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The History of Tourism Distribution Channels and Future Prospects in the Tourism Service Industry

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Abstract

Purpose: The current research investigates historical and future trends of tourist distribution channels in the tourism services business. The research examines historical patterns, current shifts, and new technologies in electricity distribution to offer insight into the distribution dynamics and advice for companies and regulators. **Research design, data and methodology:** The research in this case specifically employed the PRISMA approach when it comes to the data collection and research methodology. (PRISMA). The process is specifically made up of four steps, such as (1) Identification of Relevant Studies, (2) Screening and Selection Procedures, (3) Data Synthesis and Analysis, and (4) Reporting of Findings. **Results:** The fast-changing technology offers all opportunities to innovate the sector of tourism services. These upcoming technologies are not just reconstructing the way customers interact and operate but they are also creating room for development. Besides “the utilization of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality, virtual reality, and blockchain, the current state of tourism distribution channels also implies some other possible consequences. **Conclusions:** These research results show that we should not be reluctant about adopting new technologies, we should expand direct booking systems, promote eco-friendly tourism, and use data analytics in order to provide personalized experiences.

Keywords : Tourims Distribution Channel, Tourism Service Industry, Supply Chain Network, Prisma Data Collection

JEL Classification Code : L83, Z32, Z33, Q21

1. Introduction

The tourism industry is a genuine reflection of human's unquenchable curiosity resulting from the necessity for traveling, cultural immersion, and relaxation. However, behind each dream trip is a sophisticated system of distribution channels that helps with booking supplies and delivery of travel services. The tourism distribution landscape has followed the footsteps of technology-driven innovations, changing customer behavior and the economic

aspects of the world at large. Comprehending this transformation is an intellectual pursuit and a vital duty for all industries that associate themselves with tourism services (Butcher, 2024). Tourism distribution channels involve marketing, sales, and delivering specified travel items and services to clients. These channels are flyers, hotel brochures, buses, and tour receipts. Due to technological development and customer preferences, these channels have changed over the years.

The 19th century was considered the beginning of

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modern tourism, and the tourist distribution networks followed. This period saw passengers book their seats through travel agencies and tour operators. These facilities provided personalized assistance and expertise, enabling passengers to plan and book their itineraries. In the mid-20th century, computerized reservation systems led to the distribution era. The Global Distribution Systems (GDS) meant that travel agents could have real-time access to the large airline, hotel, and other travel service inventories that have revolutionized the business (Quadros & Oliveira, 2021). Travel agents depended on Sabre, Amadeus, and Travelport to improve bookings and widen travel product reach. GDS systems introduced efficiency and simplicity, and then the digital revolution was set off.

By the end of the 20th century, the Internet had completely blurred the distribution boundaries, provoking brand-new players in the industry – “Online Travel Agencies” (OTAs) (McLean et al., 2020). Companies like Booking.com, Airbnb and Expedia harnessed the power of the Internet to give travelers more flexibility and choice and the facilities to book travel-related services. Individuals could compare prices, read reviews, and book rooms anytime without using the agency's service. The Internet grew, and mobile devices were embraced, transforming the distribution system. Airlines, hotels, and other operators in the travel business created their booking platforms to regain their distribution channels (Kyomba et al., 2022). Collecting data from different sources, metasearch engines like Google Flights and Skyscanner have assisted consumers in pinpointing the best deals and making intelligent decisions.

Social media influencers and user-generated content were other crucial factors in molding consumers' preferences and steering their booking to travel. Peer-to-peer networks like Airbnb and Uber complicated distribution and disrupted businesses and regulatory models. Such inventions provide a promising future while simultaneously being a problematic challenge for travel channels. AI, VR, and blockchain could change travel marketing, sales, and consumption. Nevertheless, regulatory problems, tough competition, and evolving customer needs are some of the factors that make it hard for firms to be up to date with changes in the business world.

The current research investigates historical and future trends of tourist distribution channels in the tourism services business. The research examines historical patterns, current shifts, and new technologies in electricity distribution to offer insight into the distribution dynamics and advice for companies and regulators. Comprehension of tourism distribution channel development is paramount to facing the challenges of modern tourism and harnessing its growth and innovative opportunities.

