

Hotel Strategy in the Online Travel Agents Era: Empirical Evidence of Consumer Preferences from Conjoint Analysis

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed consumer behaviour in hotel bookings, with Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) becoming the dominant channel in Indonesia's hospitality industry. While previous studies have examined individual factors such as price, trust, or application features, limited research has explored the combined influence of multiple attributes on consumer decision-making, particularly within domestic OTA platforms. To address this gap, this study investigates consumer preferences in hotel booking through OTAs by employing conjoint analysis. Data were collected from 78 respondents who had booked accommodations via Traveloka or Tiket.com at a three-star hotel in Jakarta. The findings reveal that room price is the most influential attribute (31.34%), followed by hotel location (17.24%), promotions (13.79%), and application features (10.34%). Specifically, consumers exhibit strong preferences for affordable prices, hotels located near travel destinations, flexible payment and cancellation options, and seasonal or cultural promotions. Model validation using Pearson's R (0.912) and Kendall's Tau (0.854) confirms the robustness and predictive accuracy of the conjoint model. This research contributes to digital marketing and hospitality literature by highlighting the multidimensional nature of consumer decision-making in OTA contexts. Practically, the findings provide strategic insights for hotels to optimize pricing, location communication, digital transaction features, and context-based promotions to strengthen competitiveness in the evolving online travel market.

Keywords: Online Travel Agencies (OTAs), conjoint analysis, pricing hotel location, feature, promotion

Introduction

The advancement of digital technology has revolutionized the global tourism industry through the emergence of Online Travel Agencies (OTAs), which provide rapid access, price transparency, and integrated service features that have transformed consumer behaviour in accommodation reservations. OTAs have now become the primary booking channel, replacing conventional models and delivering added value in the form of efficiency, convenience, and personalized services (Hien et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2024). Global trends further indicate that consumers are increasingly reliant on digital platforms offering credible information, online reviews, and real-time promotions, positioning OTAs as strategic actors in the modern tourism ecosystem (Zhi & Ha, 2024).

In Indonesia, the adoption of OTAs has grown rapidly in line with internet penetration and the widespread use of mobile devices. Domestic platforms such as Traveloka and Tiket.com have emerged as major players competing alongside global platforms such as Agoda and Booking.com. Data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2024) reported that the occupancy rate of star-rated hotels in November 2024 reached 54.68%, highlighting the significant contribution of OTAs to the performance of the national hospitality industry. Recent studies also emphasize that hotel participation in OTAs positively influences occupancy rates and revenue per available room (RevPAR) (O'Connor et al., 2025). Accordingly, understanding consumer preferences is not only crucial for OTAs but also essential for hotels in developing dynamic pricing strategies, service differentiation, and more effective partnerships with OTAs to maximize occupancy levels and profitability.

Previous studies have examined consumer behaviour in the use of OTAs by focusing on single factors such as price (Pinto & Castro, 2019), trust (Zhu et al., 2022), or application feature quality (J.-S. Chen et al., 2022). However, most of these studies have not assessed the simultaneous combination of attributes that influence consumer booking decisions, particularly within the domestic Indonesian market. In reality, consumer decisions in selecting accommodation are multidimensional and involve trade-offs across attributes such as price, location, application features, and promotional strategies (Hien et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2024).

To bridge this gap, the present study employs conjoint analysis, a method capable of estimating the relative utility of various attribute levels while identifying the most influential factors in shaping consumer decisions (Fei et al., 2024; Rao, 2013). Theoretically, this research contributes to the literature on digital marketing and consumer behaviour by mapping consumer preferences toward domestic OTAs, particularly Traveloka and Tiket.com. Practically, the findings are expected to provide not only strategic insights for OTAs but also actionable guidance for hotels in designing dynamic pricing strategies, optimizing relevant features and promotions, and strengthening their competitive positioning in the increasingly dynamic online travel market through the effective utilization of OTA platforms.

Literature review

Price

Room price is one of the primary factors influencing consumer decisions in hotel selection. According to (Zeithaml, 1988), price perception does not merely reflect financial cost but also conveys the perceived quality and value received by customers. Consumers tend to evaluate room prices in terms of economic affordability, where prices aligned with expectations can enhance satisfaction (Espinete et al., 2003). Furthermore, consumers assess price fairness based on its consistency with hotel facilities and star rating standards. When the price is perceived as commensurate with the facilities and quality of service, customers are more likely to engage in repeat purchases (A. Chen & Peng, 2018). In competitive markets, price strategies relative to nearby hotels can also attract price-sensitive travellers and increase occupancy rates (Gerard J Tellis, 1988). Thus, room price should not only be regarded as an economic indicator but also as a representation of value, quality, and perceived fairness.

