

**FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMERS IN SELECTING  
HOTEL'S ONLINE DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS TO BOOK  
ACCOMMODATION**



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entitled  
**FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMERS IN SELECTING  
HOTEL'S ONLINE DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS TO BOOK  
ACCOMMODATION**

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**FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMERS IN SELECTING HOTEL'S  
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## ABSTRACT

According to the intense competition among hotels' online distribution channels, this research aims to find factors that influence consumers to select the hotel's online distribution channels for booking accommodation. The information was gathered by a qualitative approach using online interviewing. The interviewees included two groups. These were the customers who have experience in using online distribution channels in booking accommodation in the past five years; and the hotel staff from various hotel departments. The findings from the research showed that two main factors delivering a strong positive influence on purchasing intention are the price and trustworthiness. Additionally, customers tend to be sensitive to the price and be aware of the trustworthiness of the website before making a reservation.

KEYWORDS: Hotel Reservation / Online Distribution Channel

23 pages

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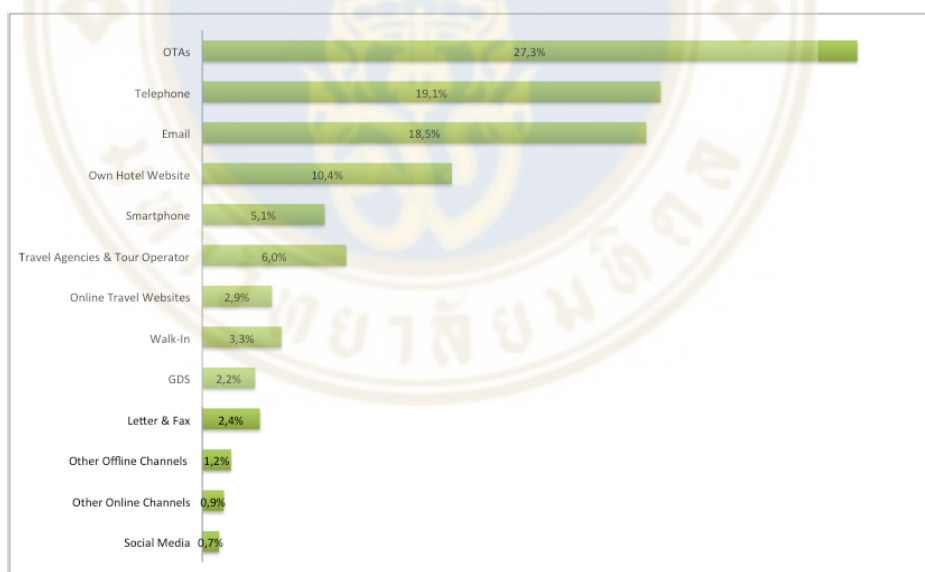




## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

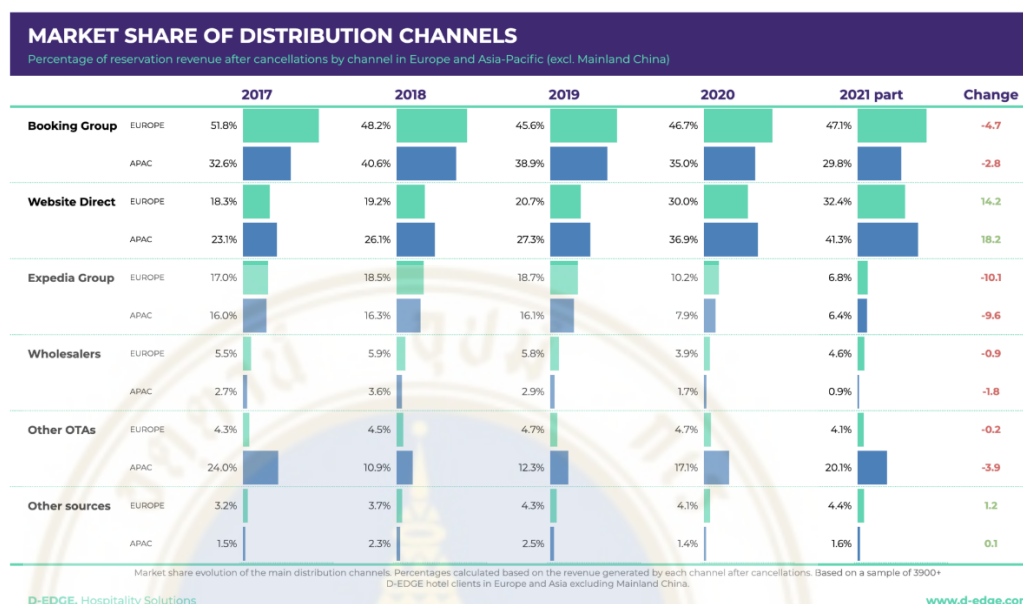
Hospitality Industry is a broad category of fields within the service industry that includes lodging, food and beverage services, tourism, etc. It included hotels, travel agencies, restaurants, and bars. The hotel is an establishment that provides paid lodging on a short-term basis. There are various types of hotels such as international luxury, Lifestyle luxury resorts, Upscale full-service, Boutique, Focused or select service, Economy and limited service, etc. Each type of hotel provides a different level of service. The important thing about the hotel is The Hotel Distribution Channel as it is the first touchpoint between the hotel and the customer.



