generation Z

Generation Z, as digital natives, represents an important demographic for hospitality marketing because of its strong preference for convenience, speed, and seamless digital experiences (Sony & Suwannarat, 2024). As technology is embedded in their daily lives, Gen Z travelers increasingly depend on digital channels to search for information, compare alternatives, and support travel-related decisions. Research by Nemec Rudež (2023) on their information behavior shows that Gen Z actively seeks specific digital travel information before making decisions, indicating the importance of relevant and easily accessible online content. Their high acceptance of ticket-booking and e-commerce platforms further demonstrates their familiarity with digital transactions and online purchasing processes (Tarigan et al., 2022).

This digital orientation also strengthens the strategic relevance of OTAs for accommodation providers seeking to reach younger travelers. Fahlevi et al. (2024) note that Gen Z's pronounced use of OTA applications for travel highlights the role of these platforms in facilitating accommodation searches, comparisons, and bookings. Consequently, hotels and villas need to consider the preferences and digital behaviors of this consumer segment when developing their marketing strategies. Moreover, generational characteristics can influence consumer attitudes and purchase intentions within the hotel industry, suggesting that marketing approaches should account for differences in consumer cohorts (Makanyeza et al., 2021).

2.4. Hotel Branding and Competitive Strategy

Górska-Warsewicz and Kulykovets (2020) argue that, beyond distribution channels, branding remains a strategic asset that enables hotels to differentiate themselves from competitors, establish a distinctive market identity, and cultivate customer loyalty. In the hospitality industry, a strong brand can help accommodation providers communicate their value proposition more consistently across digital and physical customer touchpoints. Branding is particularly important in highly competitive destinations such as Bali, where hotels and villas compete not only on room prices but also on service quality, experience, reputation, and perceived value. Consequently, accommodation providers need to formulate deliberate competitive strategies to sustain occupancy and profitability amid intense market rivalry (Wijaya et al., 2021). Digital platforms, including OTAs, can support these efforts by increasing market exposure and enabling accommodation businesses to communicate their offerings to broader consumer segments.

At the same time, competitive strategy increasingly requires a customer-centric orientation that places guest needs and expectations at the center of service delivery. Sheth et al. (2023) note that accommodation providers need to continuously adapt their services, communication, and customer support to changing preferences in order to improve guest satisfaction and strengthen competitiveness. This approach is particularly relevant for digital-oriented travelers who evaluate accommodation through multiple online sources before making booking decisions. Therefore, OTA utilization should be integrated with broader branding and customer relationship efforts rather than treated as an isolated distribution channel. Taken together, this literature positions OTA utilization as one component of a broader, brand-driven, and customer-centric marketing strategy that combines digital visibility, service quality, and differentiated brand positioning.

3. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach. The initial stage of the research was to conduct a literature review, gathering as much relevant information as possible regarding hotels' marketing strategies, particularly those involving the use of OTA platforms such as Traveloka, Agoda, and Booking.com. Compilation of documentation and sourcing of supporting data were also conducted using digital platforms such as official hotel websites and OTA profiles to understand how hotels promote their services online.

Furthermore, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with hotel marketing managers or staff members responsible for digital marketing at hotels in Bali Province that fit the research requirements. These criteria included hotels that actively use OTA platforms in their marketing and sales activities. Following the principles of qualitative research, data collection was judged sufficient when the researcher considered that the information acquired had satisfied the research objectives and attained saturation. The interview data were transcribed, reviewed, coded, and grouped into categories, which were then developed into themes related to marketing strategies, OTA effectiveness, implementation challenges, and marketing improvement. In the data analysis phase, the researcher consolidated the interview data by summarizing and removing remarks that were not relevant or did not contribute to the study's aims.

The study involved seven informants representing hotel and villa businesses in Bali. Informant I1 represented Ume Sri Villa Ubud, a villa accommodation business. Informant I2 represented Kubu Cem-Cem Mesari Private Villa Ubud, a private villa accommodation business. Informant I3 represented RV Hotel Gianyar, a hotel accommodation business. Informant I4 represented Kutus Kutus Mas Ubud Villa, a villa accommodation business. Informant I5 represented Gynandha Ubud Cottage, a cottage accommodation business. Informant I6 represented Saren Indah Hotel, a hotel accommodation business. Informant I7 represented Qinkin Long House Villa, a villa accommodation business. Thus, the informants comprised five villa/cottage businesses and two hotel businesses, providing perspectives from different types of accommodation providers.

