



Online Travel Agent Promotions to Increase Room Occupancy

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Abstract

Purpose: This article aims to determine the influence of online travel agent promotions in increasing room occupancy and the effectiveness of online travel agent promotions in increasing room occupancy at a 4-star hotel in Ubud, Bali, Indonesia, and to find out which online travel agent platforms play the most effective role in increasing room occupancy.

Research methods: The analysis techniques used are series of simple regression analysis and effectivity analysis.

Findings: Regarding to analysis of effectiveness, online travel agent promotion is very effective in increasing room occupancy with percentage of 106.89 per-cent. Based on the calculation of room night contribution, Booking.com is the most effective online travel agent platform in increasing room occupancy at Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud with the total contribution 3,287 room nights in period of 2017-2019. The greater of online travel agent promotion carried out, the more the room occupancy in the hotel will increase.

Implication: Online travel agent promotions in the form of informing, reminding and persuading activities are very effective in increasing room occupancy.

Keywords: online travel agent promotions, room occupancy, hotel.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of major players in international commerce and the fastest growing economic sector which represent one of the main income sources for many developing countries (UNWTO, 2017). Bali is one of island in Indonesia become the biggest center of tourism sector and chosen as the traveler's choice destination in 2017 by Trip Advisor Travelers Choice Ratings. It is undeniable that more and more tourists are coming to Bali each year, as evidenced by the average growth of foreign and local tourist arrivals reaching 9 percent every year (BPSPB, 2021). With the rapid growth of tourist arrivals, the population of tourism supporting facilities is increasing, one of which is the population of hotel accommodation.

Hotel is accommodation business which provided lodging service for public completed with one or more food and beverage service, room attendant service, linen cleaning service, also with furniture and equipment used that fulfill the requirements of government decisions (Meirina, 2017). Hotels both local and international are considered to be the backbone of hospitality industry which providing accommodation and other guest services needed (Leung, 2019).

With the rapid growth of hotels in Bali in various regions, it will certainly create a competition to win the tourist market. Strategy that can be applied to win the competition is to do hotel promotion through online media. Promotion is the priority components of marketing activities to informing customer regarding company product or services, both paid and free in terms of non-personal communication through electronic media, mass media and online media (Magatef, 2015).

Selection of promotional methods can be based on the amount of promotional funds, the nature of the promotion, the nature of the market, and the type of product to be promoted (Saragih, 2019). In general, promotional activities include informing, persuading and reminding customers regarding hotel products (Tjiptono, 2012). Promotional tools can also be called a promotional mix, which is an important approach to increasing sales volume, therefore every company tries to do some more interesting things to influence customers through various media promotions (Kumar, 2017). Promotional mix can be effective way to reach potential customers and influence their purchase decision in order to take action with company's product or service (Wang, 2015).

Based on the Digital 2020 report published by We Are Social and Hoot suite, mobile phone users worldwide reach 5.9 billion people and internet usage worldwide has reached 4.5 billion people. With so many internet and smart phone users, it never hurts to enter a wider market through online promotions. About 80 percent of tourists use the internet to search hotel information (Toh, 2011). Travelers in now days not only using internet to get information prior to the travel, but they also book their travel and accommodation trough internet media (Angeloni, 2020). Many hotels have implemented a promotional mix both online and offline, one of them is Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud. With a combination of online and offline promotions, sales operations will be more

effective. Effectiveness is a key element to achieve goals or objectives that have been determined in every organization or company (Kurniawan, 2018).

Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud located in Ubud Area, especially on Suweta Street, Bentuyung, Ubud, Gianyar, Bali. This four-star hotel who have implemented online and offline marketing strategies in promoting their product. In terms of online media, Wapa at Ume Resort and Spa collaborated with online travel agents in an effort to increase room occupancy and attract more online customer with the wide range portion (Ling, 2015).

Online travel agent is a type of travel agent that carries out its activities online and provides an online reservation service (Ivanov, 2019). This type of travel agent provide convenience in terms of room reservations with online reservation form facilities equipped with room availability information that is easy to understand and processed directly through the site to the destination, hotel or restaurant (Anderson, 2011). Through this media, promotions are expected to be more targeted to increase hotel sales and maximize room occupancy.