**Figure 1.1 Percentage share of online distribution channels (Steinhauser 2018)**

Most hotels provide both offline distribution channels (Phone call, email, Offline Travel Agency) and online distribution channels (Brand Website, Online Travel Agency). According to the above figure, it can be seen that the most popular channel for hotels is OTAs (Online Travel Agency) which account for 27.3 % while the hotel's

own website accounts for 10.4%. Moreover, the traditional ways to book a hotel which are Phone-call and Email also got a high percentage at 19.1% and 18.5% respectively.



**Figure 1.2: Market share of hotel distribution channels showing the percentage of reservation revenue after cancellation by channel in Europe and Asia-Pacific.**

Moving on to the online distribution channel for hotels in Europe and Asia-Pacific. The information shows that the Booking group (including Priceline.com, Booking.com, Agoda.com) and the Expedia Group control the share of the hotel distribution in both Europe and APAC. However, the direct websites of hotels are growing up every year especially from 2019 to 2021 while other channels are declined. This means that during the pandemic, consumers tend to move toward the hotel's website.

Nowadays, customers have a variety of choices when making a booking for a hotel and each consumer also has a reason to book via their preferred channel whether the loyalty program of the company, ease of use of the channel, or the service that they received from the company's staff. All of these lead to high competition among each platform.

This study will be focused on finding the factors influencing consumers in selecting the Hotel's Online Distribution Channel to book accommodation. Also,

looking deep into things that customers faced during their booking experience through their preferred platform.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

To find what influences consumers to book accommodation through their preferred online distribution channel. Also, find the in-depth reason why they make a repeat purchase on their preferred platform.

### **1.2 Objective of Study**

The purpose of our study is to find out factors that influence consumers' decisions on choosing the hotel distribution channel to make a reservation for a hotel. Also, contrast the reason for booking via the offline platform and online platform.

### **1.3 Expected Benefit**

This research will benefit the hotel management team. The outcome of this research can be used to set rates and promotions on each online hotel distribution channel in order to increase hotel booking and drive more revenue.

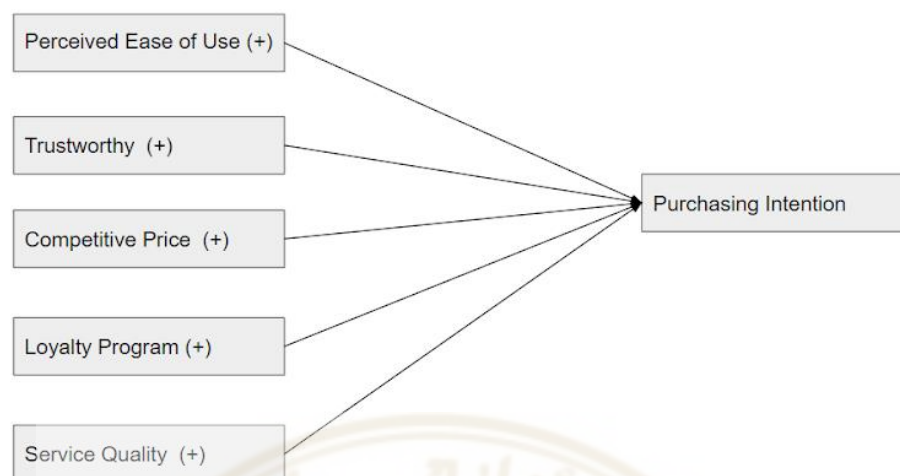
## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This is an analysis of published sources, literature, and some parts on a particular topic which help to assess the literature related to this research topic and help to formulate the conceptual framework.