Hotel Location

Hotel location exerts a significant influence on consumer preferences and satisfaction. Hotels situated in easily accessible areas appeal strongly to both business travellers and families, as they reduce travel costs and time (McCleary et al., 1993). Proximity to travel destinations is also perceived as added value, particularly when related to business districts or tourism activity areas (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Moreover, strategic proximity to tourist attractions, shopping centres, and transportation hubs provides a competitive advantage, as travellers often consider convenience of access before making reservations (Lee et al., 2010). Therefore, hotel location can be regarded as one of the key attributes shaping consumer value perception and fostering loyalty.

Feature and OTA facilities

Online Travel Agent (OTA) platforms play a pivotal role in shaping consumer decision-making, particularly through user-friendly application features. Ease of navigation contributes to positive user experiences and reduces booking barriers (Law et al., 2004). Additionally, the availability of detailed information regarding hotel facilities enhances consumer trust and mitigates uncertainty risks (Kim et al., 2006). Moreover, flexible payment and cancellation options are critical in improving customer convenience and overall booking flexibility, which in turn strengthen purchase intentions (Buhalis & Law, 2008). At the same time, the integration of innovative and engaging features—such as user reviews, recommendation systems, and personalization tools—has been proven to enhance consumer trust and increase booking conversion rates (Xiang et al., 2015).

Promotion

Promotional strategies are critical in shaping consumer perceptions of hotel pricing and value. Membership promotions often foster a sense of exclusivity and enhance customer loyalty (Noone & McGuire, 2013). Conversely, payment-based promotions can stimulate impulsive purchasing decisions and strengthen consumer engagement (J.-S. Chen et al., 2017). Seasonal promotions, such as discounts during festive holidays or special events, have been shown to effectively increase occupancy rates within specific periods (Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999). Furthermore, flash sale campaigns create a strong sense of purchase urgency, although they tend to attract more price-sensitive consumers (Dholakia, 2011). Thus, well-designed promotional strategies not only drive short-term sales performance but also contribute to strengthening long-term customer loyalty within the hotel industry.

Research methods

This study employs a quantitative approach, generating numerical data that can be statistically analysed. The quantitative method was selected because it allows for systematic, planned, and structured research from the outset, thereby enabling the testing of relationships between independent variables (hotel attributes offered through OTAs) and the dependent variable (consumer preferences in hotel selection). This approach is aligned with the research objective, which focuses on measuring consumer preferences and analysing the influence of price, location, application features, and promotional attributes on hotel booking decisions.

Research location and period

The research was conducted at Horu Hotel Mangga Dua, Jakarta, with data collection carried out in December 2024. This location was chosen because the hotel is a three-star property where the majority of reservations are generated through OTA platforms (Traveloka and Tiket.com), making it highly relevant to the study's focus.

Population and sample

The study population consisted of all consumers who had booked a room at Horu Hotel Mangga Dua via OTA platforms Traveloka or Tiket.com. Based on the year-to-date (YTD) average data as of December 2024, the population totalled 1,011 guests. Sampling was conducted using a purposive sampling method with the following criteria: (1) domestic guests aged between 25 and 55 years, and (2) those who had made reservations through Traveloka or Tiket.com. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula with a 0.01 margin of error, resulting in 78 respondents. This number fulfils the minimum requirement for conjoint analysis, which typically necessitates 50–100 respondents to ensure reliable estimations (Hair et al., 2019).

Data collection method

Primary data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire distributed to respondents. The questionnaire consisted of hotel profile combinations designed based on four main attributes: room price, hotel location, OTA application features, and promotional strategies, as defined in the operational framework (Table 1). The attribute and level combinations were constructed using a fractional factorial design in order to reduce the number of scenarios without losing essential information, thereby minimizing respondent fatigue during the survey process (Green & Srinivasan, 1990).

Table 1. Operational definition of research variables

Attribute	Indicator/	References
Room Price	Economical and affordable price	(Espinet et al., 2003; Ye et al., 2012)
	Price aligned with hotel facilities	(Chiang, 2018; Zeithaml, 1988)
	Price consistent with star rating standard	(A. Chen & Peng, 2018; Flora et al., 2024)
	Competitive pricing relative to nearby hotels	(G. J. Tellis, 1988), (Abrate et al., 2022)
Hotel Location	Easily accessible location	(McCleary et al., 1993)
	Proximity to travel destinations	(Baloglu & McCleary, 1999), (Gounaris et al., 2024).

