TRAVELLERS' EXPECTATIONS WHEN BOOKING HOTELS THROUGH ONLINE TRAVEL AGENTS

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ABSTRACT

Travellers constantly require personalized travel arrangements. They look for specific arrangements depending on whether the trip is for leisure or business. However, some travellers prefer multiple events in their travel schedules, including visiting prime locations or historical places. Hence, online travel agents (OTAs) are the most convenient alternative platforms to meet the specific needs of travellers. This study utilizes survey method to examine factors influencing travellers when booking hotels through OTAs. This study collected 398 questionnaires at Penang International Airport, Malaysia. Results indicate five factors, i.e. room facilities and amenities, customer recognition through star rating, price factor, promotion factor, and other hotel facilities, that significantly influence travellers' expectations in booking hotels through OTAs.
Keywords: *Online Travel Agents (OTA), Online Hotel Booking, Traveller.*

INTRODUCTION

The hotel industry has become increasingly important worldwide as everyone prefers to travel constantly for various purposes and reasons, such as business trips, vacations, or to pay a visit to their families or friends. The vital element of the hotel industry is central to fulfilling the demands of their customers by solely focusing on developing a desirable atmosphere and also a safe accommodation for their short-term visit. In addition, hotels must provide various services and amenities to those travellers who stay at the hotels (Jedin & Annathurai, 2020). Moreover, many travellers prefer customized options that reflect style and functionality and easy accessibility from anywhere and anytime, mainly to fulfil their specific needs as offered by online travel agents (OTAs) (Scholl-Grissemann & Schnurr, 2016). OTAs' hotel booking trends are ahead of other online platforms, especially in the travel industry (Jo et al., 2021).

The development of the Internet and its applications has enabled travellers to access their desired information immediately; thus, it enables easy bookings to be made through online environment (Morrison et al., 2004). Concurrently, the development and improvement of the Internet have significantly affected how hotels distribute and price their products and services. The emergence of the World Wide Web

(www.) has dramatically modernized the platform of tourism dispersal from the conventional to the contemporary age. Given the slow adoption of the hotel industry to online distribution, this gave opportunities to external distributors, namely Travelocity and Expedia, to dominate the industry (Law & Cheung, 2006). However, according to Martin-Fuentes and Mellinas (2018), two prominent group companies leading in the domination of online hotel distribution are Expedia, including Expedia itself, Wotif, Travelocity Hotwire, Hotel.com and Orbitz. At the same time, Priceline is popular with six direct online hotel bookings, such as Priceline.com, Rentalcars.com, Booking.com, Agoda.com, Open Table and Kayak.com. On top of that, Booking.com is also recognized as the world-leading in online booking accommodations.

Internet usage helps OTAs promote their services through an inexpensive and interactive method. Through multimedia, the travellers can apprehend the services even greater without the assistance directly from the service provider. Comparatively, the Internet has been emphasized as a global platform as most corporations use it to identify their global audience because the Internet can circulate vast volumes of information efficiently and quickly at a low cost (Wymbs, 2000). In fact, many consumers are now embracing online shopping trends which subsequently enable OTAs to become popular in online booking hotel platform (Bhatti & Ur Rehman, 2019). Therefore, Internet usage amongst customers has increased rapidly.

Several driving factors motivate travel agents to modernize their business methods and execution in Internet usage. There are significant reasons for change, such as increased customers' demand and expectations in online booking, deregulation and increased competition through globalization. This research paper intends to explore the factors that influence online hotel booking amongst travellers through OTAs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Online hotel booking has become a significant trend for travellers and visitors to travel domestically or internationally. Many researchers on online hotel booking from various countries, such as Bilgihan et al. (2014), Lien et al. (2015) and Wen (2009), have accessed attributes such as conveniences, service quality, usefulness, customer loyalty and information. Wang et al. (2020) conducted a study on online hotel booking using TripAdvisor.com as the primary database and revealed the five types of hotel booking support decisions. They also identified five classes of travellers: business, couples, family, friends, and solo. They unveiled that business travellers are more concerned about rooms, service, desks, lobby, restaurants and meals than other factors.

Meanwhile, compared to other travellers, couples are additionally interested in the bar, bed, floor, walk, and coffee. Family travellers arevmore prone to breakfast and suite factors. They prefer a good breakfast and bigger rooms, such as suites. Next, location and cleanliness are essential motives for friend travellers. Finally, solo travellers prefer places to price factors.