#### **2.1 Hotel Online Distribution Channel**

The hotel usually has several distribution channels including both offline and online. The online distribution channels are very popular among FITs (Free Independent Travellers). Not only for the customer part but also for the hotel part. (Ball and Queyranne, 2009) said that the online distribution channels also serve as an alternative to increase bookings and revenue. (Law and Hsu, 2006) also looked at the importance of accommodation websites and the (Chung and Law, 2003) look for the significance of a coherent web presence, which is perceived as a crucial factor for success. From a consumer's perspective, there have been numerous attempts to understand users' adoption of the new online distribution channels in the hotel industry.



**Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework of factors influencing consumer to select hotel distribution channel to book accommodation**

The conceptual framework shows the factors that influence the consumer's purchasing intention toward the hotel's online distribution channels. There are perceived ease of use, trustworthiness, competitive price, loyalty program, and service quality. This is because these five factors are the concern of consumers when booking hotel accommodation through online distribution channels.

## 2.2 Service Quality

Nowadays, Service Quality is a key influence to make customers want to use and decide to come to us. (Ng, 2006) said that a Service-oriented business such as helpful and friendly staff could be central to the success of the transaction. (Zeithaml, 1985) also mentioned that service quality is difficult to evaluate, it's about managing customer expectations and delivery service to narrow the gap.

## 2.3 Trustworthy

The Internet creates a huge impact on customer buying behaviour on both positive and negative sides. Nowadays, there are various choices of Online Hotel

Distribution Channel for customers to select and decide to book a hotel. However, not all of the channels will be selected by customers. Trustworthiness is another factor that makes customers decide to use and pay for our service. Trustworthiness is an important factor for Online Distribution Channel as they have access to consumers' personal information such as credit card numbers. (Teemu, Heikki, Chanaka, & Andreas, 2007) mentioned that two main factors affect customer trustworthiness, which are a person's past experiences with the company and social influence. (Foxall, 2003) said that the person's experience will shape the customer's perception of the company in both positive and negative ways and prior experience of customers influences purchase and consumption. Also, the social influence or the influence from customer's networks such as friends, colleagues, family members, and others. (Teemu et al., 2007) also mentioned that each person has a limited scope of information that can be received therefore the information that has been represented can increase the families of the product or service, therefore, it can influence the trustworthiness of the person as well.

## **2.4 Perceived Ease of Use**

Ease of use of the website also influences purchasing intention. The easier the platform, the more customers can understand and make a reservation on the platform. (Amin, Rezaei and Abolghasemi, 2014) said that Perceived ease of use influences the customer's intention to use. (Martins et al, 2014) also support that perceived ease of use is the main determinant of a user's attitude. Moreover, (Amin, Rezaei, and Abolghasemi, 2014) also mentioned that the Perceived ease of use relates to the convenience of purchasing.

## **2.5 Competitive Price**

(Chiang & Jang, 2007) said the price is an important factor and a big major for deciding to buy a product and service. As customers have many choices to choose from and customers tend to compare the price between each channel before deciding to book an accommodation. Customers tend to be sensitive to the price. Moreover, (Kotler & Keller, 2016) found that the perception of price can influence customers by giving



specific details that are meaningful to the buyer. Thus, (Faith & Agwu, 2014) also supported that price is a very important factor during the purchasing process, mostly for specific products that were bought more often.

## **2.6 Loyalty Program**

A loyalty program is a program designed to reward customers who buy a product or service frequently and in substantial amounts. The loyalty programs have a wider range of objectives according to different levels of membership. Some loyalty programs of online hotel distribution channel allow customers to collect points and redeem them for a discount on their reservation. (Sharp, 1997) said that loyalty programs are structured marketing efforts that encourage loyalty behavior which is a benefit to the firm. A loyalty program also has an effect like a long-term promotion and is effective in repurchasing intention. The main difference between loyalty programs and other marketing activities relies on the goal and the targeted outcome. Some marketing activities can increase the customer retention of the company and have a positive effect on the repeat-purchase loyalty of customers. Furthermore, sales promotions have a short-term effect on sales but loyalty programs can bring long-term benefits to the company.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research will focus on how and why customers choose their preferred platform to book accommodation so qualitative research is the most effective way to find the answers. The purpose is to understand factors from the customer's point of view and also the hotel management team's point of view as well.