Research data was obtained through in-depth interviews and supported by documentation of field findings. Interviews were conducted with seven informants from various hotels and villas in Bali that use OTA platforms to promote and sell their services. These interviews were conducted offline by visiting the hotels that served as research objects, using audio recordings and photographic documentation to strengthen and validate the findings obtained from the field. This qualitative method was chosen to extract in-depth information related to the strategic utilization of OTAs from the hotel industry's perspective, producing descriptive data in the form of narratives that capture informants' insights, strategies, and perceived challenges in utilizing OTA platforms.

4. Results

4.1. *The Online Travel Agents Currently Used by Hotels*

Interviews with seven informants from hotels and villas in Bali showed that Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) have become an important part of accommodation marketing and guest acquisition. All informants reported using multiple OTA platforms, including Booking.com, Agoda, Tiket.com, Traveloka, Tripadvisor, Airbnb, and Hotels.com. Informant 1 used Booking.com, Tripadvisor, Tiket.com, and Hotels.com, while Informant 2 used Booking.com, Tiket.com, and Hotels.com. Informants 3 and 4 reported using Agoda, Tiket.com, Hotels.com, and Agoda, Tripadvisor, Tiket.com, respectively. These findings indicate that accommodation providers combine multiple OTA platforms to expand online visibility and reach diverse market segments. This multi-platform approach reinforces the role of OTAs as important distribution channels that facilitate hotel reservations and broaden market access beyond direct booking channels (Fernández et al., 2020).

The use of multiple OTA platforms was evident among Informants 5, 6, and 7. Informant 5 partnered with Booking.com, Traveloka, Airbnb, and Agoda, while Informant 6 used Agoda, Booking.com, Tripadvisor, and Traveloka. Informant 7 similarly utilized Tiket.com, Airbnb, Agoda, and Traveloka. These variations indicate that hotels and villas select and combine OTA channels based on their marketing needs and perceived market reach. OTA utilization also extends beyond accommodation listings to broader digital marketing activities. For example, Informant 7 reported offering promotional packages and benefits during holidays and major sales periods. Such practices show that accommodation providers use digital platforms not only to enhance visibility but also to stimulate bookings through promotional strategies. This finding highlights the importance of multichannel digital marketing in tourism and hospitality, where businesses can leverage diverse digital channels to reach consumers more effectively (Sakas et al., 2022).

Beyond platform selection, the interviews also revealed several operational practices associated with OTA utilization. Informant 5 explained that the accommodation applies a prepaid booking system for OTA reservations, indicating an effort to strengthen payment security and reduce the risk of cancellations or no-shows. Across the seven interviews, the consistent reliance on multiple OTA platforms demonstrates that these channels are perceived as practical tools for increasing accommodation exposure and facilitating transactions with potential guests. This pattern is particularly relevant to younger digital-oriented travelers, who increasingly use OTA applications when searching for and arranging travel services (Fahlevi et al., 2024). The findings suggest that OTA utilization among the interviewed hotels and villas functions as a deliberate digital marketing strategy that combines broader market exposure, convenient booking processes, promotional activities, and transaction management.

4.2. *OTA Effectiveness in Reaching Target Markets and Increasing Sales*

The interviews indicate that all seven informants perceived OTAs as effective digital marketing channels for increasing accommodation visibility and reaching potential guests beyond their immediate geographic markets. Informant 1 explained that OTA platforms were particularly helpful because the accommodation was not located on a main road, allowing the property to reach potential guests despite its less strategic physical location. Similarly, Informant 2 stated that OTAs enabled the accommodation to market its services more broadly and globally. Informants 3 and 4 also emphasized the role of OTAs in attracting foreign travelers, while Informant 5 highlighted the importance of internationally recognized OTA platforms in helping tourists discover and book accommodations located in less visible areas. These findings indicate that OTAs provide accommodation providers with broader

access to potential customers and increase their online visibility across different geographic markets (Fernández et al., 2020).

