The Importance of Using Online Booking Applications on Smartphones as a Mechanism to Facilitate the Provision of Tourism Services by Hotel Institutions - A Case Study of Booking.com-

أهمية استخدام تطبيقات الحجز الالكتروني بالهواتف الذكية كآلية لتسهيل عملية تقديم الخدمة السياحية من طرف المؤسسات الفندقية – دراسة موقع booking.com-

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the importance of using electronic booking applications on smartphones in facilitating the process of providing tourism services by hotel institutions. This was achieved by exploring one of the most widely used applications globally" Booking" which specializes in tourism and online travel services. Through this research, we found that the impact and significance of "Booking" in the field of electronic booking are evident in the prominent position, it holds among its competitors. Therefore, tourism and travel companies worldwide should seek to benefit from such expertise to enhance the process of providing tourism services and develop their tourism sector.

Keywords: Electronic booking, smartphone applications, tourism service, hotels, Booking.com website.

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة لمعرفة أهمية استخدام تطبيقات الحجز الالكتروني بالهواتف الذكية في تسهيل عملية تقديم الخدمة السياحية من طرف المؤسسات الفندقية، وذلك من خلال التطرق إلى أهم التطبيقات المستخدمة عالميا وهو تطبيق" booking " المتخصص في السياحة والسفر عبر الأنترنت، توصلنا من خلال هذا البحث الى أن الآثار والاهمية المترتبة عن استخدام شركة "booking" للمواقع وتطبيقات الحجز الالكتروني واضحة من خلال المكانة التي تحتلها هذه الشركة بين منافسيها، ولذلك لابد لشركات السياحة والسفر في العالم أن تحاول أن تستفيد من هذه الخبرات لتحسين عملية تقديم الخدمات السياحية وتطوير القطاع السياحي بها.

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الكلمات المفتاحية: الحجز الالكتروني، تطبيقات الهواتف الذكية، الخدمة السياحية، الفنادق، موقع booking.com

Introduction

Information and communication technology, along with the various applications it has produced, is among the most significant innovations that have brought about a fundamental transformation in various aspects of economic, social, and political life. The use of this technology has expanded to include all sectors, particularly the tourism sector. One of the key outcomes of this technological advancement is the development of electronic booking systems, which allow customers to make reservations online. Initially, these systems were used by airlines, but they later extended to travel agencies, hotels, restaurants, and various tourism transport companies. Today, these systems are widely relied upon for booking hotel rooms, renting cars, and purchasing travel and train tickets in some countries.

The emergence of mobile phones has contributed to the tourism sector benefiting from the tremendous advancements in information and communication technology. Smartphone applications operate seamlessly on mobile devices, providing information about tourist sites, hotels, and restaurants. This, sequentially, saves significant time and effort, facilitating the delivery of high-quality services quickly and efficiently while including all the details that visitors may need (Hassan & Ati, 2018).

With the significant advancements in mobile technology, smartphones have emerged in recent years, distinguishing themselves through advanced operating systems capable of running applications and browsing the internet. As a result, smartphones can provide a wide range of information services to support travel activities, such as allowing travelers to book, modify, or cancel room reservations. Additionally, the applications offer recommendations based on tourists' inquiries, which may even influence travelers to change their destination and opt for an unplanned location.

To explore this topic further and assess its implications, we pose the following question:

Research Questions

What is the importance of using electronic booking applications on smartphones in providing tourism services by hotel institutions?

This main question includes the following sub-questions:

- How does the hotel booking process work through smartphone applications?
- What are the most widely used global applications for hotel booking?
- What is the significance of Booking in the use of electronic booking applications?

Study Hypothesis

To answer the previous questions, we propose the following hypothesis:

- Booking.com is one of the most popular and widely used electronic booking applications in the world.
- Electronic booking through smartphone applications increases the quality and speed of hotel services and enhances customer satisfaction.
- The use of Booking's website to electronic booking applications plays a significant role in facilitating the provision of tourism services.

