

Factors Influencing Direct Hotel Booking Decisions in Thailand

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Abstract: This study proposed to investigate the factors influencing Direct Hotel Booking Decisions in Thailand. The objectives of this study were: 1) to study direct hotel booking decisions among travelers in Thailand and 2) to study the factors influencing direct hotel booking decisions among travelers in Thailand. The questionnaire was distributed to a total of 400 respondents who were Thai nationals with prior experience in direct hotel booking. To conduct the study, the researcher employed a quantitative research approach by using non-probability sampling in the form of the convenience sampling and Snowball sampling. They were delivered using electronic questionnaires and statistical analyses tools included Cronbach's Alpha to assess reliability, Descriptive statistics to summarize demographics, and Multiple Linear Regression for hypotheses testing. The independent variables examined were Perceived Ease of Use, Price, Payment Method, Information Quality, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, and Customer Relationship.

The study results were: 1) Four factors were found to significantly influence Direct Hotel Booking Decision: Perceived Ease of Use, Price, Information Quality, and Customer Relationship. These independent variables could explain 57.4% of the variation in Direct Hotel Booking Decision (Adjusted R Square = 0.574). 2) The most influential factor was Perceived Ease of Use, contributing influence ($\beta=0.377$), followed closely by Price with ($\beta=0.338$). Information Quality ($\beta =0.091$) and Customer Relationship ($\beta =0.087$) also showed a significant, though weaker, influence. 3) However, Payment Method and Electronic Word-of-Mouth were not found to significantly influence direct hotel booking decisions in this model.

Keywords: Direct Hotel Booking Decision, Perceived Ease of Use, Price, Information Quality, and Customer Relationship

1. Introduction

Thailand is a country that has gained global reputation on the excellence of its hospitality and tourism industry which is an essential aspect of the country economy. Hotel business in Thailand is highly competitive, owing to the millions of local and foreign tourists that are attracted to the country every year. Consequently, hotels must constantly adjust their marketing and distribution strategies.

The Rise of OTAs and the Direct Booking Imperative

Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) have taken their position in this competitive world. They attract the user, offering wide choices, convenience in comparing prices, and simplified the booking procedure. This convenience is however very expensive to the hotels since they are charged high commission fees which in most cases are between 15 and 30 percent which greatly reduces the profit margin. Hotels have been working hard to develop their direct booking systems through official websites, mobile apps, loyalty programs, and official social media in response to this challenge. Direct booking allows hotels to get a higher revenue, have access to useful customer data, and build stronger brand loyalty in comparison to the OTA-based booking.

Trends in the Asian Market

The positive trend of direct booking has been growing tremendously in the Asia market in the previous years. Statistics show that the online booking of hotel system through direct channels in the Asian market has grown

significantly, with the proportion of 25 percent in 2019 being reduced to 44 percent in 2022. Such an increase, which amounts to 19 percentage points, is a good sign that customers, especially domestic tourists, are transitioning to direct hotel bookings increasingly and do not depend on OTAs as their only option.

Moreover, by hotel category, the data indicate high differences. Indicatively, 2-star hotels in Asia received less than 10 percent of online bookings as direct revenue as compared to 5-star hotels which received more than 50 percent. This suggests that higher-category hotels are more effective at enticing guests to book directly, likely due to greater brand awareness, robust loyalty programs, and stronger marketing efforts.

Problem Statement and Research Gap

These trends highlight the opportunities as well as the challenges that the Thai hotel industry has. Despite the presence of OTAs worldwide, the commissions charged are extremely high, and profitability is compromised, and most of the hotels, especially the small and medium ones have become excessively reliant on these third-party intermediaries. This dependency is a weakness and leaves the hotels without power in pricing, branding, and key customer information.

The gap in knowledge is pinpointing the important variables that have a specific impact on the decision of a traveler to bypass OTAs and choose the direct booking channel. The realization of these factors is important to enable the hotels to find the perfect balance between OTA partnerships and direct bookings that will enable the smaller and mid-sized hotels to become less dependent, gain higher profit margins, and build long-term customer relationships.

Research Objectives and Scope

The following are the objectives of this study:

1. To study direct hotel booking decisions among travelers in Thailand
2. To study factors influencing direct hotel booking decisions among travelers in Thailand

The research will concentrate on the booking behavior, views, preferences, and considerations of hotel guests in Thailand in case they book via official hotel platforms (websites, mobile apps, Facebook pages, and Line Official accounts). Its geographic scope is limited to Thailand.