The perceived effectiveness of OTAs was also reflected in their contribution to sales and occupancy. Informant 6 reported that the accommodation experienced an increase in occupancy after optimizing its OTA presence and participating in seasonal promotional campaigns. This indicates that OTA effectiveness is associated not only with platform availability but also with how accommodation providers manage their presence and promotional activities. Informant 7 further emphasized that OTAs make it easier for customers to find and book accommodations while providing secure payment transactions. The interviews therefore reveal that OTA platforms provide practical benefits for both accommodation providers and customers by facilitating product discovery, booking, and payment processes. From the accommodation providers' perspective, these functions can support reservation generation and broader distribution activities (Jolene, 2023).

The interviews also revealed the importance of OTAs in reaching younger and digitally oriented travelers. Informant 7 specifically stated that OTA platforms appear to be more trusted by younger consumers, particularly Generation Z, compared with previous generations. This finding highlights the relevance of OTA platforms in responding to changes in consumer travel behavior, particularly among travelers who are accustomed to searching, comparing, and booking services through digital applications (Fahlevi et al., 2024). The use of OTAs therefore enables hotels and villas to position their accommodation offerings within digital environments that are increasingly used by their target customers. The findings also suggest that the accessibility and convenience provided by OTA platforms contribute to their perceived effectiveness as marketing channels.

The findings show that OTAs contribute to accommodation marketing through three main functions: expanding market reach, increasing digital visibility, and facilitating booking and payment transactions. These benefits are particularly valuable for properties with limited physical visibility or relatively narrow direct market access. The interviews further demonstrate that accommodation providers do not merely use OTAs as passive distribution channels but actively optimize their presence through promotional campaigns and platform management. Thus, OTA utilization represents an important component of the digital marketing activities of the interviewed hotels and villas, particularly in expanding customer access and supporting occupancy and sales performance (Sakas et al., 2022).

4.3. Challenges and Obstacles Faced by Hotels in Leveraging OTAs

The interviews revealed that the challenges associated with utilizing OTAs varied across the seven informants. Some informants reported that OTA platforms were relatively easy to manage and did not create significant operational difficulties. Informant 1 emphasized that OTAs received a positive response from Generation Z because they provided convenient access to accommodation options, budget information, and available facilities. Similarly, Informant 2 stated that managing customer bookings was not particularly complicated because the OTA system supported the guest flow and helped ensure that reservations were accurately coordinated. These responses indicate that the perceived ease of OTA use can differ depending on the accommodation's experience with digital platforms and the effectiveness of the systems used (Veleva & Tsvetanova, 2020).

However, several informants identified operational challenges related to managing different OTA platforms. Informant 3 explained that each OTA has different systems and operational procedures, requiring staff to become familiar with each platform before they can manage them effectively. This indicates that the use of multiple OTA platforms can create additional demands for employees, particularly in terms of learning and adapting to different interfaces, booking systems, and platform requirements. The challenge is therefore not necessarily the availability of

OTA platforms but the need to manage several digital environments simultaneously. Such conditions require accommodation providers to continuously adapt their digital marketing activities to different platform characteristics (Sakas et al., 2022).

The interviews also showed that brand recognition and market positioning influenced the extent to which accommodations perceived challenges in attracting customers through OTAs. Informant 4 reported that the accommodation experienced relatively few difficulties because it already had strong brand recognition, making it easier to attract potential customers. Informant 5 similarly stated that despite being a relatively new hotel, the accommodation had achieved good sales performance through OTA platforms. These responses suggest that the challenges associated with customer acquisition through OTAs may vary according to the accommodation's existing market position, brand visibility, and ability to compete within the platform environment. Branding can therefore remain an important element in strengthening accommodation competitiveness alongside OTA utilization (Górska-Warsewicz & Kulykovets, 2020).