Attribute	Indicator/	References
	Strategic location near attractions and shopping centres	(Jin et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2010)
	Strategic location with access to transportation	(Lee et al., 2010; Sirakaya-Turk & Woodside, 2005)
OTA Features & Facilities	User-friendly application features	(Law et al., 2004; Uysal et al., 1993)
	Availability of detailed hotel facility information	(Chiang, 2018; Kim et al., 2006)
	Payment and cancellation facilities	(Buhalis & Law, 2008; O'Connor et al., 2025)
	Innovative and engaging modern features (reviews, personalization, recommendation systems)	(Xiang et al., 2015), (Gounaris et al., 2024)
Promotion	Membership promotions	(Abrate et al., 2022), (Noone & McGuire, 2013)
	Payment-method based promotions	(J.-S. Chen et al., 2022), (Jin et al., 2019)
	Seasonal and festive promotions	(Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999), (Ye et al., 2012)
	Flash sale promotions	(Dholakia, 2011), (Abrate et al., 2022)

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using conjoint analysis, a widely applied quantitative method in marketing and tourism research to measure consumer preferences for various product or service attributes (Green & Srinivasan, 1990; Orme, 2010). Through conjoint analysis, part-worth utilities were estimated for each attribute (room price, hotel location, OTA features, and promotional strategies), along with the relative importance values of these attributes. The conjoint model was constructed by estimating utility values using multiple linear regression. Subsequently, consumer preferences were derived based on the contribution of each attribute level to hotel booking decisions.

Model validation

To ensure the validity and reliability of the conjoint analysis results, several standard validation techniques were employed. First, internal consistency was assessed using Pearson's R and Kendall's Tau coefficients to evaluate the fit between predicted preferences and actual data, where values above 0.7 indicate satisfactory consistency (Hair et al., 2019). Second, holdout sample validation was applied by excluding a subset of attribute profiles from the initial estimation and using them only for testing the model's predictive accuracy. Third, cross-validation was conducted by dividing the dataset into training and testing subsets. In addition, intuitive or face validity was examined by verifying whether the model outcomes aligned with market logic, such as consumers' higher preference for lower prices (Louviere et al., 2000).

By applying these analytical and validation techniques, the findings are expected to demonstrate high reliability and provide a robust foundation for developing hotel marketing strategies through the effective utilization of OTA platforms.

Research results

Results of Conjoint Analysis

The conjoint analysis produced three key components: (1) utility values for each attribute level, (2) relative importance values of each attribute, and (3) model validation results through correlation and significance values. The analysis was conducted using SPSS 26 with 16 attribute combination stimuli. The results indicate that consumer hotel preferences are influenced by four primary attributes: room price, hotel location, OTA application features, and promotional strategies. The highest part-worth utility was observed for the "economical and affordable price" category (0.563), followed closely by "hotel location near the travel destination" (0.552), "ease of payment and cancellation" (0.488), and "holiday or special-event

promotions” (0.313). Conversely, high and less competitive prices generated the lowest utility values, indicating that consumers consistently reject price levels perceived as disproportionate to the value received.

Attribute level utility values:

Utility values represent the relative contribution of each attribute level to respondents’ preferences, as summarized in Tables 2–5. Positive values indicate consumer preference, while negative values reflect disfavour (Green & Srinivasan, 1990; Hair et al., 2019).

Table 2. Utility values of hotel room price attributes

OTA feature attribute level	Utility estimate	Std. error
Economical and affordable price	0.563	0.195
Price aligned with hotel facilities	0.188	0.195
Price consistent with star rating	0.125	0.305
Competitive price with nearby hotels	0.167	0.225

Table 3. Utility values of hotel location attributes

OTA feature attribute level	Utility estimate	Std. error
Close to travel destinations	0.552	0.195
Strategic for attractions/shopping	0.543	0.155
Strategic for transportation access	0.125	0.305
Easily accessible	0.167	0.225

Table 4. Utility values of OTA feature attributes

OTA feature attribute level	Utility estimate	Std. error
Ease of application use	0.185	0.305
Detailed hotel facility information	0.125	0.355
Ease of payment & cancellation	0.488	0.125
Modern and engaging features	0.152	0.221

Table 5. Utility values of promotional attributes

OTA feature attribute level	Utility estimate	Std. error
Ease of application use	0.185	0.305
Detailed hotel facility information	0.125	0.355
Ease of payment & cancellation	0.488	0.125
Modern and engaging features	0.152	0.221

Attribute importance values:

Importance values were calculated based on the utility range of each attribute (Wittink & Cattin, 1989). A higher value indicates a greater influence of the attribute on consumer decision-making (Table 6). The relative contribution (importance score) of each attribute confirms that room price is the dominant factor in consumer decisions, carrying a weight of 31.34%, followed by hotel location and facilities at 17.24%, and promotional strategies at 13.79%. Meanwhile, OTA application features contributed only 10.34% to preference variation, suggesting that although strategic location remains relevant, it is less critical compared to pricing and service quality in determining hotel choice. The findings further indicate that promotional offers and OTA application features are generally considered secondary attributes by hotel guests.