The results will be offered as insightful information that could be utilized by the hotel administrators to create specific marketing efforts, loyalty programs, and pricing mechanisms to reduce the utilization of third-party services and increase profitability. Regarding its impact on the academic world, the research fills the gap in the literature on the subject of direct hotel booking decisions in the Thai context.

2. Literature Review

The theoretical foundation of this study is built upon established models of consumer behavior and technology adoption, primarily the Decision Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), alongside core concepts in marketing and information science.

Theoretical Foundations

The Decision Theory serves as the model to understand the process of travelers selecting one booking option over the other in a case of uncertainty and trade-offs (e.g., price, cancellation policy, platform reliability). According to this theory, two categories of decision-making are normative models (how decisions ought to be made rationally) and descriptive models (how decisions are made in reality, with cognitive limitations and heuristics). In the context of hotel booking, the theory can be used to map the process of the traveler since he/she is first aware and then makes the final reservation.

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) is a significant variable that relies on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). PEOU refers to the extent to which a person thinks that a certain technology will be easy to use and with least amount of effort. The concept of PEOU in the online booking environment is directly connected with the user-friendliness of a platform and has a significant influence on the attitude of a consumer and his or her future intention to use and use the booking channel in the future.

Other concepts of the foundations that the study uses include Perceived Price which is not the objective monetary cost but the subjective perception or feeling of the consumer (e.g. is the price cheap or expensive). The perceived price acts as a critical antecedent to perceived value, where lower prices relative to expected quality increase the perceived value, thus intensifying the purchase intention.

The principle of information Quality (IQ) is decided by the concept of fitness to use, which includes accuracy, objectivity, believability, and reputation. Under online booking, high IQ (clarity, relevance, and accuracy of content) is one of the important factors that allow consumers to develop a sense of trust and make better decisions, and this aspect can often influencing the desire to purchase a product.

Finally, the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) theory serves as the basis for the Customer Relationship variable. CRM is a holistic approach that seeks to create profitable long-lasting relationships by creating personalized service and one-to-one interactions. Positive effects of CRM implementation are linked to increased customer retention, growth in revenues and improved customer satisfaction, which pushes the loyalty to the direct booking channel.

Related Review Literature

The positive impact of the usability of the systems, competitive price, reliability of the information and customer relations on the booking behavior is highly supported by empirical findings. Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) is consistently shown to be a positive and often dominant predictor of the booking decision, as great usability and convenience drastically increase transaction completion rates. The extrinsic cue of Price (P) is one of the most important cues since it is known to be one of the strongest elements of online accommodation booking, but its impact is complex as it often relies on other informational cues, such as online reviews, for diagnostic value. Customer Relationship (CR) variables, which are commonly studied as use of promotions and loyalty programs, are critical characteristics of relationships, where such tactics like free cancellation and discounts play a significant role in the final purchase decision, especially in a particular group of people such as women and younger travelers. It is also verified that Information Quality (IQ) is one of the key predictors because the clarity, relevance, and accuracy of the online content are critical to developing trust, lessening uncertainty, and making the booking decision, and visitors often go to the websites of the hotels to receive this complete information. The Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), which consists of customer feedback and social media comments, is very powerful, as its valence (sentiment) and credibility are decisive factors when it comes to the attitude and intention to make a booking by a traveler. Lastly, it is the Payment Method that affects the final choice depending on convenience, reliability, and security with the presence of various, flexible, and safe methods that is one of the most important factors to maximize the purchase experience and accrue customer trust.

3. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the proposed study will examine the factors influencing the Direct Hotel Booking **Decision** (the Dependent Variable, DV) among travelers in Thailand. This model logically combines the ideas based on the accepted theories, such as the Decision Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and uses them in the context of the Thai hospitality.

It proposes that the Direct Hotel Booking Decision is influenced by six main Independent Variables (IVs)

1. Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU): The perceived ease of the platform of the hotel.
2. Price (P): the direct price competitiveness and transparency.
3. Payment Method (PM): The comfort and safety of the payment possibilities provided.
4. Information Quality (IQ): The quality of the information given, whether it is accurate, clear and relevant.

5. Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM): The power of online ratings and social feedbacks.
6. Customer Relationship (CR): Long term, repeat customer relationship that is created by customized service and reward schemes.

The objective is to empirically test the hypothesized positive relationships between these six IVs and the decision by the traveler to book directly, which will eventually assist the hotels to lessen their dependency on OTAs and enhance profit margins.

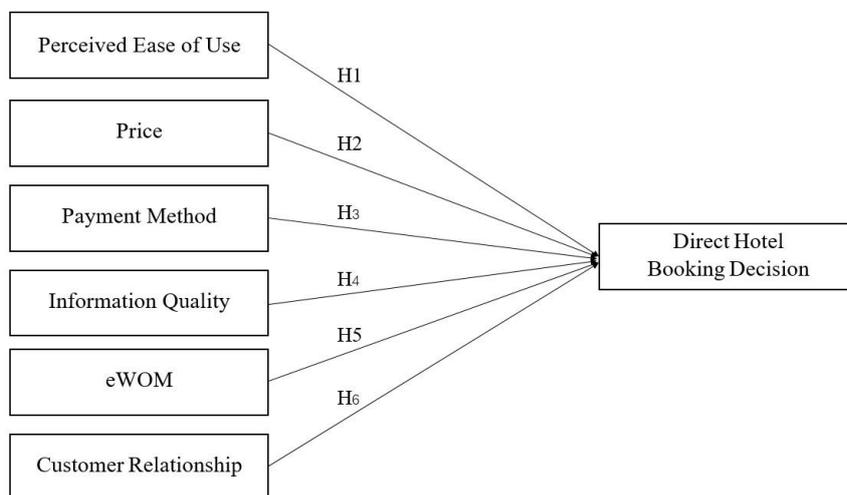


Figure 3.4: The research conceptual framework

4. Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1

H1₀: Perceived Ease of Use does not significantly influence direct hotel booking decisions of travelers in Thailand.

H1_a: Perceived Ease of Use does significantly influence direct hotel booking decisions of travelers in Thailand.

Hypothesis 2

H2₀: Price does not significantly influence direct hotel booking decisions of travelers in Thailand.

H2_a: Price does significantly influence direct hotel booking decisions of travelers in Thailand.

Hypothesis 3

H3₀: Payment Method does not significantly influence direct hotel booking decisions of travelers in Thailand.

H3_a: Payment Method does significantly influence direct hotel booking decisions of travelers in Thailand.

Hypothesis 4

H4₀: Information Quality does not significantly influence direct hotel booking decisions of travelers in Thailand.

H4_a: Information Quality does significantly influence direct hotel booking decisions of travelers in Thailand.

Hypothesis 5

H5₀: Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) does not significantly influence direct hotel booking decisions of travelers in Thailand.

H5_a: Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) does significantly influence direct hotel booking decisions of travelers in Thailand.

Hypothesis 6

H6₀: Customer Relationship does not significantly influence direct hotel booking decisions of travelers in Thailand.

H6_a: Customer Relationship does significantly influence direct hotel booking decisions of travelers in Thailand.

5. Methodology

This study employed a rigorous quantitative research approach to empirically test the proposed conceptual framework regarding the factors influencing Direct Hotel Booking Decisions in Thailand. The methodology was structured to allow for the systematic collection of data and subsequent statistical analysis necessary to validate or reject the research hypotheses.

The target population was Thai hotel customers with some previous experience with the direct hotel booking via official hotel channels (e.g., website, mobile application, phone, or official social media). Because the total number of the population was unknown but considered large (above 200,000 people), the required sample size was computed as the Infinite Population formula to be 384.165555 by using the given formula. The researcher was able to collect data on 400 respondents in total

$$n = \frac{Z^2}{4e^2}$$

Where:
 n : the necessary sample size.
 Z : z -value of the selected confidence level
 (e.g., 1.96 to a 95% confidence interval).
 e : the error allowance (allowable error at 5 percent or 0.05)

Non-probability sampling methods were employed due to time and resource constraints. This involved a hybrid approach using convenience sampling for the initial distribution of online questionnaires on easily accessible channels, and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling was initially used to locate a key person with relevant experience, who then served as the critical starting point for the subsequent snowball sampling to find other qualified Thai hotel guests.