#### **3.2 Data Collection**

The data will be collected by using a qualitative approach. The data collected for this study will be collected from two different groups of people consisting of a group of customers and a group of hotel staff from various departments. Interviews are conducted via an online meeting platform in February 2022.

#### **3.3 Interview Questions**

The questions to be used for the interview are developed from literature review and past research that influence customers to book accommodations through Online Hotel Distribution Channels.

##### **Hotel staff**

1. How long do you work in this hotel/this department?
2. What is the most popular Online Hotel Distribution Channel among Thai people in your hotel?
3. Why people preferred to book these channels? (Give your own reason or hotel strategy)



4. Do you feel that people tend to book accommodation online instead of offline channels? And why?

5. What factor do you think makes customers move toward online distribution channels?

6. What factor do you think that influence customer to book accommodation through their preferred platform?

7. List 3 priority factors that influence the customer to book the accommodation through their preferred platform?

8. How do you think that ease of use of the channel has positive influence to customer purchasing intention on the channel?

9. How do you think that trustworthy of the channel have a positive influence to purchasing intention?

10. How do you think that price have a positive influence on purchasing intention?

11. How do you think that loyalty program has a positive influence to purchasing intention?

12. How do you think that service quality of the channel (for example customer service staff) has an influence on purchasing intention?

### **Customers who have experience in booking the hotel through online distribution channels**

1. How many times have you made a reservation for yourself in the past 5 years?

2. What kind of accommodation do you normally stay in while travelling?

3. Which Online Hotel Distribution Channels do you use to book the accommodation and why?

4. Did you compare the price between each online distribution channel before deciding to book accommodation?

5. What's the most important for you to choose Online Hotel Distribution Channels?

6. What's the biggest issue with using Online Hotel Distribution Channels? Please explain.

7. Do you prefer to book a hotel via a travel agency or book by yourself through Online Hotel Distribution Channels and why? Give a reason.

8. List 3 priority factors that you are concern when book the accommodation through your preferred platform.

9. Please provide the best and worst things about using online distribution channels. Kindly share your experiences.

10. How do you think that ease of use of the channel has positive influence to customer purchasing intention on the channel?

11. How do you think that trustworthy of the channel have a positive influence to purchasing intention?

12. How do you think that price have a positive influence on purchasing intention?

13. How do you think that loyalty program has a positive influence to purchasing intention?

14. How do you think that service quality of the channel (for example staff) has an influence on purchasing intention?

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RESULTS

This fourth chapter presents the results of the analysis and findings of the study of factors that influence consumers to select hotel online distribution channels to book accommodation. This part is divided into 2 groups, the first part is represented of the finding from the hotel staff's perspective and the second part is represent of finding from the customer's perspective. Table 4.1 and 4.2 present the code number of interviewees of this study

**Table 4.1: List of interviewees (Hotel Staff)**

Code	Type	Position
HS01	Hotel Staff	Revenue Manager
HS02	Hotel Staff	Reservation Supervisor
HS03	Hotel Staff	Reservation Agent
HS04	Hotel Staff	Sales Specialist

**Table 4.2: List of interviewees (Customer)**

Code	Type
CS01	Customer
CS02	Customer
CS03	Customer
CS04	Customer

**Table 4.2: List of interviewees (Customer) (cont.)**

<b>CS05</b>	Customer
<b>CS06</b>	Customer
<b>CS07</b>	Customer

## **4.1 Represent of factors in term of hotel staff's perspective**

### **4.1.1 Trustworthy**

From the hotel's staff interview, all of them mentioned that trustworthiness is a priority factor that drives the customer to the channel because customers are afraid that if they booked through an unreliable website, the hotel will not get their reservation and they will lose money.

*'Trustworthiness is one of the factors that affect intention to buy as people tend to avoid the unwell known website. From my working experience, customers are afraid that when they arrive at the hotel, the hotel may not have their reservation' (HS02)*

*'Trustworthy effect very much on purchasing intention as all customers need the website that transparent and be able to trust' (HS01)*

### **4.1.2 Ease of Use**

For the Ease of Use, all of the interviewees said that it has a positive influence to customer's purchasing intentions. The Good User Interface makes customers like to use their platform. Also, Good User Experience encourages people to make reservations.