Importance of the Study

This study aims to highlight an important topic in the field of tourism services, the significance of using electronic booking applications on smartphones to facilitate the provision of tourism services by hotel institutions. Accordingly, this research explores key concepts related to hotel e-booking, identifies the most commonly used applications, and examines the role of smartphone applications in enhancing tourism services. Additionally, the study go through one of the most prominent global hotel booking platforms, booking to analyze its impact and importance in the industry.

Research Methodology

To address this topic in all its dimensions and aspects, the study adopts the descriptive method, which focuses on reviewing the theoretical framework of various concepts related to websites and electronic applications specializing in tourism services worldwide. Additionally, the analytical method is employed to collect and analyze data and information in a scientifically objective manner to reach the expected research findings. To answer the main research question, this study is structured into four key sections as follows:

- What are hotel booking services?
- The most widely used hotel-booking applications worldwide.
- The significance of hotel booking via smartphones in enhancing tourism services.
- The importance of Booking's use of websites and mobile booking applications.

1. What are hotel booking services?

1.1 Definition of Electronic Hotel Booking Service

Electronic hotel booking is a service designed to address the shortcomings of the traditional booking system, such as time consumption and effort. This service allows travelers to make reservations online without the need to visit booking offices or company branches, as was required in the past.

1.2 Types of Electronic Hotel Booking

According to Ben Ahsan (2023), hotel booking can be categorized into the following types:

- **Official Booking:** This type of booking is made by governmental or official entities, such as ministries or professional organizations, based on an official invitation. The booking expenses are covered by the entity making the reservation.
- **Individual Booking:** It has done without an intermediary, where the guest makes the reservation independently using available booking methods.
- **Group Booking:** travel agencies and tour operators who receive a commission on room sales made through them facilitate this.

1.3 Required Information for Hotel Booking

The key information required for hotel reservations includes:

- **Check-in Date:** The date the guest intends to arrive at the hotel, marking the start of room charges and applicable taxes.
- **Check-out Date:** The date the guest plans to leave the hotel. Typically, the checkout day is not charged unless the guest stays beyond the designated checkout time.
- **Number of Adults in the Room:** Room rates in many hotels vary based on single or double occupancy, with an additional charge for extra guests.
- **Children:** Some hotels offer family plans or discounted rates for children, while others charge the regular adult rate for all guests, including children.
- **Guest Preferences:** Guests can specify their preferences, such as room location or bed type. For example, they may request a sea-view room, a ground-floor room, a room near the parking area, or a non-smoking floor. Couples may also prefer specific bed arrangements, such as a king-size bed or separate beds.
- **Optional Requirements:** Any optional requirements, such as a baby crib, a foldable extra bed, or an additional guest, must be specified when making the reservation so that the total fare can be determined accordingly (Al-Taie, 2017).

2. The Emergence of Smartphone Applications and Their Role in Providing Hotel Tourism Services

Smartphone applications have played a significant role in enhancing hotel tourism services. A smartphone is a mobile device equipped with an operating system, allowing it to function similarly to a small computer. These devices enable users to browse the internet, access email, install and use applications, and perform various other tasks typically associated with computers. Additionally, smartphones retain essential mobile functions such as calling, text messaging, and photography. The first smartphone introduced in 1999, but it did not gain widespread popularity until 2003. By 2007, smartphones started to replace personal computers for many users. In 2010, approximately 302.6 million smartphones were sold worldwide (Hassan & Ati, 2018).

Smartphones come with a range of features, including their ease of portability and mobility, as well as their ability to facilitate business management. They also allow

users to book hotels, checkroom prices, reserve flight tickets, and rent cars anytime and anywhere. Additionally, most smartphones can access the internet, enabling users to check their emails, browse the web, play games, use GPS navigation systems, listen to music, and run various applications. Due to the increasing integration of smartphones into daily life, many hospitality companies have launched mobile applications to reach potential customers, reduce costs—especially marketing expenses—enhance operational efficiency, and, most importantly, improve service quality and customer experience.