The research instrument was an online questionnaire (using Google Forms) consisting of 42 items divided into three parts: Screening Questions (Nominal Scale), Demographic Data (Nominal/Ordinal Scale, 7 items), and the Measurement of Variables (33 items using a 5-point interval Likert scale). The Likert scale measured the dependent variable (Direct Hotel Booking Decision) and the six independent variables (Perceived Ease of Use, Price, Payment Method, Information Quality, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, and Customer Relationship).

Table 4: Rules of Thumb of Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient range	Strength of Associations
> 0.9	Excellent
> 0.8	Good
> 0.7	Acceptable
> 0.6	Questionable
> 0.5	Poor
< 0.5	Unacceptable

Prior to main distribution, the questionnaire underwent a pretest with 30 respondents¹³¹³¹³¹³. The reliability of the constructs was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, where all variables met or exceeded the acceptable threshold of Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7. The main analytical techniques included Descriptive Analysis (to summarize demographics and mean scores), and Multiple Linear Regression (to quantify the predictive abilities of the six independent variables on the dependent variable and test the hypotheses).

6. Result

The preliminary analysis of the collected data reveals a clear profile of the participants and their general attitudes toward the factors influencing direct hotel booking. It's important to differentiate between the demographic characteristics of the sample and their perception of the study variables.

Table 11.1: Summary of demographic information’s result in frequency and percentage

Demographic Information	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	254	63.5
Age	25–35 years	130	32.5
Educational Level	Bachelor’s degree	262	65.5
Occupation	Private sector employee	262	65.5
Monthly Income (in Thai Baht)	15,001–30,000 THB	113	28.2
	30,001–50,000 THB	113	28.2
Purpose of travel	Leisure	376	94.0
Frequency of hotel stays per year	1–2 times	201	50.2

The study had a final sample of Thai travelers who had experience with direct hotel booking. The demographic profile determined that the respondents were mostly female and represented the younger working age adult group with the greatest number of respondents being in the 25-35 years age range. A very large proportion of them were well educated, having completed a Bachelor degree, and were working in the private sector. Furthermore, the overwhelming motivation for travel was leisure. This description makes the sample a digitally familiar, educated, and largely leisure-oriented group of the Thai market, the preferences of which with regards to booking were critical to the focus of the study.

Table 8.2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Dependent and Independent Variables

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Direct Hotel Booking Decision	400	3.6905	0.82718	Agree
Perceived Ease of Use	400	3.9480	0.76640	Agree
Price	400	3.9015	0.77077	Agree
Payment Method	400	3.9525	0.79789	Agree
Information Quality	400	3.8769	0.79235	Agree
eWOM	400	4.0781	0.64525	Agree
Customer Relationship	400	3.8625	0.75897	Agree

Descriptive analysis of the study variables showed that respondents held a positive attitude toward the dependent variable, Direct Hotel Booking Decision, as well as all six independent variables. This overall positive impression suggests that customers find direct booking channels easy to operate, affordable, safe, and informative. However, this descriptive support only reflects importance; the subsequent regression analysis is required to determine which of these highly-rated factors are the actual predictors of the final booking channel decision.

The core findings emerged from the Multiple Linear Regression Analysis, which tested the predictive power of the six independent variables on the Direct Hotel Booking Decision. The initial model yielded a strong explanatory power, with the six variables jointly explaining 57.4% of the variation in the decision to book directly (Adjusted R Square =0.574).

Table 8.2: Model Summary from Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			
					R Square Chang	df1	df2	Sig. Change F
1	.762 ^a	.580	.574	.53985	.580	6	393	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), PEOU, P, PM, IQ eWOM, CR

Table 9.2.2: Model Summary from Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.010	.195		.049	.961		
Perceived Ease of Use	.409	.047	.379	8.632	.000	.554	1.804
Price	.338	.056	.315	6.041	.000	.393	2.545
Payment Method	.057	.055	.055	1.042	.298	.383	2.610
Information Quality	.086	.053	.083	1.642	.011	.420	2.383
eWOM	.050	.052	.039	.961	.337	.656	1.524
Customer Relationship	.101	.054	.093	1.890	.040	.442	2.261

a. Dependent Variable: Direct Hotel Booking Decision

The analysis of individual significance identified four factors as statistically significant predictors of the direct booking decision ($p < 0.05$). Conversely, Payment Method (PM) ($p=0.298$) and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) ($p=0.337$) were found to be statistically non-significant in influencing the decision in this model. These results led the researcher to reject the null hypotheses for the four significant factors and fail to reject the null hypotheses for PM and eWOM. This confirmed the need to refine the model, focusing solely on the four significant predictors to better represent the key influences⁸

The re-examination of the model (2nd round) was performed by removing the two statistically non-significant predictors—Payment Method and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)—identified in the initial analysis, focusing solely on the four significant variables: Perceived Ease of Use, Price, Information Quality, and Customer Relationship.