*'Ease of Use effect very much on consumer purchasing intention, if the application or the website is too complicated, this will make people annoying and affect their impulsive buying' (HS02)*

*'The design of the website (UX/UI) also affects the consumer's intention to purchase. The easier to use, the more customer willing to use'(HS01)*

#### **4.1.3 Service Quality**

In terms of Service Quality from hotel staff's perspective. Some of them said that it's not important to purchase intention. However, most of them said that it's influential for repurchasing intention as best service can bring customer back.

*'Service quality is extremely influential on purchasing intention. For example, when customers struggle with some steps of the booking process, the customer service of the platform will be the one who can help them. If the service is bad, they will not use their service for the next purchase'(HS02)*

#### **4.1.4 Price**

In terms of hotel staff's perspective, price is the first factor that influences customers to use the platform. Each platform usually offers a special price for members which can influence customers to use their platform.

*'Price can influence customers to select their platform, especially for members, the website usually offers the special price for members only which can attract customers to book and make a repeat purchase'(HS01)*

*'The price is also a significant factor to purchasing intention. A reasonable price can attract customers to use the platform. Also, websites that have a good promotion can easily motivate customer to use'(HS03)*

#### **4.1.5 Loyalty Program**

From hotel staff's perspective, the Loyalty program has a positive influence on purchasing intention. All of them mentioned that the loyalty program makes customers come and make a repeat purchase.

*'In my perspective, loyalty program also affects a bit on consumer's intention, for example, I'm a genius booker at booking.com website, so I usually book through it'(HS01)*

*'Loyalty program have a positive influence to intention to buy Some customers they are want to collect points for their reservation in order to get a discount in the future'(HS02)*

## **4.2 Represent of factors in term of consumer's perspective**

### **4.2.1 Trustworthy**

From the customer's perspective, all of them said that the trustworthiness of the channel is one of the factors that influence them to use the channel. Nowadays, there are many fraud websites so customers tend to be aware of this.

*'Trustworthiness of the platform is very important because i don't want to get fraud'(CS01)*

*'It's the first priority that most people are concerned about. If the online booking channel has big names like Agoda, Traveloka and Expedia, most people will definitely use it. I think it affects purchasing intentions'(CS02)*

*'Trustworthy is the most important factor for me because we need to provide our personal information and credit card information to book the hotel so if the website lacks trustworthiness, I will not use their service even the price is lower than others'(CS03)*

### **4.2.2 Ease of Use**

Ease of use also has a positive influence on purchasing intention. All of them said that the easier it is to use, the more they intend to book through that platform. Some



of them mentioned that if the platform is designed to be complicated, they will change the platform.

*'I do agree that ease of use effect on purchasing intention because if the channel is too hard to use, people won't like it as there are many easier ways to make a reservation'(CS03)*

*'In my perspective, ease of use is extremely influential on the purchasing intention, for our generation, it may not affect that much but for the elderly people, if the website is too complicated, they may decide to call the hotel instead.'*(CS06)

#### **4.2.3 Service Quality**

According to the service quality in term of customer's perspective, the majority of them are concerned about it, However, some of them did not put it as a influential factor that drive their purchasing intention.

*'Bad or not willing to help staff can be a reason I don't want to use the platform'(CS01)*

*'Service from staff affects purchasing intention. Even though the booking price is low, service from the staff is bad, I will go to use another website. I think no one likes to be treated badly. Word of mouth can change the customer's decision, in my opinion.'*(CS02)

*'For the service quality, I don't think it affects my intention as it is not the main point for booking a hotel.'*(CS03)

#### **4.2.4 Price**

All of the customers are concerned about price as a priority factor to selecting the distribution channels. They tend to choose the cheapest price platform and also compare the benefits between each platform.

*'I usually compare prices between each website and I decided to book with a website that offers the lowest price'(CS04)*

*'Price is my priority in order to decide to book a hotel'(CS03)*

#### **4.2.5 Loyalty Program**

From the interview, most people are not concerned about the loyalty program of the platform but they are loyal with the hotel instead. Some of them prefer to book with the same channel every time as they would like to gain more benefits such as points or member level.