Xie et al. (2011) have listed a few other elements that motivate travellers for online hotel booking from OTA's or hotels' websites: online reviews, quality of the website, and information satisfaction. Whereas Kim et al. (2020) pointed out that travellers who booked online will receive price descriptions of travel itineraries and easily retrieved at

any time while travelling. Besides, Wang et al. (2013) stressed that convenience, security, usefulness, efficiency and perceived risk are the five characteristics of the Internet that influence online hotel booking. Another positive view, Ip et al. (2012), stressed that online booking allows travellers to check and compare, particularly cost advantages, faster transactions, and rapid booking confirmations. Most travellers browse hotels' and OTAs' websites to compare the prices before booking (Emmer et al., 1993). Ultimately, online booking allows travellers to directly communicate with hoteliers or OTA's agents at their convenience, time and place.

Various factors influence online hotel booking. Thus, embarking on the online hotel booking studies through OTAs is worthwhile, particularly in ASEAN countries, such as Malaysia, where travellers are diverse in personality and multi-cultural ethnic backgrounds. Given the many factors and variables from previous research, this study proposes several variables in influencing online hotel booking in Malaysian contexts, namely, room facilities and amenities, selection of food and beverages, customer recognition through star rating, price factors, promotion factors, location advantages and other hotel facilities.

Availability of rooms is a primary element for hotels. In addition, accommodation amenities have a crucial function to popularise hotels. For instance, if travellers are satisfied with the hotel services and facilities, they will likely become regular hotel members and return to the same hotel. Thus, accommodating comfortable rooms to establish loyal customers is crucial. Moreover, Ye et al. (2011) uncovered most traveller consider room condition and amenities as significant factor in selecting a hotel. Thus, the hoteliers should invest in and emphasize the quality of the hotel rooms, such as the room's design, and regularly improve room facilities and amenities.

In addition, it improves room facilities and promotes the present facilities through various advertisement tools such as websites, which helps the business maximize the room bookings. Hence, website room images and short videos are crucial to attracting customers. With technological sophistication, the OTAs and hoteliers can publish images and videos of the rooms, namely the amenities and views. According to Bilgihan and Bujisic (2015), good quality hotel room pictures and videos through the website's design will give the prospective hotel guest a clear description of what they will expect before making a reservation. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_1: *The greater the room facilities and amenities, the more attractive the room is to travellers.*

Another important landmark is food and beverages. Food and beverages are also factors that contribute to the popularity position of a particular hotel. As a result, hotels nowadays focus more on food and beverage elements to popularize their business. For example, guests' experience with food and beverage is essential to their overall hotel experience. Exclusive and flavorful food that has gone through proper sanitation will encourage guests to select the similar hotel for their next trip. Guests are not only to return to the same hotel but in fact they likely to showcase the pleasant experiences to their friends through social media. Above all, decent food services and beverage quality are crucial to differentiate the hotel itself from other hotels (Abu Khalifeh & Som, 2012). Besides that, halal food and beverages are also attractions in online hotel booking in Malaysia. Every year, the increase in Muslim tourists significantly

increases the need for halal food and beverages (Shafaei & Mohamed, 2015). Further, a better awareness of Muslim travellers can extend more customer segments to the hotels and, significantly, to OTAs (Eid, 2013). Hence, it can be proposed that:

H₂: The more comprehensive the selection of food and beverages served, the more likely the traveller is to book the hotel.

The role of the digital world has become part of our living spaces in our daily lifestyle. Recommendations and views from customers and users via websites are the factors that customers evaluate a service or product they have experienced. This rating platform is an alternative for travellers to assess the hotel's services. Nowadays, travellers depend more on peers' views and online ratings (Casalo et al., 2015). This is also emphasized by Park et al. (2007). Online evaluations and ratings show the details of the products and services and serve as customer recommendations. On the other hand, reviews and recommendations on travelling services such as accommodation need to be updated and supported by reliable hotel information through their websites (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Zhang et al., 2011).