Table10.1: Model Summary from Multiple Regression Analysis (2nd round)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.760 ^a	.578	.574	.53986

a. Predictors: (Constant), PEOU, P, IQ, CR

This refined model achieved a high explanatory power, with the Adjusted R Square value remaining at 0.574, confirming that these four factors alone could account for 57.4% of the fluctuation in the Direct Hotel Booking Decision. All four retained variables maintained a statistically significant influence on the dependent variable ($p < 0.05$), validating their role as the true drivers of the behavior.

Table 10.2.2: Model Summary from Multiple Regression Analysis (2nd round)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.068	.169		.402	.688		
	Perceived Ease of Use	.407	.047	.377	8.723	.000	.571	1.753
	Price	.363	.051	.338	7.154	.000	.477	2.094
	Information Quality	.095	.049	.091	1.950	.032	.488	2.051
	Customer Relationship	.094	.051	.087	1.846	.046	.484	2.066

a. Dependent Variable: Direct Hotel Booking Decision

The most significant factor was determined to be the Perceived Ease of Use which has a beta of 0.377 which proves that the most important aspect to a traveler is the usability of the system. The second factor that dominated was price set at 0.338, and this indicates the significance of transparent and competitive price set. The remaining two factors, Information Quality (beta=0.091) and Customer Relationship (beta=0.087), maintained significant but smaller, supporting roles. The successful validation of Model 2 affirms that these four variables are the statistically meaningful drivers of direct booking behavior among Thai travelers, leading to the final regression equation.

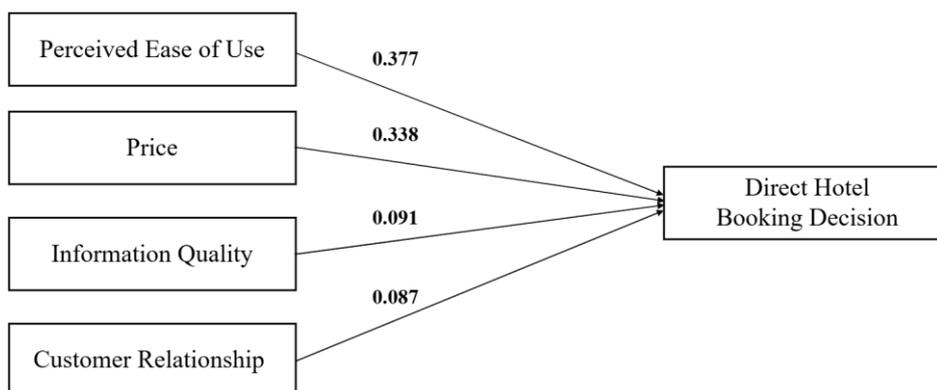


Figure 5.1: Factors Influencing Direct Hotel Booking Decisions in Thailand Model

$$\text{Direct Hotel Booking Decision} = 0.068 + 0.407(\text{Perceived Ease of Use}) + 0.363(\text{Price}) + 0.095(\text{Information Quality}) + 0.094(\text{Customer Relationship})$$

7. Conclusion

The analysis of factors influencing Direct Hotel Booking Decisions in Thailand provided clear and actionable insights, with the established model explaining 57.4% of the variance in customer behavior (Adjusted R Square =0.574). The primary conclusion is that the decision to book directly is fundamentally driven by perceived ease of use, price, information quality, and customer relationship elements, but is notably not significantly predicted by factors related to Payment Method or Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM).

The four statistically significant factors that were found to be the drivers of the direct booking behavior are:

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU): This is the strongest predictive variable of the behavior with a beta of 0.377, p-value of 0.000. This aligns with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), confirming that a smooth, fast, and

intuitive user experience on a hotel's direct platform is the single most critical factor that shifts a traveler's decision away from using OTAs.