Room occupancy is the condition to what extent or how many rooms can be sold compared to the total number of rooms that are capable of being sold (Sugiarto, 2011). Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa collaborated with online travel agents in an effort to increase room occupancy. Since 2013, Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud has collaborated with several online travel agents such as Expedia, Booking.com, Agoda, C-Trip, Traveloka and other online travel agents.

Table 1. Distribution of room night at Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud (2017-2019)
[Source: Sales and Marketing Department at Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa, 2021]

Distribution channel				
Year	Online TA (nights)	Offline TA (nights)	Wholesaler (nights)	Booking engine (nights)
2017	2,996	3,123	1,352	254
2018	3,036	3,663	1,173	287
2019	3,240	3,275	1,019	225
Average	3,099	3,353	1,181	256

In Table 1, online travel agents have a strong potential to become the main distribution channel because the number of room nights that are contributed continues to increase every year, considering also the digital era which is growing and internet users are increasing. In order to maintain a good corporation Wapa

di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud should give optimal effort to achieve the goal in room occupancy as expected by hotel management.

This article uses several previous studies that are used as a basis and comparison in research. The first is a research conducted by Kadam (2020) with the title "An Analysis of The Effect of OTAs on Travel Agents in Hotel Room Bookings". The second is Raab (2018) in "Creating Strategic Relationships with Online Travel Agents to Drive Hotel Room Revenue: an OTA Perspective". The third is Inversini (2014) in "Selling Room Online: The Use of Social Media and Online Travel Agents". The fourth is Chang (2019) studied "Cooperation and Competition between Online Travel Agencies and Hotels". The last is Caliskan (2013) entitled "The Contribution of Online Travel Agencies to the Profitability of Hotels: Case of Turkey". The difference is thaty this research uses a quantitative approach with simple linear regression analysis techniques with the help of SPSS data processing tools and effectiveness analysis with the help of Ms. Excel tabulation.

RESEARCH METHODS

Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud is located in Ubud, Gianyar, Bali and has been around for 27 years. In that period of time, the hotel must have collaborated with many online and offline travel agents so that they know the characteristics of promotions that can be carried out on each travel agent.

The variables discussed in this article are Online Travel Agent Promotions as the independent variable (X) and Room Occupancy as the dependent variable (Y). Online travel agent promotion (X) is a series promotion activity doing by Sales and Marketing at Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud, in the form of informing, persuading and reminding customer trough online travel agent accounts with online media starting from January 2017-December 2019. Room occupancy (Y) is the percentage of rooms sold at Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud in a period of three years, starting from January 2017 to December 2019. This article was developed by collecting primary and secondary data through a literature study, observation, and direct interview process through related parties such as Assistant Sales and Marketing Corporate, Reservation Staff and E-commerce Executive in Sales and Marketing Department at Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa

Ubud. Then the analytical technique used to facilitate the processing of the data obtained is a series of simple linear regression and effectivity analysis.

The series of simple linear regression analysis includes correlation analysis, classic assumption test, simple linear regression, coefficient of determination, and partial test (T-test). Then the effectivity analysis includes the comparison of targets and actual results from the contribution of room night each year by online travel agent promotions.

FINDINGS

To answer the problem formulation in this study, statistical calculations are performed with the help of a computer using the SPSS program (Statistic Package for Social Science) 25.00 for windows and Microsoft Excel.

There are several tests that must be passed to determine influence of online travel agent promotions in increasing room occupancy at Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa. The first is the correlation analysis, then the classic assumption test, simple linear regression analysis, the coefficient of determination and the last one is the partial test (t-test) to conclude the results of the effect of variable X on variable Y.

1) Correlation Analysis

After calculation using SPSS 25.00, result in correlation table showed correlation between online travel agent promotion variables and room occupancy at Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa ubud is 0,880. These value means that the correlation between online travel agent promotions and increasing of room occupancy can be categorized as very strong correlation.

2) Classic Assumption Test

The regression model of this study is normally distributed. This was obtained after conducting a normality test using graphical and statistical methods. In the graph method the points spread in the direction of the diagonal line of the curve and in the statistical method the Kolmogoros Smirnov test value is 0.200 (>0.05). The value of deviation from linearity is 0.226 (>0.05) showed that the data is linear. The regression model also does not have heteroscedasticity symptoms, because in the heteroscedasticity test the points spread without forming a special pattern. Last from autocorrelation test, the value of Durbin-Watson is 1.658, which

means it is between -2 and +2. It could be ascertained that the regression model does not show auto correlation.