A study examining OTAs users who reviewed using alternative review posting channels via social network interface systems (SNIS) like Facebook uncovered low ratings and shorter reviews than the local account on the OTAs platform (Kim & Hyun, 2021). This finding confirmed that the OTAs platform is more critical as a review recommendation for travellers than other platforms. Another recent study by Chatterjee and Mandal (2020) stressed that airline reviews, such as customer reviews using star ratings and recommendations, were vital and reflected in the customer's perception of the services provided. In fact, according to Hensens (2015), online guest reviews through star ratings will continually become an essential reference to travellers. It allows them to review and read the star rating across devices and various platforms when and where they want. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₃: The higher the hotel's star rating, the more likely the traveller will make a booking.

Price has become another important determinant for this study. The price is considered a key selection for travellers to book a hotel online using the OTAs platform that serves travellers regarding the accommodation rates (Law et al., 2007). Meanwhile, Pan et al. (2013) pointed out that primarily customers prefer to use price to make the comparison by narrowing their preferences, evaluating, looking for another possibility and then making a purchase decision.

From an online hotel booking perspective, fee influences hotel rooms' booking decisions and determines the customers' insights of quality and cost expectations (Schwartz & Chen, 2010). This is confirmed by a study by Lien et al. (2015), who found that perceived price positively influences purchase intentions provided with reasonable and acceptable prices for online hotel booking. Meanwhile, Law and Cheung (2006) identified that some customers often used several OTAs websites to collect booking data, especially prices and make comparisons before making their online booking. Specific online booking platforms provide the best offer on their price rates and use numerous methods to attract customers (Dixit et al., 2005). Due to these circumstances, many customers spend time searching and comparing prices to get the best and most reasonable prices (Law et al., 2007).

Furthermore, most previous studies indicated that online customers always concern on hotel room rates (Jedin & Annathurai, 2020). Customers compare room rates amongst the OTAs channels and, at the same time, browse the hotel room facilities and amenities, which allow them to attain the best deals (Law et al., 2007). Certain studies make comparison on price variations among all hotel websites including OTAs. For example, Gazzoli et al. (2008) found that hotel website room rates had higher prices than OTAs. Likewise, Tso and Law (2005) found higher prices on the hotels' websites. However, recently, best price clauses (BPCs) were imposed by OTAs as it accommodates the hotel, which cannot offer better prices on distribution channels other than the OTAs (Hunold et al. 2018). Further, BPCs could restrict hotels from charging higher room rates to the OTA stated in the clause. Therefore, issues of room prices should be considered and put it as priority by the consumers when making hotel booking through OTAs. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₄: *The lower the price, the more likely the traveller will book the hotel.*

Promotions refer to activities that raise customers' awareness through various aggressive marketing promotions of products, services or brands (Jedin & Balachandran, 2021). Promotion drives increased requests for a product or service. Kotler (2000) emphasized that companies use promotion to convince customers to purchase a product or service. Most hotel promotions were based on price promotions, typically comprising price discounts, coupons, wedding and membership. In fact, the most effective strategy is induced consumers with price promotions in order to increase purchase volume (Montaner et al., 2011). In terms of OTAs, the tendencies of travellers to book are higher when the prices are reasonable, and they have good values in their hotel room.

Furthermore, travellers who use OTAs services will be attracted to cheaper price promotions than other offers (Chandon et al., 2000). On the other hand, Hu and Yang (2020) confirmed in their study that hoteliers should consider online hotel ratings when specifying online price promotions to highlight the importance of consumer perceptions on what "you get what you pay for". Therefore, OTAs and hoteliers must ensure their promotions on their accommodation reflect the quality and value paid by the travellers through online hotel booking. Thus, below is the proposed hypothesis:

H₅: *The Better the Price Promotion of a Hotel, the Higher the Traveller will Book the Hotel*

Location is considered an essential element to travellers seeking convenience and nearby various facilities and amenities. Most travellers who travel mainly to a strategic tourist location will obtain the main consent. In fact, this is the prime strategy for hoteliers to survive and succeed in offering hotel accommodation to travellers (Yang et al., 2012). This is confirmed by Nicolau (2002), who stressed that hotel location is the first factor influencing hotel selection decisions for tourists. Similar views by Rivers et al. (1991) who stated location convenience influences tourists' room selection. Meanwhile, Lewis and Chambers (1989) location of accommodation is always a concern to business travellers. Further, Tsaur and Tzeng (1995) emphasized on hotel location, inconvenience of transportation and parking area is essential in the perspective of service quality.

