ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN MANAGING ROOM RESERVATIONS THROUGH E-COMMERCE AT JTS HOTEL SAMOSIR REGENCY

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Abstract

The research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, where the problems and opportunities regarding e-commerce in room reservation management at JTS Hotel are analyzed. E-commerce has recently formed one of the best approaches toward improving efficiency in operations and enhancing guest service engagement in hotels. However, for the small- and medium-sized hotels, there are greater challenges in the integration of such technologies into their reservations. Some of these issues are the limited technological infrastructure, inadequate training of staff in e-commerce platforms, and fierce rivalry with other hotels and online reservation facilities. These variables not only reduce the overall effectiveness of the digital marketing of the hotel and the involvement of online customers but also make the process of reserving a room inefficient. The study also considers practical challenges, such as how to integrate e-commerce with existing systems and the impact of erratic internet connectivity in the area. The findings bring out several opportunities that can be exploited through e-commerce. These are market reach expansion through the attraction of foreign visitors, face-to-face interaction enhancement with customers, as well as personalization of services by using online platforms. Finally, e-commerce provides JTS Hotel with the opportunity to introduce efficiencies to its booking process in order to appeal to technologically advanced tourists. Data were gathered from interviews with the hotel management and employees, and documents regarding e-commerce implementation were analyzed. Descriptive qualitative allowed the authors to delve deeply into the opportunities and challenges actually faced by the hotel in trying to optimize room reservations via electronic commerce. The results provide meaningful analysis and practical recommendations for the improvement of e-commerce management in the hotel industry, particularly in regard to small- and medium-sized hotels in Samosir.

Keywords: E-commerce, room reservations, hotel management

A. INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of digital technology and the internet has significantly transformed the hospitality industry over recent years. Increasing consumer reliance on digital platforms for hotel room reservations has prompted hospitality businesses to adapt more swiftly. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift toward digital technology, further pushing consumer behavior toward mobile hotel room booking.

JTS Hotel, located in Samosir Regency, has adopted a strategic approach by implementing an e-commerce-based reservation system to optimize its services. As tourism rebounds in the post-pandemic era, visits to Lake Toba are on the rise, making effective room reservation management on e-commerce platforms essential. However, implementing room reservation management through e-commerce presents complex challenges, including integration with multiple Online

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Travel Agent (OTA) platforms, real-time inventory management, fluctuating pricing, and last-minute cancellations that require careful management.

Online Travel Agents (OTAs) are platforms that facilitate online travel bookings, including hotel and transportation reservations, by distributing and promoting tourism services from providers through their websites. OTAs are companies specializing in selling travel services online, such as hotel bookings, flight reservations, and tour packages (Saragih, 2019). They function as intermediaries between consumers and service providers, enhancing accessibility and convenience in travel planning (Istikhomah & Darma, 2016). OTAs are digital platforms that facilitate travel bookings by connecting consumers with service providers, primarily focusing on hotels and flights, thereby enhancing market dynamics and customer experience (Garcia et al., 2022).

OTAs utilize electronic marketing strategies to promote their services, leveraging the internet to reach a broader audience. Data indicates that a significant portion of hotel bookings (up to 50%) occur through OTAs, underscoring their impact on occupancy rates (Istikhomah & Darma, 2016). Popular OTAs include Traveloka, Tiket.com, and Pegipegi, which have shown a substantial contribution to hotel bookings (Saragih, 2019). OTAs serve as digital marketplaces that facilitate direct travel product bookings with suppliers, using platforms for comprehensive information, price comparisons, and customer reviews (Herdianysah et al., 2023). OTAs also employ big data for personalized pricing and marketing, though they are often involved in price discrimination practices (Guo, 2023).

E-commerce has significantly transformed the hospitality industry, enhancing customer engagement and operational efficiency. Integrating digital marketing strategies, online booking systems, and e-business supply chain management has become essential for hotels to thrive in a competitive landscape. E-commerce in the hospitality industry involves utilizing digital platforms for bookings, boosting customer engagement, and optimizing marketing strategies to increase visibility and revenue through online travel agents and direct channels (Bhandari & A Sin, 2023). Effective digital marketing can lead to higher customer retention and business growth by targeting a diverse audience (Bhandari & A Sin, 2023). A study conducted in Fortaleza, Brazil, identified price and social influence as significant factors affecting online hotel bookings (Perinotto et al., 2022). E-commerce enhances the hospitality industry by facilitating online room reservations, improving marketing strategies, and increasing revenue through the effective management of average room rates and occupancy (Widani et al., 2019). Despite its benefits, many hospitality businesses face challenges such as security concerns and a lack of technological infrastructure (Ibrahim et al., 2020). Conversely, while e-commerce offers numerous advantages, some hotels still rely on traditional booking methods, indicating a gradual transition rather than a complete shift to digital platforms. This highlights the need for ongoing adaptation and training within the hospitality sector.