The use of smartphone booking applications has brought a major transformation in hotel services, as it has contributed to improving operational efficiency, enhancing guest satisfaction, and providing more personalized and seamless services. However, it also presents challenges related to cost, cybersecurity, and the adoption of technology across different customer groups. Among the most important advantages of using these applications are: (Nyagaka,2024, p 15)

1. Improving Operational Efficiency

- Automated bookings: Reduces human errors such as double bookings or incorrect data entry.
- Mobile check-in and check-out: Minimizes crowding at reception and allows staff more time for personalized service.
- Digital keys: Using smartphones as a substitute for traditional cards, reducing costs and losses.

2. Enhancing Guest Satisfaction

- Ease of use: Booking, modifying, and canceling reservations can be done quickly and simply.
- Price and offer transparency: Guests can directly view prices, photos, and reviews.
- Self-control: Ability to choose rooms, request additional services, or customize the stay before arrival.

3. Personalizing the Experience

- Loyalty points and personalized offers: Guests accumulate points and receive tailored promotions.
- Smart recommendations: Apps suggest restaurants or services based on guest preferences.
- Instant notifications: Reminders of bookings, special offers, or available services during the stay.

4. Strengthening Communication

- In-app chat: Enables tourists to communicate directly with reception or room service.
- Digital service requests: Such as extra cleaning or maintenance, with the ability to track requests.

5. Integration with Smart Systems

- Room control: Lighting, air conditioning, and TV managed via smartphone.
- Travel integration: Linking bookings with apps like Uber or Google Maps.

• Smart energy systems: Reducing energy consumption through automated control.

Statistics also indicate that hotel bookings made via desktop or laptop computers have significantly declined in recent years. This is mainly due to the emergence of these mobile applications and the increasing number of users worldwide who prefer them for their ease and speed of use.

3. Mobile Applications for Hotel Booking

"Recently, traveling around the world has become a major interest for many people. Thanks to technological advancements, it has become easier to explore any country or hotel before traveling, helping individuals choose accommodations that suit their budget. Additionally, travelers can select the most attractive destinations based on the images and videos provided by the best hotel booking apps. In this article, we will introduce some of the top hotel booking applications that can relied upon when choosing accommodations" (Mahi & Nadi, 2023)

There are many mobile applications specifically designed for hotel booking, including:

- **WEGO App:** One of the easiest apps for booking hotels and flight tickets at the best prices. It operates in over 50 countries, including 11 in the Arab world. This app has significantly simplified travel procedures, hotel bookings, and customer service communication with airlines and hotels worldwide via the internet.
- **KAYAK App:** A well-known travel app that provides various services, including flight, hotel, and car bookings, as well as airport services before and after travel through its customer support.
- **EXPEDIA App:** A globally recognized application owned by Expedia, a leading online travel company. It offers services in the U.S. and 15 other countries, including flight ticket bookings across multiple airlines, hotel reservations, car rentals, and both land and sea trip planning.
- **BOOKING.COM App:** Primarily specialized in hotel bookings worldwide, it is one of the most popular platforms for this purpose. It offers competitive prices and comprehensive details about hotels in any city, from one-star to seven-star accommodations. The platform also known for its user-friendly experience, including the option to cancel bookings and receive refunds.
- **HOTELS.COM:** One of the oldest platforms in this field, launched in 1991 as a hotel-booking network before online reservations became fully available. A unique feature of this platform is that it offers free bookings for users who book multiple times throughout the year.

