

Learning outcomes

- By the end of this session, you should be able to:
 - Define eCommerce and its relevance to hospitality.
 - Explain the evolution of hospitality eCommerce.
 - Identify key players and platforms in hospitality eCommerce.
 - Map the digital booking journey of a customer.

What is eCommerce?

- Buying and selling of goods and services using digital platforms.
- In hospitality → applies to bookings, reservations, payments, and service delivery.
- Not just about transactions → includes customer experience & marketing.

Why is eCommerce important in hospitality

- 24/7 acess for customers.
- Expands market reach globaly.
- Increases eficiency (online reservations, digital payments).
- Enables personalization and loyalty building.

Evolution of hospitality eCommerce

- Phase 1: Walk-ins, phone bookings, physical travel agents
- **Phase 2:** Hotel websites with booking engines.
- Phase 3: OTAs (Expedia, Booking.com, Agoda).
- **Phase 4:** Meta-search & apps (Google Travel, TripAdvisor).
- Phase 5: Sharing economy & platforms (Airbnb, Couchsurfing).

Key players in hospitality eCommerce

- Hotels & restaurants (direct websites, apps).
- OTAs (Online Travel Agencies) → Booking.com, Expedia.
- **Meta-search engines** → Trivago, Kayak, Google Travel.
- **Aggregators & delivery apps** → Uber Eats, Jumia Food.
- Sharing economy platforms → Airbnb, Vrbo.

Guest digital booking journey

- Awareness sees ad, searches online.
- Consideration compares prices & reviews.
- **Booking** reserves room/table online.
- **Experience** uses digital tools during stay.
- **Post-stay** leaves reviews, receives loyalty offers.

Case example – Jumia Travel (Africa)

- Offered hotel bookings online across Africa.
- Challenges: low digital literacy, trust, payment issues.
- Lessons: local adaptation matters in hospitality eCommerce.

Class activity (15 mins)

- Task:
- In groups of 3–4, map out the **digital booking journey** for a guest reserving a hotel in your city.
- Identify at least **3 digital touchpoints** (ads, OTA, hotel site, reviews, payments, apps).
- Present briefly to the class.
- CHALLENGE: What would a digital booking journey look like for a 'lodge' in Katazamiti?

Hospitality eCommerce models and platforms

Learning Objectives

- Understand key eCommerce models in hospitality
- Compare advantages and limitations of each model
- Explore major platforms (OTAs, direct booking, hybrid)
- Evaluate how platforms shape customer experience and business strategy

Why eCommerce models matter in hospitality

- High competition → choice of model impacts visibility
- Influences customer acquisition costs
- Affects brand control and long-term loyalty

Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) model

- Customer books directly on business website/app
- Pros: Lower costs, more control, stronger loyalty
- Cons: Requires strong marketing, tech investment

Online Travel Agencies (OTAs)

- Examples: Booking.com, Expedia, Agoda, Airbnb
- Pros: Large reach, strong trust, easy setup
- Cons: High commission, less control, reliance on platforms

Meta-search platforms

- Examples: Google Travel, TripAdvisor, Trivago
- Aggregates options, redirects to booking sites
- Key feature: price transparency

Hybrid models

- Combination of direct booking + OTAs + meta-search
- Balances reach and control
- Widely used in mid-to-large hospitality businesses

Restaurant eCommerce models

- Table reservations (OpenTable, Quandoo)
- Food delivery & pickup (Uber Eats, Deliveroo)
- Own apps vs. aggregator apps

Platform economics

- OTAs as intermediaries commission structure
- Importance of visibility ranking
- Dynamic pricing and algorithm-driven competition

Choosing the right model

- Business size & resources
- Target market (local vs. international)
- Customer preferences (mobile-first, trust in OTAs)



Learning outcomes

- Understand the concept of customer experience (CX) in eCommerce.
- Explore the customer journey in hospitality.
- Learn strategies for digital service delivery and personalization.
- Identify tools for measuring guest satisfaction online.
- Discuss best practices for handling service recovery digitally.

Why customer experience matters

- Key points:
- CX is a differentiator in competitive hospitality markets.
- Digital channels amplify both positive and negative experiences.
- A seamless online-to-offline transition is crucial.

The digital customer journey in hospitality

Stages:

- **Awareness** discovering hotels/restaurants online.
- Consideration comparing options, reading reviews.
- Booking/Transaction online reservations, payment.
- Pre-Arrival Communication reminders, upselling.
- **Experience/Stay** actual service delivery.
- Post-Stay Engagement reviews, loyalty programs.

Key dimensions of hospitality CX

- Convenience & accessibility
- Personalization
- Speed & responsiveness
- Trust & security
- Emotional connection

Digital touchpoints

Examples:

- Hotel/restaurant websites
- Booking engines (Booking.com, Expedia)
- Mobile apps
- Social media pages
- Chatbots & virtual assistants
- Email confirmations & reminders

Personalization in hospitality eCommerce

Techniques:

- Dynamic pricing
- Personalized recommendations (rooms, dining, packages)
- Customized emails/text reminders
- Loyalty programs tailored to guest preferences

Service quality in digital environments

- **Speed**: Fast response to inquiries.
- Accuracy: Correct booking details.
- Empathy: Human touch even in digital spaces.
- Consistency: Across online and offline channels.

Managing online reviews

- Reviews = modern word-of-mouth.
- Platforms: TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, Booking.com.
- Responding promptly and professionally boosts reputation.

Service recovery in eCommerce

Best Practices:

- Acknowledge complaint quickly.
- Provide sincere apology.
- Offer a tangible solution (refund, voucher).
- Follow up to confirm satisfaction.

Emerging trends in hospitality CX

- ChatGPT-powered concierge services
- Virtual reality tours before booking
- Contactless check-in/check-out
- Real-time guest feedback apps

Group activity

Task:

- In groups of 4–5, design a *digital service recovery plan* for a restaurant that received a bad review for delayed delivery.
- Present in 5 minutes.