3) Simple Regression Analysis

Table 2. Significance value and simple linear regression result
[Source: Data Processed, 2021]

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	695010.822	1	695010.822	116.521	.000 ^b
	Residual	202798.817	34	5964.671		
	Total	897809.639	35			

a. Dependent Variable: Room Occupancy

b. Predictors: (Constant), OTA Promotion

Coefficients ^a						
		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	278.506	52.310		5.324	.000
	OTA	2.132	.197	.880	10.79	.000
	Promotion				5	

a. Dependent Variable: Room Occupancy

In Table 2 and 3 sig. value is 0.000 which means less than 0.005, so that the regression modeling between online travel agent promotions and room occupancy can be accepted. From this significance value 0.000 (<0.005), it can also be stated that there is a significant influence between online travel agent promotion in increasing room occupancy. In addition, it was found that there was a positive relationship between online travel agent promotions and room occupancy through online travel agents from the model regression $Y = 278,506 + 2,132X$.

4) Coefficient Determination

Table 3. Coefficient determination result
[Source: Data processed, 2021]
Model summary^b

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.880 ^a	.774	.767	77.23128

a. Predictors: (Constant), OTA Promotion

b. Dependent Variable: Room Occupancy

The value of Adjusted R Square is 0.767, this means the effect of online travel agent promotion in increasing room occupancy by 76.7 percent while the rest is 23.3 percent influenced by other variables outside of this study.

5) Partial Test (T-Test)

The t-count value = 10,795 compared to the t-table value = 2.032, it turns out that the t-count value is bigger than the t-table value and the t-count is in the rejection area of H_0 , so H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. This means that statistically at the error level (α) = 5%, then online travel agent promotions (X) has a positive and significant influence on room occupancy (Y). Thus the hypothesis is verified.

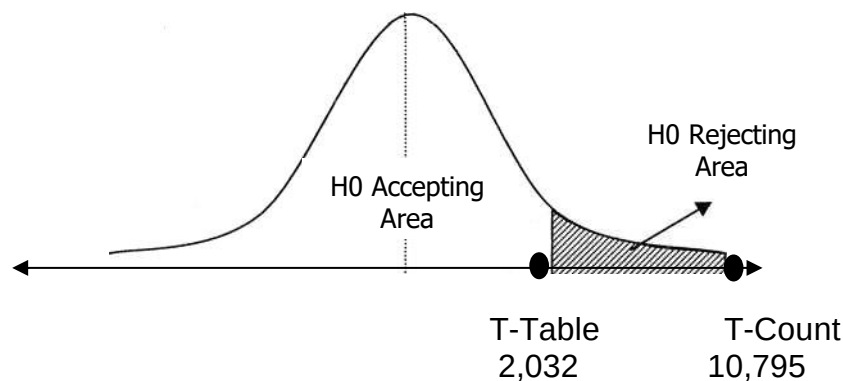


Figure 1. Curve of accepting and rejecting area
[Source: Data processed, 2021]

After all the series of test, it could stated that there is a significant and positive relationship between online travel agent promotions in increasing room occupancy. This positive relationship means that if online travel agent promotions are increased, room occupancy will also increase. Likewise, if the online travel agent promotion activities are reduced, there will be a decrease in room occupancy. The influence of online travel agent promotion in increasing room occupancy is 76.7 percent, while the rest 23.3 is influenced by other variables which were not examined in this study.

The online travel agent promotion carried out at Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud is a series activities of informing, persuading and reminding customers through the online travel agent platform that collaborated with the hotel. The informing activities including provide information for customers about new products from the hotel trough online travel agent platform, describe the benefits and features of the hotel product, respond to guest questions well through online

travel agent platform, and straighten out any misunderstandings by customers about the hotel using chatting feature in online travel agent platform. Informing activities are one of the important activities in promotion because through these activities we show an act of concern for the company to the customer.

The second is persuading activities, this activities carried out to provide a stimulus to consumers and influence their purchase decision to buy products offered by Wapa at Ume Resort and Spa such as hotel rooms and other stay packages provided by the hotel. Persuading activities includes create promotional packages periodically in all online travel agent platforms, updating photos of property periodically so that the online travel agent platform's appearance remains attractive, giving discounts related to hotel products, and join in marketing campaigns on the online travel agent platform.