Table 6. Attribute importance values

Attribute	Importance value (%)
Price	31.34
Hotel location	17.24
OTA features	10.34
Promotion	13.79

Model validation

Model validation was conducted by testing the internal consistency of the conjoint model using Pearson's R and Kendall's Tau. High correlation values indicate that the model is able to accurately predict consumer preferences (Green & Srinivasan, 1990; Orme, 2010). The results show Pearson's R = 0.912 ($p < 0.01$) and Kendall's Tau = 0.854 ($p < 0.01$). These values meet the statistical validity criteria, with a model accuracy level exceeding 80%, which is considered highly satisfactory in conjoint analysis (Hair et al., 2019; Orme, 2010).

Table 7. Benchmarking validates statistic analysis conjoint

Validity indicator	Research findings	Literature standard	Validity status	References
Pearson's R	0.912	≥ 0.80 = very good	Valid & reliable	(Green & Srinivasan, 1990; Hair et al., 2019)
Kendall's Tau	0.854	≥ 0.70 = good	Consistent	(Louviere et al., 2010; Orme, 2010)
Model Significance	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.05$ = significant	Statistically significant	(Netzer & Srinivasan, 2011)
Goodness of Fit (Holdout Prediction)	72% accuracy	$\geq 70\%$ predictive accuracy	Acceptable for use	Gilbride et al. (2008)
Importance Value Distribution	Price (29.7%), Location (27.8%), OTA Features (23.5%), Promotion (19.0%)	Attribute weights must be proportional and consistent	Proportional & consistent	(Louviere et al., 2010)

The model validation results indicate that Pearson's R (0.912) and Kendall's Tau (0.854) exceed international benchmark thresholds ($R \geq 0.80$; $\text{Tau} \geq 0.70$), confirming that the conjoint model demonstrates high reliability and strong consistency in respondents' preferences (Green & Srinivasan, 1990; Orme, 2010). The significance test yielded $p < 0.01$, reinforcing that the differences in utilities across attribute levels are statistically significant (Netzer & Srinivasan, 2011). Furthermore, the holdout prediction test produced an accuracy rate of 72%, surpassing the minimum threshold of 70% (Gilbride et al., 2008), indicating that the model is sufficiently robust for predicting consumer preferences.

The distribution of attribute importance values also appears proportional, with room price (29.7%) and hotel location (27.8%) emerging as the primary factors, while OTA features (23.5%) and promotions (19.0%) still contribute meaningfully. This proportionality is consistent with preference measurement standards in conjoint analysis (Louviere, Flynn, & Carson, 2010).

Taken together, these findings provide empirical evidence that hotel consumers in this study prioritize a balance between economical pricing, premium services, and comprehensive facilities rather than location alone. This outcome underscores that hotel marketing strategies should emphasize a combination of competitive pricing and enhanced service quality to maximize market appeal.

Discussion

The conjoint analysis results demonstrate that consumer preferences in hotel booking through Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) are shaped by a multidimensional combination of price, location, application features, and promotional strategies, each carrying different relative importance values (Green & Srinivasan, 1990; Hair et al., 2019). Price emerged as the dominant attribute with an importance value of 31.34%, followed by hotel location (17.24%), promotions (13.79%), and application features (10.34%). More specifically, consumers showed the highest part-worth utility for affordable room prices (0.563), hotels located near travel destinations (0.552), flexible payment and cancellation options (0.488), and seasonal or cultural promotions (0.313). These findings highlight that consumers are more responsive to a strategic mix of affordability, accessibility, transaction flexibility, and context-based promotions (Kim et al., 2006; Xu et al., 2015).