*'Loyalty programs affect my purchasing intention, for me, I feel comfortable with Agoda, so I never think to use another'(CS02)*

*'Loyalty Program not effect so much, for me, I want to keep exploring new place to stay rather than be a member for certain hotel/platforms'(CS01)*

*'From my experience, I do not think about loyalty program of the channel that much, but I'm loyal with the hotel chain'(CS06)*

### **4.3 Results**

The below tables provide rating scores based on interviews with both groups. Table 4.3 presents rating scores with their definition which is used to evaluate factors that influence purchasing intention. Table 4.4 presents scores of the hotel staff which indicates that price is the most important factor in purchasing intention (average score = 3.75). The second important factor is the trustworthiness of the channel (average score =3.5). Table 4.5 presents scores of customers which indicates that trustworthiness is the most important factor for customers to select the online distribution channels (average score = 4). The second factors are ease of use and price which affect customers' purchasing intention by a lot (average score = 3.57).



**Table 4.3: The Score Definition**

Score	Definition
0	Not concern
1	Not effect on purchasing intention
2	Neutral
3	Effect on purchasing intention
4	Extremely effect on purchasing intention

**Table 4.4: Score of hotel staffs**

Factors	Hotel Staff (HS)				
	01	02	03	04	Avg
Price	3	4	4	4	3.75
Trustworthy	4	3	3	4	3.5
Ease of Use	3	4	4	2	3.25
Service Quality	3	4	4	2	3.25
Loyalty Program	3	3	2	2	2.5

Remarks: Avg = Average

**Table 4.5: Score of Customers**

Factors	Customer (CS)							Avg
	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	
Trustworthy	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Price	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	3.57
Ease of Use	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	3.57
Service Quality	3	3	0	3	1	0	3	1.85
Loyalty Program	1	3	0	1	2	0	3	1.42

Remarks: Avg = Average

**Table 4.6 Average Score for hotel staff and customer**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Hotel Staff (HS)</b>	<b>Customer (CS)</b>
Price	3.75	3.57
Trustworthy	3.5	4
Ease of Use	3.25	3.57
Service Quality	3.25	1.85
Loyalty Program	2.5	1.42

Overall, from the customer's perspective and hotel staff's perspective, it found that price is also the most important factor to influence customers to choose online distribution channels. People tend to compare prices between each platform before making a decision and also seek the best price for their reservation. The secondary factor is trustworthiness, both groups of interviewees are paying attention to this factor a lot because they do not want to get fraud.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Conclusions**

According to the research objective, this thematic paper explores factors that influence consumers to select online distribution channels to book accommodation. From interviews with both groups of people, it shows that price is the most important factor that influences consumers to use the channels. Customer tend to sensitive to the price and will select the lowest price channel that they found. The secondary factor is trustworthiness of the channels, people tend to select the trustworthiness channel to prevent the fraudulent of their credit card information.

#### **5.2 Recommendations**

##### **5.2.1 Preference**

As some interviewees said about preference of customer when selecting the online distribution channel to book accommodation. For example, customers would like to book the accommodation together with an airline ticket so they will select the channel that can provide them on both services.

##### **5.2.2 Promotion**

Promotion also has a positive influence based on both customer and hotel staff's perspective. Not only the price of the accommodation, but the customer was attracted by the special promotion as well. For example, if the channel provides a special promotion and benefits, even if the price is the same as other channels, customers tend to select the channel that gives them a special promotion.

### **5.2.3 Familiarity**

From the interview, customers said that they usually book through the same channel every time as they feel familiar with the channels. They know how to book and also the channel already has their information and credit card details, so they do not need to fill in the information again.

### **5.3 Limitation**

According to qualitative research methodology in order to get depth reasons that influence customers on selecting online distribution channels to book accommodation. There are limitations in terms of the interviewees' age group which most of them are in the younger generation so they usually shared the same idea and answers. Moreover, the group of interviewees is too small and could not represent all of the factors that might occur in reality.

### **5.4 Future Research**

The next research should be focused more on the hotel's own distribution channel in order to drive more customers to book accommodation through direct channels (brand website). As indirect channels such as online travel agencies, the hotel needs to pay off the commission to the platform which costs a lot. If the hotel is able to gain more direct booking, it would be great in terms of the hotel's revenue stream.

Furthermore, the next research can focus on the customer expectation before using online distribution channels and customer satisfaction after using online distribution channels. This can help both hotels and online travel agencies develop their channels in order to increase customer satisfaction and increase repeat purchase.

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