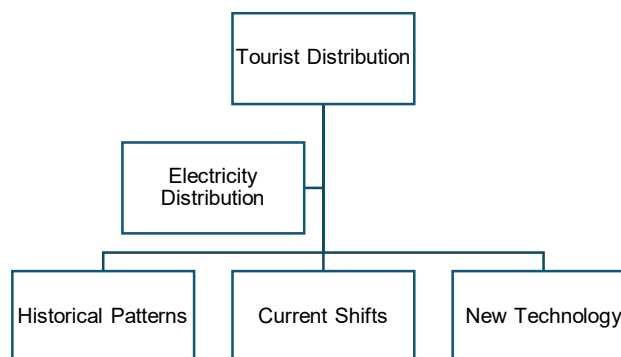


Figure 1: Path to Achieving the Purpose of this Research

2. Literature Review

A deep dive into the topic of tourism distribution channel evolution is joint when considering the ever-changing nature of the industry as well as its sensitivity to technological disruptions, consumer behaviors, and regulatory frameworks. This literature review, therefore, combines crucial academic research, industry reports, and expert discussions to provide a detailed comprehension of the development process and future opportunities in the tourism distribution channels.

2.1. Historical Perspectives

An essential component in the literature about tourism distribution channels is the evolution of their history. Suteeshna (2021) explains the roots of modern tourism distribution in the start of mass tourism in the post-World War II era and the role of travel agencies in designing package tours for the increase in leisure travel demand. Consequently, Butcher (2024) focuses on the transformation of travel agencies to computerized automated reservation systems in the 1970s and 1980s that led to the automation of booking processes and formed the basis for digitizing the distribution of tourism.

2.2 Technological Innovations

The Internet and online technologies have dramatically reshaped tourism distribution channels, resulting in a diverse ecosystem of digital platforms and intermediaries. Jolene (2023) draws our attention to the disruptive nature of the Internet brought up through Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) and direct booking platforms as the game changer influencers. Notably, experts like Kyomba et al. (2022) have studied the influence of search engines and meta-search engines on how tourists research, compare, and make bookings, which reveals the dimension of information

accessibility and transparency in the information age.

Researching technology innovation in tourism distribution and future trends, including AI, VR, and blockchain, is also a part of the literature. Christo and Chatzigeorgiou (2020) highlight the importance of using intelligent systems in travel recommendations to improve their quality and booking processes. Jolene (2023) also highlights that virtual reality is being used to market tourism destinations and can also deliver a new level of engagement and decision-making for tourists. The other important feature, as depicted by Kerdpitak (2022), includes the application of blockchain technology in payment systems architecture, identity verification, and trust architecture, which reinvent the whole tourism system by changing the modus operandi of traditional distribution channels and the roles of the intermediaries.

2.3. Consumer Behavior and Preferences

Through the research related to the points of tourism sales, we aim to understand consumers' preferences during the digitalized age. Hu and Yang (2020) suggest that the factors determining the consumers' choice of booking channel include cost, convenience, trust, and perceived risk. Conversely, Boto-García et al. (2021) discuss how user-created content and social media affect how people perceive travel and influence their booking intentions. They show the role of online reviews, peer recommendations, and social proof in the decision-making process.

Furthermore, researchers are studying mobile technology and the growing mobile booking apps on tourism distribution channels. McLean et al.'s (2020) study analysis is based on mobile travel applications, finding that a constant internet connection through a smartphone makes reservations and travel planning for vacationers easy. Ramadhani (2021) also focuses on using mobile technology for instant and last-minute reservations. He points to its impact on travel services branding and marketing through different distribution channels.

2.4. Regulatory Frameworks and Industry Dynamics

The literature on tourism distribution channels expounds on the regulations, market dynamics, and industry structures that influence the competitive nature. Ramadhani et al. (2021) signal that the regulation problems related to online trading are among the toughest barriers to fair competition, for example, taxation, consumer protection, and competition policy. They highlight the importance of the government getting involved with private businesses and regulatory bodies to create a fair system. Furthermore, Rashideh (2020) investigated power and control in the tourism distribution

networks. They focus on strategic alliances, vertical integration, and market consolidation as the factors that force industry restructuring and competitive behaviors.