Intense competition with other starred hotels in the Lake Toba area demands increasingly efficient reservation management at JTS Hotel. Despite the challenges, e-commerce presents significant opportunities for performance optimization, including access to broader markets, dynamic pricing strategies, data analytics, insights into consumer behavior, and digital loyalty programs. Given these challenges and opportunities, this study will analyze the challenges and opportunities in managing room reservations through e-commerce at JTS Hotel.

This research aims to contribute practical insights to improve e-commerce management strategies at JTS Hotel, as well as theoretical knowledge in the field of digital hotel management. This study is especially pertinent considering JTS Hotel's location at Lake Toba, a government-designated super-priority destination. Data indicate that tourist visits to the lake grew by over 45% in 2023 compared to the previous year. Therefore, JTS Hotel must optimize its e-commerce-based

reservation system, aligning with government initiatives to promote digitalization in the tourism and hospitality sectors as part of national economic recovery efforts.

The problem statements in this research are 1. How effective is the management of the e-commerce-based room reservation system implemented by JTS Hotel in Samosir Regency? 2. What challenges does JTS Hotel face in implementing an e-commerce-based room reservation system? 3. What strategies can be applied to optimize business opportunities through e-commerce platforms at JTS Hotel? The objectives of this research are 1. To analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the e-commerce-based room reservation system at JTS Hotel 2. To identify and analyze the challenges encountered in managing room reservations through e-commerce 3. To formulate strategies to optimize business opportunities through e-commerce platforms.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted at JTS Hotel, located in Parbaba, Situngkir, Pangururan District, Samosir Regency, North Sumatra. The study was carried out from September to October 2024. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method. This descriptive qualitative analysis method is used to depict the conditions and issues, explain the results of observations and field studies, and draw conclusions and recommendations.

The data collection techniques used in this research include direct observation conducted at JTS Hotel, an interview with the Front Office Manager, and a questionnaire designed for 30 guests selected as the sample. collecting data from books, the internet, and other documents that support the research and literature review conducted by gathering data from various relevant references, including books, research findings, regulations, and policies related to the study.

Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation studies will be analyzed qualitatively. The analysis steps include data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on observations and documentation conducted from September to October 2024, it was found that 85% of reservations are made via phone, 10% via WhatsApp, and 5% through the platform Tiket.com. Most guests prefer to book rooms by phone due to server issues with the website, allowing them to confirm room availability and negotiate prices directly. Observations of the hotel's website indicate that it remains static, lacking a booking engine, current room and pricing information, and an online payment feature.

Interviews with hotel guests indicate they feel more comfortable booking rooms by phone as it provides immediate confirmation of room availability and pricing. Challenges in implementing the e-commerce system include infrastructure limitations such as an unstable internet connection, no dedicated server, limited computer equipment, and a manual reservation record-keeping system. Observations and interviews related to human resources reveal challenges such as limited staff knowledge of digital systems, no dedicated IT staff, minimal technology training, and conventional work habits. Identified operational barriers include manual reservation records, a lack of integrated systems, slow interdepartmental coordination, and a high risk of record-keeping errors. External challenges include guests' preference for direct communication, limited regional infrastructure, and competition with more modern hotels.

Strategies for optimizing business opportunities through e-commerce platforms include website and reservation system improvements, such as upgrading the website with complete, up-to-date information, a professional photo gallery, and a simple online booking feature. For a basic reservation system, JTS Hotel could implement an online booking form, automatic email

confirmations, a digital record-keeping system, and an integrated guest database. Human resource development could include basic training, computer fundamentals, an online booking system, and database management.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion presented, this research concludes the following: the reservation system at JTS Hotel remains highly conventional, with most reservations made by phone. Major challenges include limitations in basic infrastructure, human resources, and operational systems. A gradual approach is recommended for e-commerce system development.
The following recommendations are proposed for JTS Hotel: Website and Basic Reservation System Development: JTS Hotel should enhance its current website to make it more informative and user-friendly, providing accurate and updated information. Basic Training Program for Staff: This program aims to equip staff with foundational knowledge and skills essential for professional and effective service. Implementation of Simple Digital Marketing: JTS Hotel can start utilizing digital marketing to reach a wider audience without extensive resources.

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