- **TRIPADVISOR:** Originally started as a website where travelers shared their experiences and reviews about hotels, companies, and restaurants in the cities they visited. Over time, it evolved into a platform allowing direct communication with listed hotels, companies, and restaurants. It features tens of thousands of travel agencies, hotels, and dining establishments. In 2013, it found that 82 million people had downloaded the TripAdvisor app, with 2,800 new topics posted daily. As of December 2013, it had 1.23 billion monthly active users, making it one of the most important tools for hotel and travel company reviews.
- **HOSTELWORLD:** A well-known global website specializing in budget-friendly hotel bookings, particularly catering to backpackers and students looking for affordable accommodation.
- **ALMOSAFER:** A mobile app designed to simplify travel and hotel bookings free. It is widely preferred for booking hotels in Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, the UAE, as it saves time, and streamlines travel procedures. .
- **AGODA:** An online hotel booking app that helps travelers save time and effort in finding suitable accommodations. It focuses on pricing, highlighting the most affordable options, and retains search history for easy reference, making the booking process more efficient.
- **HOTELTONIGHT:** This app helps traveler's find luxury hotels worldwide, offering a curated selection of top-rated accommodations. It allows users to book a room in just 10 seconds while providing all the essential details about the hotel.
- **GOOGLE HOTEL FINDER:** Launched in 2011, this is Google's specialized hotel search engine, designed to help users find and book hotel rooms at the lowest prices. It provides an instant and efficient search tool within Google's search bar to deliver the best results.
- **TRIVAGO:** A hotel comparison app that allows users to compare hotel prices from over 400 booking sites for more than 1.8 million hotels in 190+ countries. With 1.4 billion annual site visits, Trivago helps travelers regularly compare hotel deals within the same city and book the best available offers.
- **YA MOSAFER:** A hotel booking company that offers services via its website and mobile app. One of its standout features is the ability to book hotels without requiring a credit card. The platform provides access to bookings for over 10 million hotel rooms worldwide.

4. The Importance of Mobile Applications in Hotel Services

The integration of information and communication technology has become essential for the advancement of the tourism sector. Rather than being an optional tool, it is now a necessity driven by economic factors to support and expand the industry.

Mobile applications in the hospitality sector provide travelers with easy access to detailed information about tourist destinations. These apps assist in trip planning, allowing users to organize their itineraries, select attractions, schedule visits efficiently, book flights, and estimate their expenses (Al-Adasani, 2022).

These applications also save time and effort while reducing costs for both hotels and tourists. Additionally, they help in building a brand name for these hotels and reaching new customers. Moreover, they contribute to establishing a good reputation for the hotel among customers, which in turn leads to increased sales and widespread reach without obstacles, targeting a diverse range of audiences. (Hassan & Ati, 2018)

The use of applications in the hotel industry has become one of the key factors that hotel establishments rely on to strengthen competition, stand out in the market, and increase customer satisfaction. Consequently, the rules of competition impose the necessity for tourism businesses to adopt information and communication technologies in their operations to withstand competitors who continuously innovate new methods to attract customers and enhance their activities.

5. The Significance of Hotel Businesses Utilizing Leading Smartphone Applications for Hotel Reservations – Booking

With millions of people worldwide passionate about travel, technological advancements have made it easier than ever to explore different countries and hotels before visiting. This enables travelers to select accommodations that fit their budget and preferences while also choosing destinations with captivating tourist attractions, thanks to the images and videos provided by top hotel booking apps.

Among these, Booking stands out as one of the most popular and highly rated hotel reservation applications. It offers users extensive information on hotels and resorts, covering over 41,000 travel destinations. Additionally, the app includes several valuable features, such as integrated maps for easy navigation to hotels, along with many other useful tools.

5.1 Introduction to Booking.com

According to Booking.com (2025), the company's mission is to "make exploring the world accessible to everyone."

Booking.com Founded in 1996 in Amsterdam invests in cutting-edge technology to simplify travel, offering a seamless experience with a wide range of transportation options and accommodations—from homes to hotels and more—for millions of travelers. As one of the largest travel marketplaces globally, it connects accommodation providers with international customers, helping businesses of all sizes, from well-known brands to independent entrepreneurs, expand their reach.

Available in 43 languages, Booking.com offers over 28 million accommodation options, including more than 6.6 million homes, apartments, and other unique stays.

No matter where you want to go or what type of experience you seek, Booking.com makes travel effortless, supported by a 24/7 customer service team.