Additionally, tourism distribution channel literature discusses sustainability, responsible tourism, and destination management. Christou and Chatzigeorgiou (2020) draw attention to the environmental issues arising from different distribution channels and the carbon footprint caused by air travel, which e-commerce and telecommuting could considerably lessen. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2021) highlight the issues of over-tourism and destination crowding, according to which distribution channels steer visitor flows, spatial distribution, and carrying capacity.

Table 1: Main Points of Literature Review

Five Activities	Description
1. Historical Perspectives	The roots of modern tourism distribution in the start of mass tourism in the post-World War II era and the role of travel agencies in designing package tours for the increase in leisure travel demand.
2. Technological Innovations	Researching technology innovation in tourism distribution and future trends, including AI, VR, and blockchain, is also a part of the literature. Christo and Chatzigeorgiou (2020) highlight the importance of using intelligent systems in travel recommendations to improve their quality and booking processes.
3. Consumer Behavior and Preferences	Previous studies have mentioned mobile travel applications, finding that a constant internet connection through a smartphone makes reservations and travel planning for vacationers easy.
4. Regulatory Frameworks and Industry Dynamics	The regulation problems related to online trading are among the toughest barriers to fair competition, for example, taxation, consumer protection, and competition policy. They highlight the importance of the government getting involved with private businesses and regulatory bodies to create a fair system.

2.5. Research Gap

Despite the wealth of data regarding the history and innovation in tourism distribution channels, the social-economic implications remain a notable gap, especially in the case of emerging markets and marginalized communities (Rosa-Jiménez et al., 2023). Although present studies concentrate mainly on technological progresses and consumer behavior in developed economies, there are few works focus on how these trends affect access to tourism services, economic development in and social inclusion in in third world countries.

The research paper will not only concentrate on the evolution of tourism distribution channels in emerging markets but also on their socio-economic implications for

those local communities. The study will proceed from a multi-dimensional standpoint that combines technical innovations with cultural, economic, and institutional factors to present a holistic view of forces shaping distribution of tourism in diverse socio-cultural environments. Additionally, the paper will ensure that it does compare the different tourism markets, both the developing and the developed when it comes to the distribution process in order to understand this concept better.

3. Methodology

The research in this case will specifically employ the PRISMA approach when it comes to the data collection and research methodology. (PRISMA) (Sarkis-Onofre et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2022; Kim & Kang, 2022).

3.1. Identification of Relevant Studies

Database Search: In the process of choosing the literature that is to be used in the research process, the paper will use different research databases and some of these will include Google scholar, PubMed, Web of Science and others. The search strategy will be implemented by the selection of appropriate keywords along with the Boolean operators in order to find studies on distribution channels in tourism zone, technological developments, consumer behavior and socio-economic impact.

Inclusion Criteria: Peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and academic books published in the designated time period were considered. The selection criteria will also encompass studies written in English and addressing the historical development and technological advancements of the distribution channel in the tourism industry.

Exclusion Criteria: Studies that did not match the criteria for inclusion, namely, the non-peer-reviewed materials, the duplicates, and the inappropriate publications, were excluded from the review.

3.2. Screening and Selection Procedures

Title and Abstract Screening: First, titles and abstracts of the chosen studies will be evaluated to see if they meet the research focus. Within this stage, relevant studies will move forward, and irrelevant others will be excluded.

Full-Text Assessment: Only the abstracts of selected studies will be screened. The researcher will read the full texts together to maintain uniformity and reliability of the selection process (Sutheeshna, 2021). If any discrepancies or disagreements happen, they will be resolved using

discussion and negotiations.

Data Extraction: Relevant information from the chosen studies, such as authors, publication date, research objectives, methodology, key findings, and implications, will be systematically extracted and noted in a standardized data extraction form (Sutheeshna, 2021). This process will help to develop clear and concise conclusions in the following stages of the analysis.

3.3. Data Synthesis and Analysis

Thematic Analysis: The extracted data undergo thematic analysis to identify the salient themes, patterns, and trends across the selected studies. The topics relating to the evolution of tourism distribution channels, technological innovations, consumer behavior, and how they impact society and the economy will be synthesized and organized thematically.

Comparative Analysis: By comparing and contrasting varieties of research with particular regards to geographical regions, the research methodologies and the theoretical frameworks (Zhang & Zhang, 2021; Kang, 2023). Furthermore, the comparative strategy will enhance the quality and extent of the outcomes in the comprehensive review of literature.