Another challenge concerned the need to continuously maintain competitiveness through pricing and platform performance. Informant 6 explained that the accommodation needed to maintain high ratings and attractive prices to remain competitive, while dynamic pricing on OTA platforms required continuous monitoring and adjustment. This process was considered resource-intensive because accommodation providers needed to respond to changing market conditions while maintaining competitive room rates. The finding indicates that OTA management extends beyond simply listing accommodation and receiving reservations, as providers also need to actively manage pricing and other performance-related factors. Dynamic and personalized pricing practices require accommodation providers to adjust their offers according to market conditions and customer demand (Elmachoub et al., 2021).

The interviews revealed concerns regarding digital trust among some accommodation customers. Informant 7 explained that some villa customers were reluctant to make reservations through OTAs because of concerns about fraud and preferred to contact the property's management directly, particularly when direct booking could provide better prices, discounts, or additional benefits. This indicates that although OTAs offer convenience and broad market access, concerns about transaction security, perceived value, and trust can influence customers' willingness to use these platforms. Online reviews, service quality, and brand trust are therefore relevant considerations in customers' decisions to make reservations through OTA platforms (Putra & Pangaribuan, 2025).

The findings indicate that OTA-related challenges can be grouped into platform management, technological adaptation, competitive positioning, pricing management, and digital trust. While some informants experienced minimal difficulties, others faced greater demands in managing multiple OTA systems, maintaining competitive prices and ratings, and addressing customer concerns regarding online transactions. These variations demonstrate that the challenges of OTA utilization are not uniform across accommodation providers and depend on their operational capabilities, brand position, and ability to manage digital marketing activities effectively.

4.4. Improving Marketing Practices through Direct and OTA Channels

The interviews revealed that hotels and villas apply several strategies to optimize OTA utilization and remain responsive to changing market conditions. Informants 1 and 2 emphasized the use of flexible pricing, particularly by adjusting room rates according to seasonal demand. Informant 1 also highlighted differences in customer quality and room rates across OTA platforms, indicating that accommodation providers consider platform performance when determining where to focus their marketing efforts. These findings show that pricing flexibility is an important part

of managing OTA-based marketing activities and responding to fluctuations in demand (Elmachtoub et al., 2021).

Another strategy involved monitoring competitors and strengthening market positioning. Informant 3 explained that the accommodation continuously observes competitors, particularly their pricing, while also targeting foreign tourists as an important customer segment. Informant 4 emphasized the use of an established brand to promote the accommodation and attract potential customers. These practices indicate that OTA strategies are supported by competitive monitoring, target-market identification, and brand leverage rather than relying solely on platform exposure. Brand strength can provide accommodation providers with an additional basis for differentiation and customer recognition (Górska-Warsewicz & Kulykovets, 2020).

The interviews further showed that social media and digital engagement are used alongside OTA platforms. Informant 5 reported using Instagram Ads to increase the likelihood that the accommodation would appear when tourists search for properties, while Informant 6 emphasized personalization, digital engagement, loyalty programs, and A/B testing of descriptions and pricing. These practices demonstrate that accommodation providers combine OTA tools with other digital channels and experimentation to improve their online visibility and customer engagement. The use of multiple digital channels and data-based optimization forms part of contemporary hospitality marketing practices (Camilleri, 2020; Sakas et al., 2022).

Informant 7 described adapting promotional packages to customer preferences and current travel trends, including the use of offline travel agents when considered more relevant to the target market. The accommodation develops specific packages and promotions based on the characteristics and needs of frequently visiting guests. The findings indicate that OTA optimization involves a combination of flexible pricing, competitor monitoring, brand leverage, social media promotion, digital experimentation, and customer-oriented personalization. These strategies allow accommodation providers to adapt their marketing activities according to market conditions, customer preferences, and the characteristics of their target segments (Sheth et al., 2023).

5. Discussion

The rapid advancement of technology has significantly influenced how people think, behave, and live, most notably by easing access to information embedded in everyday activities (Wijarnarko & Maharani, 2024). In the digital age, businesses in the hospitality industry continuously adapt to these technological shifts to stay competitive and relevant (Hossain et al., 2021). One of the key strategies modern businesses use is digital marketing through OTAs, which have become central to hotel marketing, especially in targeting younger generations such as Generation Z (Jolene, 2023; Fahlevi et al., 2024). Consistent with Sakas et al. (2022), the industry has shifted from traditional methods to an integrated digital strategy emphasizing accessibility, real-time interaction, and data-driven decisions.