5.2 Services Offered by Booking.com

Booking.com provides a variety of services, including:

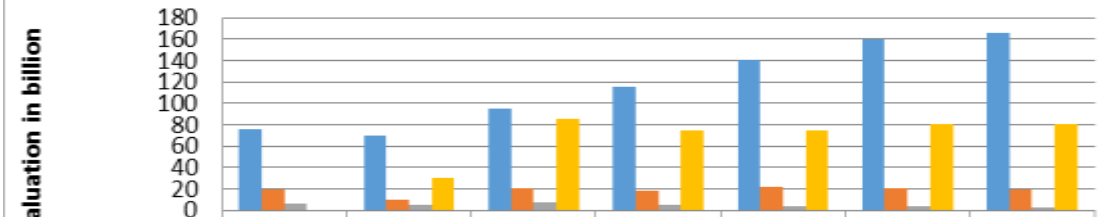
- ✓ **Extensive Accommodation Options:** A wide selection of choices, from apartments to bed-and-breakfast stays.
- ✓ **Low Prices:** Guarantees the best available rates compared to competitors.
- ✓ **Instant Confirmation:** All bookings confirmed immediately upon selecting accommodation.
- ✓ **No Booking Fees:** No hidden charges or administrative fees, with free cancellation available.
- ✓ **Secure Booking:** Facilitates hundreds of thousands of transactions daily on a secure platform, ensuring privacy protection.
- ✓ **24 / 7 Customer Support:** Offers assistance in over 40 languages, acting as an intermediary to address inquiries and fulfill requests.
- ✓ **Added Value for Accommodation Partners:** Helps property owners connect with new customers, streamline bookings, and grow their businesses through the Booking.com platform.

5. 3 The Importance of Online Hotel Booking via Booking.com

The significance of online hotel booking can be highlighted through key metrics:

- As of February 13, 2025, the market value of Booking Holdings, the parent company of Booking.com, is estimated at $165.77 billion USD. This makes it the highest-valued company in the travel and technology sector, reflecting its leading position in the industry (Booking.com, 2025).

Figure (01): Market Value of Booking.com Compared to Some Competitors (2019–2025)



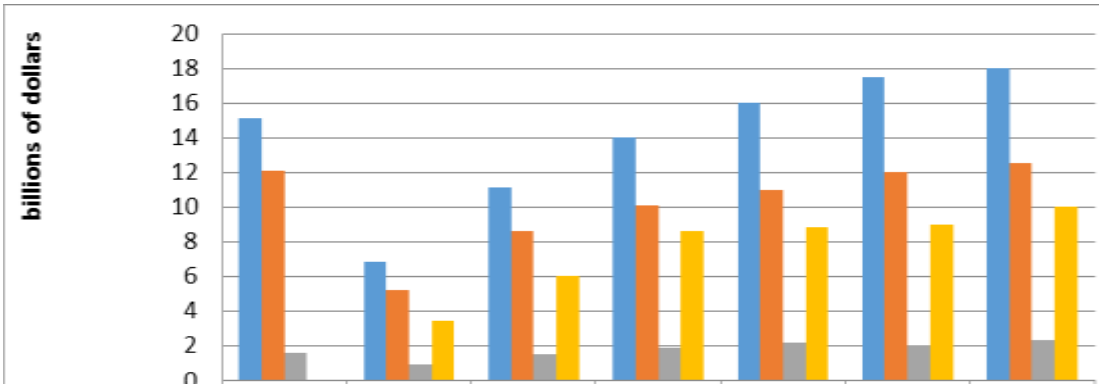
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
booking	75,1	70	95	115	140	160	165,8
expedia	19,6	10	21	18	22	20	19,3
tripe advisor	6,3	5	7	5	4	3,5	2,5
airbnb		30	85	75	75	80	80,2

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on (Statista 2025).

The data above shows that Booking.com consistently led in market value throughout this period, surpassing key competitors like Expedia, TripAdvisor, and Airbnb.com. In 2024, it achieved the highest market value at $160.0 billion, followed by Airbnb with $80 billion, Expedia at $22 billion, and TripAdvisor ranking last with $3.5 billion.