The third is reminding activities including manage online travel agent services in order to keep in touch and build a good relationship with customer. Besides that, reminding activities aims to produce hotel brands with positive reviews so that customers always remember hotel products and make them as the repeater guest. The ability of a guest or customer to remember a logo or a characteristic of a hotel is called brand awareness. Of course, this brand awareness is needed by every hotel, including Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud in terms of bringing back guests who have visited the hotel or even generating new guests. Building brand awareness through the online travel agent platform can be done by maintaining reviews that have been written by guests on the online travel agent platform, both reviews of hotel staff, hotel environment, hotel services, and hotel products. In addition to maintaining reviews, negative guest comments written on reviews must also be handled appropriately so that the complaint can be resolved.

Analysis of the effectiveness is carried out by comparing the targets that have been previously determined by the company with the actual results obtained by the company. In finding the level of effectiveness of online travel agent promotions, Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud uses secondary data in the form of room night data generated from online travel agent promotions from the period of January 2017 to December 2019.

Table 4. Analysis of effectiveness (2017-2018)
[Source: Data processed, 2021]

No	Month	Room night generated by OTA		Effectivity level (%)	Criteria
		2017 (target)	2018 (actual)		
1	January	190	146	76.84	Less effective
2	February	170	152	89.41	Quite effective
3	March	182	175	96.15	Effective
4	April	202	228	112.87	Very effective
5	May	328	321	97.87	Effective
6	June	278	220	79.14	Less effective
7	July	296	294	99.32	Effective
8	August	342	302	88.30	Quite effective
9	September	306	316	103.27	Very effective
10	October	197	335	170.05	Very effective
11	November	189	194	102.65	Very effective
12	December	286	353	123.43	Very effective
Average				103.28	Very effective

Based on the table 2, the biggest effectivity level in 2017-2018 period is in April with the effectivity level 112.87 percent (very effective) and the lowest effectivity level in 2017-2018 period is in January with the effectivity level 76.84 percent (less effective). But the average over of effectiveness level in 2017-2018 period is 103.28 percent which can be categorized as very effective as a whole.

Table 5. Analysis of effectiveness (2018-2019)
[Source: Data processed, 2021]

No.	Month	Room night generated by OTA		Effectivity Level (%)	Criteria
		2018 (Target)	2019 (Actual)		
1	January	146	192	131.51	Very effective
2	February	152	195	128.29	Very effective
3	March	175	211	120.57	Very effective
4	April	228	224	98.25	Effective
5	May	321	245	76.32	Less effective
6	June	220	325	147.73	Very effective
7	July	294	274	93.20	Effective
8	August	302	339	112.25	Very effective
9	September	316	336	106.33	Very effective
10	October	335	316	94.33	Effective
11	November	194	225	115.98	Very effective

12	December	353	358	101.42	Very effective
Average				110.51	Very effective

Based on the table 3, the biggest effectivity level in 2018-2019 period is in June with the effectivity level 147.73 percent (very effective) and the lowest effectivity level in 2017-2018 period is in May with the effectivity level 76.32 percent (less effective). But the average over of effectiveness level in 2018-2019 period is 110.51 percent which can be categorized as very effective as a whole.

Table 6. Final result of effectivity analysis (2017-2019)
[Source: Data processed, 2021]

Period	Effectivity Level (%)
2017-2018	103.28
2018-2019	110.51
Total average	106.895 (Very effective)

Based on Table 2 and Table 3, can be showed that in both period, effectivity level are still fluctuating in each month. From the results of an interview with the Assistant Director of Sales Corporate Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud, the fluctuation was caused by several factors, such as changing customer purchase decisions, competition with other hotels, the types of promotions being carried out and marketing period which should be chosen so that promotion is more efficient. So that in the online travel agent promotion process must pay attention to some of these factors so that the promotions carried out continue to run effectively. In the period of 2017-2018 an average effectiveness level was obtained of 103.28 percent and in the period of 2018-2019 an average effectiveness level was obtained of 110.51 percent. If we take the average of the two results as showed in the table 4, the final result of effectivity level is 106.89 percent with very effective criteria. So from these results it can be stated that the implementation of online travel agent promotion to increase room occupancy is very effective.

Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud has collaborated with online travel agent platforms both locally and internationally since 2013. The following is the data room night contribution by several online travel agent platforms in collaboration with Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud.