3.4. Reporting of Findings

The systematic literature review findings will be published according to PRISMA guidelines as a mean to provide transparency and clarity in reporting. The route will be displayed graphically, while tables and graphs shall be used to illustrate the main research findings and the patterns discovered in the research (Sarkis-Onofre et al., 2021). This section will explain the limitation in research and suggest future topics for further evolution of tourism distribution channels.

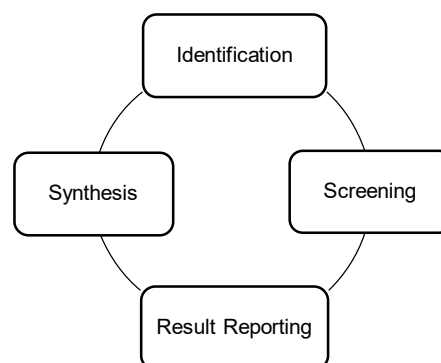


Figure 2: The Procedure to Obtain the Final Dataset

4. Findings

4.1. Integration of Emerging Technologies

The fast-changing technology offers all opportunities to innovate the sector of tourism services. These upcoming technologies are not just reconstructing the way customers interact and operate but they are also creating room for development (Zhang et al., 2021). Besides “the utilization of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality, virtual reality, and blockchain, the current state of tourism distribution channels also implies some other possible consequences” (Quadros & Oliveira, 2021).

4.1.1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Personalization

AI is an incredible tool for personalizing the travel experience, from personalized suggestions to predictive prices and itinerary customization. Using machine learning algorithms, travel companies can analyze enormous amounts of data, namely history, preferences, and social media interactions. Consequently, they can offer personalized recommendations and tailor their promotions to customers (Holzinger et al., 2019). For instance, AIs tailored for chatbots and virtual assistants will provide real-time help and customized recommendations to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.

4.1.2. Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) for Immersive Experiences

AR and VR technologies allow travelers to immerse themselves in the preview of destinations, accommodations, and attractions, which may help them make a booking. AR applications can put digital information over a physical space. Therefore, visitors can view landmarks, historical places, or tourist attractions in real-time (Quadros & Oliveira, 2021). Also, like VR simulations, virtual reality simulations can put users in virtual worlds where they can discover destinations and activities in person (Holzinger et al., 2019). For example, hotels and tour operators can use VR to let travelers visualize the rooms, amenities, and tours, increasing the traveler's decision-making capacity and reducing the anxiety and uncertainty regarding travel.

4.2. Expansion of Direct Booking Platforms

One more essential perspective in the tourism service industry is the emergence of direct booking platforms in which hotels, airlines, and other travel suppliers operate directly. Aliyah et al. (2023) highlighted that there has been an apparent tilt towards direct booking channels in the recent past primarily due to the adoption of some of the factors like changing preferences of the consumers, technological

advancement, and diversification from using third-party intermediaries (Kerdpitak, 2022).

4.2.1. Benefits for Suppliers and Consumers

Direct booking platforms also provide several advantages for suppliers and customers. On the suppliers' part, direct bookings control inventory management, pricing, and customer relationships by reducing their reliance on OTAs and commission fees (Rojas Bueno et al., 2020). For clients, direct booking channels always provide high-value discounts, loyalty rewards, and enhanced flexibility in booking options and customization (Aliyah et al., 2023). Furthermore, direct booking platforms can enable a smooth and integrated experience, thus allowing customers to complete bookings quickly and with fewer hassles with intermediaries.

4.2.2 Challenges and Opportunities

Although it has demonstrated various advantages, expanding direct booking platforms has created issues and opportunities for industry players. Suppliers compete effectively in the digital environment and differentiate themselves by investing in technology, marketing, and customer service (Sutheeshna, 2021). There is also a need to balance direct and indirect distribution channels to maximize reach and revenue and maintain customer satisfaction (Butcher, 2024). At the same time, consumers can face information load and decision fatigue when overwhelmed by too many options, highlighting that user-friendly interfaces, personalized recommendations, and transparent pricing will be essential in this context.