These figures underscore Booking.com's dominance and strong market position in the online hotel booking industry. The following chart will further illustrate this significance by examining its revenue performance.

Figure (02): Booking.com Revenue Compared to Some of Its Competitors during the Period 2019-2025



	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
booking	15,1	6,8	11,1	14	16	17,5	18
expedia	12,1	5,2	8,6	10,07	11	12	12,5
tripe advisor	1,6	0,9	1,5	1,9	2,2	2	2,3
airbnb		3,4	6	8,6	8,8	9	10

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on (Statista 2025).

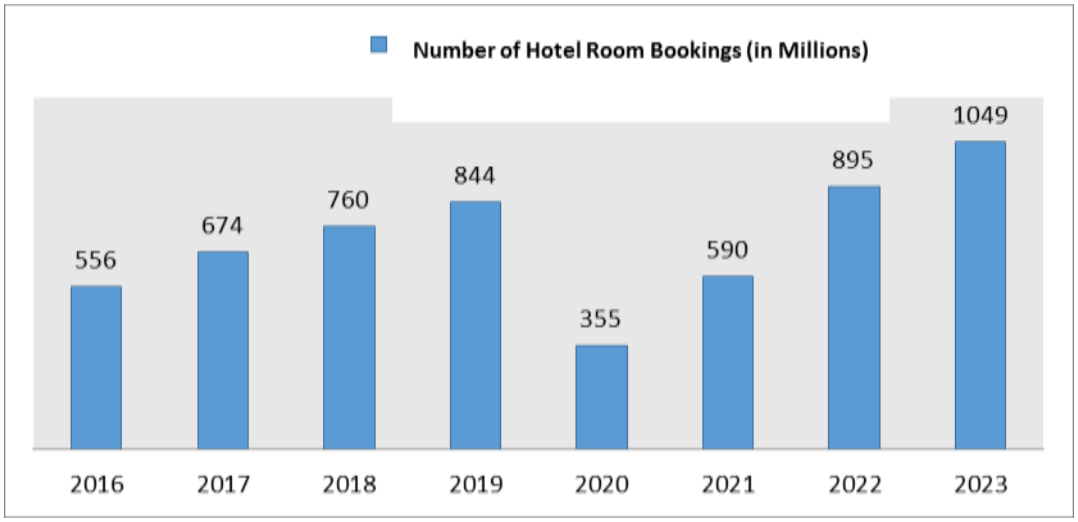
The figure above shows that Booking.com has consistently recorded the highest revenue compared to its competitors (Expedia, TripAdvisor, and Airbnb.com). Its

revenue experienced continuous growth throughout the period, except for 2020, when it declined due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global tourism sector. However, after overcoming the global health crisis, Booking.com resumed its upward trend, reaching over $17.5 billion in 2024. Projections indicate that its revenue will exceed $18 billion in 2025.

5.4 Number of Hotel Room Bookings via Booking.com

The following table presents the number of hotel room bookings made through Booking.com, measured in millions of bookings.

Figure (03): Number of Hotel Room Bookings for Booking.com during the Period 2016-2023



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on (Statista 2025).

From the data above, we note that the number of nights booked has continued to grow from 2016 to 2019, marking a sharp decline in 2020 by an estimated 58%. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, after the beginning of the global health crisis, we have witnessed a marked development of the number of nights booked at an estimated growth rate of 66% in 2021, compared to 2020, and continued until 2022 by 52%, and 17% in 2023. That is, the number of nights booking has grown from 2016 to 2023 by an estimated 89%. This demonstrates the importance of booking in online booking and the increasing importance of this over the years.