Table 7. Room night contribution by online travel agent (2017-2019)
[Source: Data processed, 2021]

No	OTA platform	Year			Total	Percentage
		2017	2018	2019		
1	Booking.com	1183	1089	1015	3287	35.57%
2	Expedia.com	831	789	741	2361	25.55%
3	Agoda.com	716	747	806	2269	24.55%
4	Traveloka	125	165	233	523	5.66%
5	Tiket.com	111	82	135	328	3.55%
6	C-trip	0	92	204	296	3.20%
7	Pegi-peggi	0	0	97	97	1.05%
8	NusaTrip	0	72	9	81	0.88%
Total (Increasing)		2966 (0%)	3036 (2.30%)	3240 (6.29%)	9242	100.00%

Based on table , Booking.com is still the leading contributor to room nights among other online travel agent platforms with a total number of room nights during the 2017-2019 period reaching 3,287 (35.57 percent) room nights. In second place followed by Expedia.com with a room night contribution of 2,361 room nights (25.55 percent). In third place was Agoda.com with the contribution of 2,269 room nights (24.55 percent). In fourth place is Traveloka as a local online travel agent with the contribution of 523 room nights (5.66 percent). In fifth place there is Tiket.com with 328 room nights (3.55%). In the sixth place there is C-Trip with the contribution of 296 room nights (3.20 percent). In the seventh place there is Pegi-Pegi with the contribution of 97 room nights (1.05 percent). The last one is Nusa Trip as the smallest contributor with room night contribution of 81 room nights (0.88 percent) in period of January 2017-December 2019.

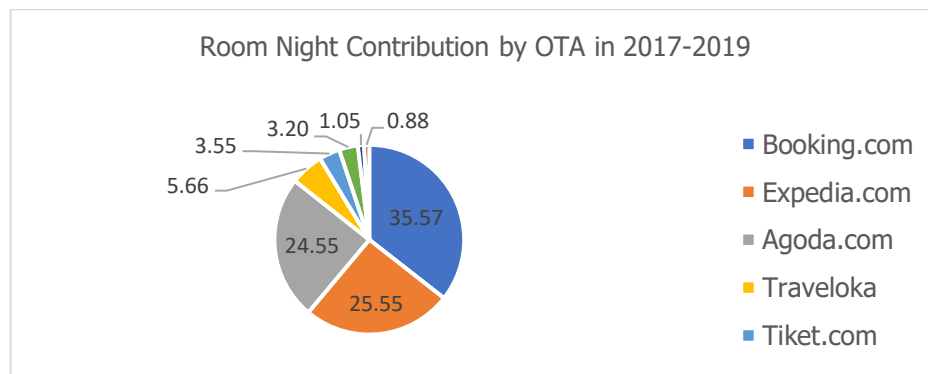


Figure 2. Pie chart of room night contribution by online travel agent (2017-2019)
[Source: Data processed, 2021]

Regarding the results of interviews with E-commerce staff at Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud, the difference of room nights produced by each online travel agent platform is caused by several factors such as price differences published by the OTA system, customer desire to use OTA preferred, the features provided by each OTA, and others. In terms of allotments, all online travel agent platforms get the same allotment because availability is arranged automatically in a channel manager system called "Site Minder". Site Minder is a channel manager system used by Wapa at Ume Resort and Spa Ubud, which this system is a service provider that connects the property management system (Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa using virtual hotel program as the property management system) with online travel agent platforms to manage rooms and prices. This service allows hotels to update prices, availability, and reservations automatically on several online travel agent platforms. In this case, room availability and price are set once on Site Minder, then they will automatically be distributed to each online travel agent platform. Likewise, if there is a reservation from one of the online travel agents, the availability of room will automatically decrease in the system and in other online travel agent platforms.

From those results it can be stated that Booking.com being the most effective contributor in increasing room occupancy at Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud in the form of online travel agent platform.

CONCLUSION

Online travel agent promotion has a positive and significant influence in increasing room occupancy at Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud. If the promotion of online travel agents is increased, the room occupancy will also increase, and vice versa. The effect of online travel agent promotion on room occupancy is 76.7 percent and the rest is by factors not examined in this study. The effectiveness level of online travel agent promotion in increasing room occupancy by 106,859 percent, which if we look at the table of effectiveness criteria, these numbers show that the criteria are very effective. So it can be concluded that online travel agent promotions are very effective in increasing room occupancy at Wapa di Ume Resort and Spa Ubud.

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