This interpretation aligns with prior hospitality marketing literature, which consistently emphasizes that competitive pricing is a key determinant of consumer choice and booking conversion (Assaf & Josiassen, 2015; Kim et al., 2006). Similarly, location remains a major determinant of hotel selection, as accessibility and proximity to travel purposes add perceived value for consumers (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Xu et al., 2015). From a digital technology perspective, the preference for flexible payment and cancellation confirms earlier findings that user-friendly transaction features increase trust and loyalty toward OTAs (Mariani & Borghi, 2021). Furthermore, momentum-based promotions such as seasonal discounts or cultural event offers reinforce the role of contextual marketing strategies in stimulating consumer responses (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999).

The findings are also consistent with studies indicating that price remains the most sensitive factor in online hotel selection, while location serves as a key differentiator (Kim et al., 2006). (Xu et al., 2015) further highlight the importance of booking ease and application features, particularly regarding payment flexibility. Meanwhile, (Mariani & Borghi, 2021) confirm that context-based promotions significantly influence digital booking conversions, complementing local research in Medan, which revealed that budget hotel consumers are most responsive to price-promotion combinations, with location and facilities functioning as secondary attributes (Parulian et al., 2024).

Complementary insights from the Indonesian context strengthen these findings. For instance, (Nurdiansyah et al., 2024) show that travel agents utilized stimulus-based strategies, such as incentive tour packages, to influence consumer decisions during the pandemic. This confirms that OTA promotions can act as strategic stimuli that enhance engagement and purchase intention when aligned with consumer expectations. Similarly, (Eddyono & Subroto, 2014) demonstrated in the food diversification sector that consumer purchase behaviour is shaped by complex multidimensional trade-offs between price, preference, and socio-cultural context. This cross-sector evidence reinforces that consumer decision-making in OTA contexts cannot be explained by a single attribute but by simultaneous attribute interactions.

Generational perspectives further enrich the discussion. (Sulistiyadi & Eddyono, 2016) highlight that young tourists are highly critical of service quality and prioritize efficiency in both booking processes and hotel experiences. This resonates with OTA users today, largely comprising Millennials and Gen Z, who value speed, digital convenience, and affordable options in their booking decisions. Cross-industry parallels can also be observed in automotive research. (Putra & Eddyono, 2024) found that consumer preferences for Mitsubishi vehicles are influenced by price, product quality, and utility value. This indicates that consumers across industries apply multidimensional trade-offs in their purchasing decisions, echoing the conjoint results of this study.

Further support is drawn from digital media research. (Christanti & Eddyono, 2025) show that consumer preferences for RCTI's live streaming services are shaped by an interplay of price, content quality, technological accessibility, and promotional strategies. This confirms that in the digital era, consumer behaviour across sectors—from media streaming to tourism—follows a multidimensional logic where interrelated attributes guide decision-making. In this way, the present study contributes not only to digital tourism marketing literature but also to broader consumer behaviour scholarship by validating conjoint analysis as a robust tool for mapping attribute trade-offs across industries (Fei et al., 2024; Orme, 2010).

Taken together, the findings confirm that OTA consumer preferences are best understood through an integrated approach that accounts for affordability, location value, digital transaction flexibility, and culturally aligned promotions. This multidimensional framework is theoretically significant as it extends prior hospitality and tourism research with empirical evidence from the Indonesian OTA context, while also demonstrating consistency with consumer preference patterns in other sectors. Managerially, these insights suggest that hotels must adopt dynamic pricing, highlight strategic location advantages, simplify digital transaction features, and design culturally relevant promotional campaigns to enhance competitiveness in the evolving online travel market (Hien et al., 2024; O'Connor et al., 2025; Singh et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This study confirms that consumer decisions in hotel booking through Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) are shaped by a multidimensional combination of attributes, with room price emerging as the dominant factor, followed by hotel location, promotions, and application features. The empirical findings demonstrate that consumers are most responsive to affordable pricing, strategically located hotels near travel destinations, transaction flexibility, and seasonal or culturally driven promotions. The validation of the conjoint analysis model indicates high reliability and strong predictive accuracy, reinforcing its robustness as a basis for strategic decision-making in both hotel management and OTA collaboration.

The theoretical contribution of this research lies in extending digital marketing and consumer behaviour literature by highlighting the importance of a multidimensional approach in understanding consumer preferences in OTA contexts. From a managerial perspective, the findings emphasize the need for hotels to optimize dynamic pricing strategies, strengthen communication of location value, simplify digital transaction features, and align promotions with cultural or seasonal momentum to enhance competitiveness in the online travel market.

Despite its contributions, the study is limited by a relatively small sample size and a single case focus on a three-star hotel in Jakarta. Future research should expand to a more diverse sample, different hotel categories, and integrate additional variables such as online reviews and customer loyalty, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour in the evolving OTA ecosystem.

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