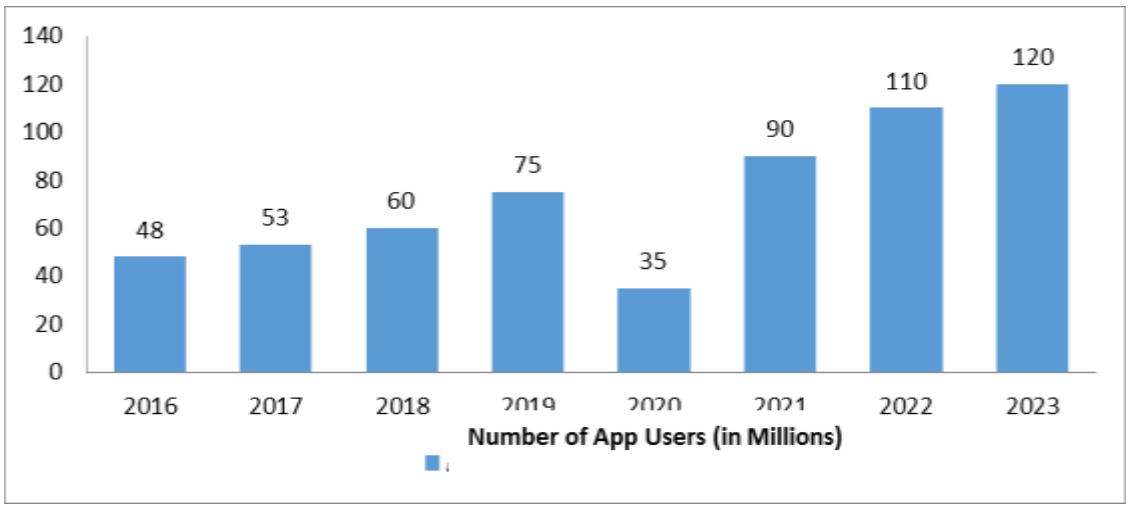
Booking.com is the most widely used booking application in the world. By analyzing statistics on the number of hotel rooms reserved through it during the period 2016–2023, we observe a continuous increase: from 556 million rooms in 2016 to 1,049 million rooms in 2023. This demonstrates the efficiency and reliability of the application, which has encouraged more tourists to use it for reservations. Moreover, most hotel establishments across different countries are engaged with the platform and offer attractive promotional deals for electronic booking through the app—often better

than booking upon arrival, such as discounted prices. This has further increased tourists' preference for using the application over traditional on-site booking.

5.5 Number of Users on Booking.com

A large number of people worldwide use Booking.com's website, as illustrated in the following table.

Figure (03): Number of Booking.com Users on the Mobile App during the Period 2016-2023



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on (Statista 2025).

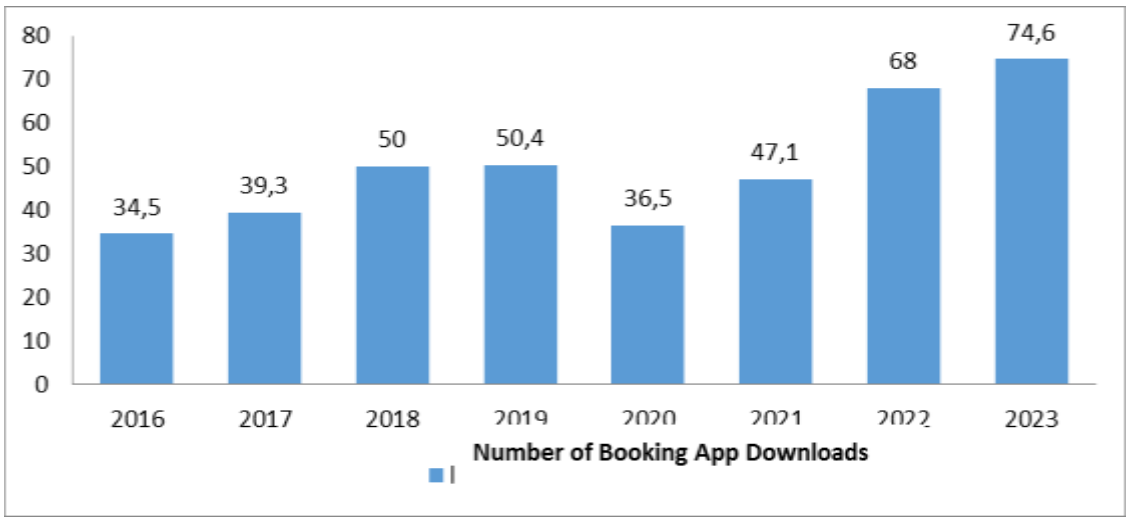
From the data above, the number of booking users has continued to evolve since 2016 with 48 million users to 120 million users in 2023, an increase of 150% during this period. However, in 2020, the number of users fell significantly, only 35 million, due to the impact of the global health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we have witnessed a continuous development since the beginning of the improvement of the health situation, with 90 million users in 2021. This growing number of booking users shows its importance in hotel booking to meet the requirements of customers.