Meanwhile, another important finding in online hotel booking related to strategic location and ratings was examined by Cezar and Ogut (2016). They found that high

location ratings and hotel ranks in search listings significantly impact generating more revenues. Therefore, hotel management and OTAs must consider the location strategy as an advantage to attract travellers to online hotel booking. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₆: The more Accessible the Hotel Location, the Higher the Traveller will Book the Hotel.

Another important factor in online hotel booking is the variety of hotel facilities. These factors are the most common experienced by the hotel guests, such as the hotel rooms, gymnasiums, pools and many more. According to Hu and Yang (2020), guests can quickly review hotel attributes such as hotel amenities and other facilities they have used through OTAs and other review platforms. Subsequently, many travellers rely on online reviews, especially from OTAs, as it shows transparency and can highly influence them to decide when making an online booking. Furthermore, hotel facilities and hospitality management can be measured using hotel feedback forms that also supply the hotel improvements and complaints (Losekot et al., 2001).

Meanwhile, Abdullah and Hamdan (2012) conducted a study on hotel facilities categorized into two leading platforms, internal and external. They highlighted that hotel facilities and services are involved in internal factors such as personnel attitudes, security factors, cleanliness and other hotel facilities. They found that most of the guests were satisfied and met their expectations. Another important study that examined hotel facilities was conducted in New Zealand. Shergill et al. (2004) classified overall hotel facilities in New Zealand as basic, convenient, and personal requirements. These factors were again divided into a few areas according to their guest, either vacation or business travellers. For vacation travellers, factors include customer service quality, additional value and personal requirements. Instead, business travellers looked at basic requirements: convenience, living quality, and traffic. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₇: The more variety of hotel facilities, the higher the traveller will book the hotel

FLOW THEORY

Flow theory is also known as flow experiences. An individual is absorbed in an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975), which means the individual experiences a clear direction and can influence his attitudes without distraction. Hoffman and Novak (1996) stated that flow could be described as an online flow facilitated by machine interactivity during network navigation. They also highlighted that the machine interactivity was created in a commercially compelling website, promoting flow experiences. Flow experiences exist in many circumstances, for example, sports, shopping, gambling, dancing and Internet games that need concentration and control whilst enjoying the activity (Hoffman & Novak, 2009; Chi-Hsun & Jyh Jeng, 2017). Flow theory was applied in examining personal experiences in virtual reality technology (Kim & Ko, 2019). Moreover, in the case of online environments, flow experiences have been used as a construct to examine consumer behaviours in online customer experiences (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). This outlook was also stressed by Bilgihan et al. (2014), who encapsulated that flow helps explain online experiences. According to Bridges and Florsheim (2008), marketing through the online landscape could offer consumers experience flow,

influencing them to make more purchases and revisit the website to feel the same shopping experience. Consequently, companies that use online websites as their primary marketing tool to engage consumers, such as OTAs', must provide excellent online features and attractive websites to create pleasant experiences. This argument was also supported by Bilgihan et al. (2014). They studied consumers' online hotel-booking experience and stated that the role of flow experience becomes even more apparent when hotel rooms become a commodity in contemporary marketplaces. It is also in line with Wu et al. (2014), who identified that flow experiences directly affect general online shopping or impulse buying. Hence, companies must understand the online marketing strategy by developing and formulating convenient and highly creative website landscapes. Therefore, this study parallels the concept conveyed by flow theory in travellers' expectations when booking hotels through OTAs.

METHODOLOGY
Sampling Method and Location
This study used a survey to collect the data and obtained a close- ended questionnaire. A non-probability sampling method was adapted through convenience sampling. The study limits its respondents to those who have experienced booking hotels through OTAs. The travellers must have knowledge and opinions regarding the OTAs' services. Penang International Airport, Malaysia was the venue to distribute the questionnaire, in June, July, August, and December. Each year, most international and local tourists use air transportation during these months (Jayaraman et al., 2008). Ultimately, we distributed 450 questionnaires at the location of the survey.

Scale and Measurement
The researchers measured all of the items using five-point Likert scales. This study adopted the items from previous empirical research on hotel selection factors and attributes by Chu and Choi (2000), who examined business and leisure travellers in Hong Kong's hotel industry. Meanwhile, Callan and Bowman (2000) focused their study on British travellers.