Price (P): It is the second most significant driver with a beta of 0.338 and a p-value of 0.0005. It is not only emphasized on low cost, but on the price transparency and integrity. Customers feel more confident they are paying the correct, fair price when booking directly, which reduces uncertainty and builds trust.

Information Quality (IQ): IQ serves as a significant supporting influence with a beta of 0.091 and a p-value of 0.032. Customers require that the hotel's official platform provides accurate, complete, and reliable information, including clear policies and trustworthy photos.

Factors of Baseline Expectation

The finding that eWOM and Payment Method were statistically non-significant predictors in the final model is a key takeaway. Although both received high mean scores in the descriptive analysis (eWOM mean =4.08, PM mean =3.95), indicating they are highly valued by customers, their lack of predictive power suggests they are perceived as baseline expectations. Travelers assume that both positive reviews and secure, varied payment options are mandatory for any reputable online platform, thus they might not serve as competitive differentiators when choosing between the hotel's direct channel and an OTA.

In conclusion, the decision to book directly is not driven by whether a hotel has good reviews or secure payment, but rather by the usability of the platform and the assurance of a fair, clear price, complemented by reliable information and superior direct service.

8. Recommendations

The quantitative data of this study offers certain, hard-grounded suggestions to hotel owners and management teams in Thailand with an intention to expand their market share of direct bookings and minimize the reliance on OTAs. These recommendations are directly aimed at capitalizing on the four statistically significant factors in the model that are Perceived Ease of Use, Price, Information Quality, and Customer Relationship.

Optimize for Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)

Since PEOU is the strongest predictor of direct booking behavior, high priority of investing in the digital infrastructure should be put. Hotels should make sure that their direct booking engine is ultra-fast and highly responsive and designed in an intuitively designed format, which can be on a web site or in a mobile application. This involves the reduction of the number of clicks that it takes to make a purchase, providing easy-to-follow step-by-step instructions, and having a clean interface. It should be tested regularly on the various devices (mobile, desktop) to remove friction and ensure maximum convenience.

Implement a Transparent Pricing Strategy

Since the second strongest factor is Price, the strategy has to be centered on integrity and clarity rather than merely ensuring the lowest rate. The prices quoted on the direct channel should be fully transparent showing all the taxes, fees and surcharges on the face to avoid "hidden charges" that will destroy trust. Hotels must also be eager to sell a Best Rate Guarantee and make sure that direct rates are up to competition with and possibly a little lower than those found on OTAs, which makes the customer confident that they are paying the right rate directly.

Enhance Information Quality (IQ)

The direct channel must function as the definitive source of truth. Hotels should invest in providing accurate, complete, and trustworthy content. That would be the case of high-resolution and up-to-date photos that truly depict the rooms and facilities, and the description of the policies related to cancellation, refunds, and modification of the booking in a clear and unambiguous manner. Advertisements and deals should be updated on a regular basis and address presented in a clear manner to be timely and credible.

Strengthen Customer Relationship (CR) Value

Since customers value the relational benefits of booking directly, hotels must capitalize on their direct control over the guest relationship. This means ensuring that staff—via chat, email, or phone—respond quickly and helpfully to inquiries. Furthermore, loyalty programs should be enhanced to offer tangible, perceived value, such as easier modification of dates, guaranteed room upgrades, or highly personalized offers and promotions that are unavailable elsewhere.

Supplementary Note on Non-Significant Factors

Although the variables Payment Method and eWOM were not significant predictors of channel choice, they had high values of descriptive means, which require maintenance. Hotels are advised to have a wide range of secure payment methods (e.g., credit cards, e-wallets) and keep on the offensive on the online image by promoting positive feedback and acting in a professional manner on all customer feedbacks.

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This study's foundation rests upon the **valuable data** provided by the respondents—400 Thai nationals with prior direct hotel booking experience. Their detailed responses were critical to empirically testing the relationship between established theoretical constructs and actual booking behavior.

Furthermore, the academic context was established through the extensive **prior research** analyzed in the literature review, which informed the identification and operationalization of key variables, including Price transparency, Information Quality, and Customer Relationship dynamics, that significantly influence this decision-making process. This collaboration of guidance, established knowledge, and firsthand consumer data was indispensable to the findings.

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