4.3. Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Practices

The increasing environmental and social awareness among consumers has contributed to the rise of sustainable and responsible tourism business models. As a result, consumer behavior, business standards, and regulations are changing (Christou & Chatzigeorgiou, 2020). Tourism distribution channels are shown in different ways, such as eco-lodging marketing, carbon offsetting options, and community-based tourism activities (Kim & Kang, 2022).

4.3.1. Eco-Friendly Accommodations and Transport

Today, tourists demand lodging or transportation services based on sustainability and environmental conservation. Eco-friendly hotels, resorts, and lodges use green practices, including efficient energy utilization, waste minimization, and water conservation, to reduce the ecological impact (Christou & Chatzigeorgiou, 2020). In addition, transportation companies are deploying fuel-efficient vehicles and alternative fuels and compensating for

travel emissions using carbon offsets. As a result, online booking platforms can contribute a lot to ensuring the sustainability of the tourism industry by featuring eco-certified properties, providing information about sustainability, and rewarding environmentally friendly travelers (Rojas Bueno et al., 2020).

4.3.2. Community-Based Tourism and Cultural Experiences

Community-based tourism practices offer local populations an opportunity to participate and reap the benefits of tourism, which simultaneously preserves the culture and nature (Rosa-Jiménez et al., 2023). By distributing through channels that support authentic cultural experiences, indigenous crafts, and traditional cuisines, tourism can sustain livelihoods and preserve cultural heritage (Butcher, 2024). The online portals can help promote and book tours, homestays, and immersive cultural experiences by connecting travelers with local hosts and forming relations beyond the traditional stereotypes of tourists (Rashideh, 2020).

4.4. Enhanced Data Analytics and Personalization

The ever-growing number of data analytics tools and techniques enable tourism stakeholders to understand consumer behavior, market trends, and competitor dynamics better, creating well-designed marketing strategies, personalized services, and dynamic pricing models (Sutheeshna, 2021).

4.4.1. Predictive Analytics for Demand Forecasting

Predictive analytics uses statistics models, machine learning and historical data algorithms to develop future demand patterns and market trends. Tourism firms can adapt their inventory management, pricing methodology, and resource allocation by investigating variables such as seasonality, demography, and booking trends to maximize client satisfaction and minimize wastage (Sarkis-Onofre et al., 2020).

4.4.2. Dynamic Pricing and Revenue Management

A dynamic pricing model changes the prices in real time using factors like the market conditions, the changes in demand and the market dynamics. Through the implementation of dynamic pricing strategies, the travel suppliers like hotels, airlines, etc. are not only able to optimize revenue and occupancy rates but also balance supply and demand to generate the maximum profitability (Sutheeshna, 2021). On top of that, personalized pricing provides individual discounts, promo deals and coupons, typically based on customers' booking history and loyalty

status, hence, boosting customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Table 2: Research Findings

Solutions	Description
1. Integration of Emerging Technologies	Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Personalization, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) for Immersive Experiences.
2. Expansion of Direct Booking Platforms	Benefits for Suppliers and Consumers, Challenges and Opportunities
3. Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Practices	Eco-Friendly Accommodations and Transport, Community-Based Tourism and Cultural Experiences
4. Enhanced Data Analytics and Personalization	Predictive Analytics for Demand Forecasting, Dynamic Pricing and Revenue Management

5. Implications

As a result, the prospects found in the above findings section are useful for practitioners to refine tourism distribution channels, awareness customers, and achieve growth of the industry. Here are brief suggestions on how practitioners can leverage these prospects to achieve these objectives:

5.1. Integration of Emerging Technologies

Tourism practitioners should focus on incorporating new technologies like AI, AR, VR, and blockchain into the distribution processes to enhance distributional efficiency, effectiveness, and competitiveness.

- **AI-powered Personalization:** Leverage AI analytical tools and chatbots to mine consumer data, forecast preferences, and offer personalized suggestions and offers. Based on real-time data collection, apply machine learning models to tune prices, inventory, and promotion.

- **AR and VR Experiences:** Generate interactive AR and VR experiences where participants can view places, hotels, and activities to help them choose where to stay. Team up with technology providers and content creators to develop original and engaging content that highlights USPs and unique features to increase the number of bookings and customer satisfaction.

- **Blockchain-enabled Transactions:** Delve into how blockchain technology improves the payment processes, security or trust, and transparency issues (Kerdpitak, 2022). Blockchain can be used for identity verification, digital contracts, and secure payments to eliminate fraud, disputes, and transaction costs.