Data Collection, Reliability and Convergent Validity
In this study, respondents were requested to participate in completing the questionnaires face-to-face and collected once they completed the questionnaires. As a result, this study collected 410 questionnaires, and only 398 were useable for several reasons. Table 1 shows the number of respondents and item reliability. All the items for reliabilities were taken from Cronbach's alpha and were above the recommended level of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1967). Table 2 shows the result of the Pearson correlation analysis. The result indicates that most variables have a positive relationship and significance. However, two variables (promotion factor and other hotel facilities) were not significant against customer recognition. According to Hair et al. (2014), the correlation values should be below the usual threshold of 0.50.

The researchers also analyzed the skewness and kurtosis. According to George and Mallery (2010), skewness and kurtosis measure the level of data distribution peak

with the threshold between −2 and +2. This is important to ensure that the data are in a normal distribution. Consequently, Table 2 shows that the data were normally distributed. As for the analysis of average variance extracted (AVE), Table 2 presents that all variables of the AVE values were accepted but mostly were at low values. The minimum threshold values of the AVE were 0.5, thus accepting the analysis (Fornell and Larcker, 1991). IBM Statistical package version 26 was used to analyze the data collected.

Table 3
Respondents' Profile

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Destination of travel		
Domestic	163	41.0
International	158	39.7
Both	77	19.3
Gender		
Male	196	49.2
Female	202	50.8
Age		
Below 20	12	3.0
21 – 30	220	55.3
31 – 40	109	27.4
41 – 50	49	12.3
Above 50	8	2.0
Education levels		
School leaver	29	7.3
Diploma	80	20.1
Bachelor Degree	203	51.0
Master Degree	73	18.3
Other	13	3.3
Citizenships		
Malaysian	333	83.7
Foreigners	65	16.3
If Malaysian, please state your race below		
Malay	117	29.4
Chinese	107	26.9
Indian	81	20.4
Others	28	7.0
Monthly Income		
Below RM3000	116	29.1
RM3001-RM5000	162	40.7
RM3001-RM5000	90	22.6

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
RM10 000 above	30	7.5

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The primary purpose of the trip		
Business/Meeting	50	12.6
Holiday	293	73.6
Visiting Friends/Relatives	52	13.1
Others	3	0.8
Which one of the following online travel agents that you used?		
Trivago.com	63	15.8
Agoda.com	146	36.7
Kayak.com	9	2.3
Expedia.com	41	10.3
TripAdvisor.com	58	14.6
Booking.com	81	20.4
Others	0	0

N=398

RESULTS
Proportion of Demographic Results

Table 3 depicts the summary of respondents' demographic profiles. The study identified 41.0 percent of the travellers travelled in local destinations while 39.7 percent travelled internationally, 19.3 percent travelled both local and international. 196 were male, whereas 202 were female. Majority of the respondents were in the group of 21–30 age (55.3%). 83.7 percent were Malaysians, and the rest were foreigners. In terms of races and nationalities Malay 29.4 percent, followed by Chinese at 26.9 percent, Indian with 20.4 percent and 7.0 percent for other races. Meanwhile, 73.6 percent of respondents chose a holiday, 13.1 percent selected visiting friends and relatives, 12.6 percent chose business trips, and 0.8 percent chose others.

The researchers have listed a few OTAs for this study, such as Agoda. com, Trivago.com, Kayak.com, Expedia.com, TripAdvisor, Booking. com, and others. The survey results show that 146 respondents preferred to use Agoda.com services, followed by 81 respondents who chose Booking.com, 63 respondents chose Trivago.com, 58 respondents chose TripvAdvisor, 49 respondents chose Expedia.com, and nine respondents chose Kayak.com services.

Table 2
Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Room capacity	0.564							
Selection of food	0.310**	0.613						
Customer recognition	0.189**	0.144**	0.528					
Price factor	0.136**	0.125*	0.178**	0.676				
Promotion factor	0.176**	0.226**	0.008	0.341**	0.555			
Location advantage	0.318**	0.177**	0.251**	0.321**	0.252**	0.503		
Other Facilities	0.232**	0.248**	0.052	0.156**	0.247**	0.342**	0.507	
Online hotel booking	0.029**	0.122*	0.191**	0.286**	0.344**	0.249**	0.238**	0.505
Cronbach Alpha	0.719	0.785	0.779	0.759	0.807	0.752	0.712	0.835
Skewness	-7.31	-2.67	-0.325	-1.449	-.817	-0.786	0.221	0.122
Kurtosis	0.992	-0.828	-0.392	2.129	0.917	0.629	-0.258	2.063
Mean	3.925	3.530	3.502	4.633	4.178	4.200	3.559	4.407
Standard Deviation	0.633	1.101	0.835	0.491	0.682	0.641	0.593	0.478