On the other hand, we notice that the significant increase in Booking.com users in recent years is due to the growing use of technological platforms, the ease of downloading applications, their free availability, and the higher level of security they provide. Additionally, the expansion and availability of electronic payment methods have encouraged tourists to seek convenience, make advance reservations, and plan their trips through smartphone applications before traveling. Booking.com offers them this convenience, flexibility, and security.

5.6 Number of Downloads of Booking.com's Booking Apps

As previously mentioned, Booking.com has a large user base worldwide. This has led to a significant increase in the number of downloads of its mobile app, as illustrated in the following figure.

Figure (04): Number of Downloads of Booking.com's Hotel Booking App on Mobile Phones during the Period 2016-2023



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on (Statista 2025).

The table above shows that the number of Booking.com app downloads on mobile phones increased from 34.5 million in 2016 to 74.6 million in 2023, representing a 116% growth over this period. However, there was a noticeable decline in 2020, when downloads dropped to 36.5 million, primarily due to the decrease in tourism caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Following this decline, the platform experienced a recovery in both user numbers and app downloads, reaching 47.1 million in 2021 and continuing to grow until it reached 74.6 million in 2023.

This trend reflects the increasing awareness of the app's importance in facilitating hotel bookings worldwide.

Conclusion

Online booking is an optimal strategy and a modern trend adopted by travel and tourism institutions worldwide to promote their services and facilitate hotel reservations. Digital platforms and applications play a crucial role in simplifying the booking process for both customers and management. Booking.com is one of the leading global platforms that provides electronic booking services for various tourist destinations. With just a few clicks, users can select a country and region, explore tourist spots, compare prices, and make reservations—making the process seamless and convenient for travelers planning their vacations.

❖ Findings

The main findings can be summarized as follows:

- Digital platforms and applications have become essential due to the vast amount of information available on the internet. They simplify the process of finding and booking travel and tourism services.

- Modern technology, particularly digitalization through mobile applications, has significantly enhanced the tourism sector by facilitating communication between key industry players.
- Digital applications streamline the presentation of tourism services, reducing costs, saving time, and adding value to tourism products.
- Online booking platforms increase competition among tourism companies, boosting their sales and revenues, ultimately contributing to the overall growth of the tourism industry.
- The Booking.com application is an online website and a mobile application that allows customers to book various trips and hotel rooms.
- The Booking.com website is available in more than 43 languages and offers 28 million accommodation options worldwide, including over 6.6 million homes and apartments. It operates in 70 countries and represented by 198 offices.
- There are positive impacts of Booking.com's use of websites and applications for hotel booking, tourism, and travel across different countries worldwide. This is evident from the results and figures presented earlier, as well as the company's strong position among its competitors in the same field.

❖ Recommendations

The study also concluded with a set of recommendations, the most important of which are:

- Tourism authorities must provide the necessary modern technological requirements to keep up with developments that make tourism applications a key option for improving tourism services and accessing international markets.
- Websites and online applications should encourage their customers to book electronically to reduce costs. At the same time, they must be honest in the images they use to promote their services.
- Website and application owners should learn from the experience of Booking.com in hotel booking for tourist destinations and embrace globalization by offering services in multiple languages and adopting a digital expansion strategy.

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