5.2. Expansion of Direct Booking Platforms

Tourism professionals can use different booking channels by hotels, airlines, and other travel providers to build brand identity, cultivate a direct connection with consumers, and maximize profit.

- **Enhance User Experience:** Let passengers browse, compare, and book their travel directly with suppliers through mobile apps and websites that are easy, fast, and personalized. Effortless booking processes, user-friendly navigation menus, and interactive features achieve this by mitigating friction points (Aliyah et al., 2023).

- **Build Trust and Credibility:** Use genuine reviews and testimonials of tourists and social evidence that builds tourists' trust. To differentiate from OTAs and create brand trust, it is necessary to accentuate direct booking benefits, such as prompt communication with hotel staff, tailored treatment, and privileged facilities.

5.3. Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Practices

Sustainable and responsible tourism professionals should be accountable for reducing the social and environmental impacts, preserving the culture, and strengthening the destinations. Green Tourism.

- **Eco-Friendly operations:** Energy-efficient building designs, waste reduction plans, sustainable purchasing, and recycling should be applied along the supply chain. Eco-certification and accreditation programs increase sustainability and attract eco-minded visitors.

- **Educate and Engage Travelers:** Through educational efforts, narratives, and immersive experiences, visitors can learn more about sustainable and fair tourism (Aliyah et al., 2023). Minimize rubbish, consider current traditions, and promote moral animal interactions so that tourists are wise and considerate.

5.4. Enhanced Data Analytics and Personalization

Tourism experts should employ data analytics and customization to analyze customer behavior, preferences, and trends to build targeted marketing campaigns, dynamic pricing, and customized services.

- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Use data analytics tools to collect, analyze, and comprehend customer data from website traffic, reservations history, social media and feedback. Through predictive modeling, clustering, and sentiment analysis, identify patterns, predict trends, and improve marketing in real time.

- **Dynamic Pricing Strategies:** Dynamic pricing

algorithms and revenue management systems should be used to adjust the prices taking into consideration demand, market situations, and competition (Christou & Chatzigeorgiou, 2020). Utilize pricing elasticity models and demand forecast to incrementally change prices, obtain maximum revenue, and optimal yield within distribution channels.

Table 2: Implications Based on the Findings

Suggestion	Key Point
1. Integration of Emerging Technologies	Tourism practitioners should focus on incorporating new technologies like AI, AR, VR, and blockchain into the distribution processes to enhance distributional efficiency, effectiveness, and competitiveness.
2. Expansion of Direct Booking Platforms	Tourism professionals can use different booking channels by hotels, airlines, and other travel providers to build brand identity
3. Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Practices	Sustainable and responsible tourism professionals should be accountable for reducing the social and environmental impacts, preserving the culture, and strengthening the destinations. Green Tourism.
4. Enhanced Data Analytics and Personalization	Tourism experts should employ data analytics and customization to analyze customer behavior, preferences, and trends

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the evolution of tourism distribution channels symbolizes a dynamic interplay between technological innovation, transforming customer habits, and industry dynamics. From the physical stores of travel agencies present in the past, to the digital venues and emerging technologies of the current landscape, the history of tourism distribution channels shows a way of changing, of overthrowing and transformation. In the paper, we have followed the historical change of tourism distribution channels from the traditional intermediaries such as travel agents to digital platforms and new technologies. We delved into the main trends, technological innovations and consumer preferences which are influencing the current tourism distribution, exposing the future perspectives and the industry ramifications for the stakeholders.

These research results show that we should not be reluctant about adopting new technologies, we should expand direct booking systems, promote eco-friendly tourism, and use data analytics in order to provide personalized experiences. Through exploitation of these opportunities and implementing the suggested ways, practitioners in the tourism sector can boost channels of distribution, better customers' experiences, and drive

sustainable growth. Going forward, it is crucial that industry players stay dynamic, innovative and customer-focused in view of the constantly changing market dynamics and new technological developments. The tourism sector would be able to maintain their position and meet the challenges of the digital era by embracing change, encouraging collaboration, and by giving priority to sustainability. In a nutshell, an integrative strategy that uses technology combined with sustainability and client involvement will be very important for the future of tourism distribution and its continued success going forward.

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