Noted: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)
Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed)

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	81	20.4
	0	0

N=398

Multiple Regression Analysis

The researchers used multiple linear regressions to run the analysis in this study. This analysis helps evaluate the contributions of predictors. Table 4 demonstrates that the R square is 0.228 and significant at 0.000 thus variables can be accepted. Similarly, to the multicollinearity analysis, which indicates that the study is free of multicollinearity issues as shown in Table 5: Tolerance and VIF results.

Table 4
Multiple Regressions Summary

Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
				R Square Change	F Change	Df1	Df2	Sig. F Change
0.477[a]	0.228	0.214	0.42341	0.423	2.948	16.443	7	390	.000[b]

Subsequently, the outcomes show that five independent variables exist: room facilities and amenities, customer recognition through star rating, price factor, promotion factor, and other hotel facilities have a significant relationship with a dependent variable online hotel booking. Pallant (2013) stated if the significant value is less than 0.05, the variable makes a uniquely significant contribution to the prediction of the dependent variable.

Next, the beta findings for room facilities and amenities are 0.188 and significant at 0.000, followed by customer recognition through star
rating, beta result is 0.130 and significant at 0.006. In terms of the price factor, beta result is 0.136 and significant at 0.006. Subsequently, the promotion factor beta level is 0.245, which is significant at 0.000. Finally, other hotel facilities are also significant at 0.023 and beta level at 0.112. However, the findings revealed two variables were not significant: selection of food and beverages and location advantages.

Table 5
Multiple Regression and Multicollinearity Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Results	
						Tolerance	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
Constant	1.953	0.248		7.880	.000		
Room facilities and amenities	0.142	0.037	0.188	3.817	.000	0.815	1.227
Selection of food and beverages	-0.026	0.021	-0.059	-1.217	0.224	0.844	1.185

Customer recognition	0.074	0.027	0.130	2.760	0.006	0.890	1.124
Price factor	0.132	0.048	0.136	2.744	0.006	0.810	1.235
Promotion factor	0.172	0.035	0.245	4.943	0.000	0.803	1.245
Location advantages	0.018	0.039	0.024	0.452	0.651	0.730	1.369
Other hotel facilities	0.090	0.040	0.112	2.283	0.023	0.821	1.218

Dependent variable: Online Hotel booking

DISCUSSIONS

This study has listed several factors experienced by many travellers when booking hotels online. Subsequently, five factors contributed to attracting travellers' intention to book through OTAs: room facilities and amenities, customer recognition through star rating, price factor, price promotion factor, and other hotel facilities.

When travellers look for hotels, room facilities and amenities are the most important factor to be selected. Table 6 shows the room facilities and amenities result (β = 0.188, p < 0.001). Thus, H1 is supported. This result is congruent with the study of Ye et al. (2011). They confirmed room quality and amenities as the most influential factor when selecting a hotel. Furthermore, Wang et al. (2020) pointed out that the view of the room through hotel websites highlighting the interior design and facilities provided inside the room would develop trust and attract the attention of potential guests before booking a reservation. Room facilities are the most crucial in hotel online booking as it reflects the main intention according to the needs of the travellers that suit them.

This study found that customer recognition through star rating positively and significantly influences online-booking intention (β = 0.130, p < 0.05). Hence, H3 is supported. This is expected as most travellers select their hotels according to the rating made by previous hotel customers. The rating shows a high impact as it mirrored hotel management's essential services and facilities. Similarly, Park et al. (2007) stressed that hotel ratings and online customer reviews largely influence travellers' intention to book hotels online. Customer feedback and reviews are prime information that updates travellers, especially first-time guests (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Zhang et al., 2011). Likewise, Dickinger and Mazanec (2008) emphasized that hotel rating is one of the preferred criteria in online hotel booking. Similarly, price factor has a significant and positive effect (β = 0.136, p < 0.05). Therefore, H4 is supported. This result aligns with Pan et al. (2013) and Schwartz and Chen (2010), who stressed that price influences travellers' intention to book hotels online. Promotion factor also positively affects and significantly influences online hotel booking (β = 0.245, p < 0.05). Thus, H5 is supported. This finding is similar to the study by Kang et

al. (2007). Price and promotions are essential elements to persuade customers to select services or products. It is evident that higher promotion and competitive prices will attract more customers to buy a product or service.