The interviews indicate that OTAs play a crucial role in enhancing visibility and trust among potential guests. Interviewees 1 and 7 reported using multiple OTA platforms, although the platforms differed between them. Informant 1 used Booking.com, Tripadvisor, Tiket.com, and Hotels.com, whereas Informant 7 used Tiket.com, Airbnb, Agoda, and Traveloka. These findings suggest that working with various OTA platforms can help accommodation providers expand their online visibility and reach different potential guests, supporting the view that OTAs have become important digital distribution and trust-building channels for both hotels and consumers (Putra & Pangaribuan, 2025). Furthermore, pricing and promotional flexibility emerged as one of the most valued aspects of using OTAs: Interviewees 1 and 2 noted that OTAs allow rate adjustments according to market demand, echoing

the argument that real-time pricing customization is essential in industries with fluctuating demand (Elmachoub et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, challenges remain. Interviewees 3 and 6 pointed out the difficulty of managing dynamic pricing across multiple platforms, each operating differently and demanding continual monitoring. This finding is in line with Veleva and Tsvetanova (2020), who emphasize that digital marketing requires continuous adaptation to changing technologies and platform-specific conditions. The need to continuously adjust prices also reflects the importance of personalized pricing in responding to fluctuations in market demand, as discussed by Elmachoub et al. (2021). Interviewee 7 added that some customers avoid OTAs due to fraud concerns, preferring direct booking for better discounts and more personal service. This finding is comparable to Putra and Pangaribuan (2025), who highlight the importance of online reviews, service quality, and brand trust in shaping purchase intention through OTAs. Thus, while OTAs provide convenience and broader market access, the findings indicate that platform management and customer trust remain important considerations, supporting the need for a dual approach that maintains both OTA and direct booking strategies.

Hotels are also increasingly integrating social media marketing and personalization. Interviewees 5 and 6 reported that Instagram Ads and digital engagement drive visibility, particularly among younger travelers, while A/B testing and loyalty programs improve conversion, consistent with Camilleri (2020). Branding likewise matters: Interviewee 4 explained that leveraging the Kutus Kutus brand identity sustained a strong market presence without heavy reliance on OTA tools, in line with evidence that branding fosters customer loyalty amid rising competition (Górska-Warsewicz & Kulykovets, 2020). Interviewee 7's tailoring of packages to guest preferences reflects customer-centric marketing that improves service alignment and satisfaction (Sheth et al., 2023). These patterns collectively reflect the growing influence of e-tourism, which enables real-time access to information and services and supports interactive, customer-focused experiences that travelers increasingly value (Vila et al., 2021; Leung, 2022).

6. Conclusion

This study examined how hotels and villas in Bali use OTAs as part of their digital marketing strategy to attract guests and improve reservations. The findings show that OTAs exert a substantial influence on hotel exposure and consumer trust, particularly in reaching younger travelers such as Generation Z, by providing simple booking systems with flexible pricing and promotional capabilities that hotels value for adjusting room rates to market demand. At the same time, hotels face difficulties in handling multiple OTA platforms owing to system disparities and the need for continual monitoring to maintain competitive pricing and strong ratings, while some customers prefer to book directly due to fraud concerns or better rates and more personalized treatment; hotels therefore adopt a dual approach that combines OTAs with direct reservations.

Complementary practices such as social media marketing, data-driven techniques like A/B testing and loyalty programs, strong branding, and guest-tailored packages further support conversion, loyalty, and satisfaction. This study has several limitations: it was confined to a limited number of hotel representatives, which may affect generalizability; it focused primarily on the hotel perspective without insights from customers or OTA managers; and its qualitative nature makes the findings exploratory and context-specific. Future research should therefore incorporate larger, more diverse samples and multiple stakeholder perspectives to provide a more balanced and generalizable understanding.

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