Finally, hotel facilities have positive effects and a significant relationship with online booking ($\beta = 0.112$, $p < 0.05$). Hotel facilities will fulfil customers' needs and make accommodation infrastructure meaningful and practical for them. Moreover, Shergill and Sun (2004) pointed out that various hotel facilities are the elements that differentiate hotels from their competitors. Nevertheless, two variables were found not significant: selection of food and beverages and location advantages to influence online hotel booking. Food and beverages are not the main concerns for travellers who search for accommodation through OTAs. Good food must be tested and experienced, which creates added value as food must be tested and experienced while staying at the hotel. Those mentioned above could motivate a returning guest by providing a tasteful and excellent variety of complimentary food, such as a free breakfast. In terms of location, travellers are mainly looking for low prices and comfortable accommodation rooms. Instead, most strategically located hotels offer a higher price, which can sometimes be doubled. Sometimes, the hotel location is challenging to locate.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

This study identified five factors as crucial factors for OTAs. These five factors are room facilities and amenities, customer recognition through star rating, price, promotion, and other hotel facilities, which significantly affect online hotel booking except for food and beverage services and location advantages. Further, this study contributes to flow theory in an online setting experience. Travellers experience the flow in an online landscape, engaging in purchasing activities and influencing them to revisit the same shopping experiences. The results show that travellers are most attracted to room facilities and amenities whilst experiencing online booking.

Thus, hotel management and OTAs must upload more elegant and aesthetic room pictures to attract travellers to make the booking. In addition, the framework and model contribute to travellers' behavioural preferences and decisions in online hotel booking. This is also supported through the result that broadens the scope and discussion from customer recognition through star ratings and reviews, which are emphasized for travellers in making online hotel selections.

Secondly, this study provides strong support to OTAs involving travellers' needs by acknowledging the factors that influence to online hotel booking. Further, this study aids OTAs in determining numerous features to be presented on their websites and ways to enhance the most significant factor: the room facilities and amenities. OTAs could request hotel service providers to provide additional room photos and facilities to attract travellers to book online. Concurrently, existing facilities must be truthful and similar to the pictures on OTA websites to increase travellers' trust and star ratings on the OTA star rating platform. Nonetheless, by having suitable features, travellers will be interested in using the same services through the same OTA and indirectly encourage returning the same travellers. Simultaneously, the trends will also lead to loyalty and

satisfaction of OTA customers.

Fundamentally, OTAs can systematize all elements through hotel websites as the online travel agency competes with one another. Moreover, understanding the features is essential as this knowledge will help OTAs accommodate the travellers' tastes and anticipations. At the same time, it will ensure satisfaction among the travellers with the services they receive. By concentrating on the five significant findings, OTAs and hotel management could meet travellers' expectations and ensure their trust and loyalty to continue using their services. In addition, this study also contributes to further potential understanding of customers from previous customer reviews, such as the star rating and positive feedback that will help OTAs open more opportunities to new customers. In conclusion, this study has achieved its aims to identify the factors influencing travellers booking hotels through OTAs.

This study has some limitations, which may affect the generalisability of the research findings as it was conducted in Penang International Airport, Malaysia. Future research may extend the study contexts to the national level. The study also focused on Malaysian travellers. 80 percent of the respondents were Malaysian; thus, this study will be more interesting if it can look at more foreign travellers. An in- depth comparison of OTAs perception's study between the locals and foreigners will be more meaningful.

In addition, future studies should focus on and investigate the role of online reviews because consumers' purchase behaviours are also influenced by online reviews, particularly the transaction made on social media channels. This study examined the effect of variables that look at the hotel environments: room facilities, customer recognition, price factors, promotion factors and other hotel facilities. Thus, this limitation provides avenues for future studies, for example, the perspective of online systems, payment procedures and sharing of
hotel information to OTAs service providers. Next, the findings of this research should be interpreted considering its limitations. We used an online survey. Future research must identify the OTAs from the field experiments or secondary database analysis. Future researchers could consider using a mixed-method research design to strengthen the rigour and enrich the analysis and findings on OTAs.

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