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Exploring the Role of Accommodation Contracting in Travel Agent Service Delivery

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the accommodation contracting process in supporting travel agent services, with a case study at EXO Travel Indonesia. The research identifies key issues such as delays in contract finalization, mismatches between contract prices and reservation system entries, and limited internal coordination, all of which can impact service quality and operational efficiency. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation over a six-month period involving 25 respondents from internal teams and hotel partners. The data were analyzed through processes of data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing with ongoing verification. Findings reveal that while the contracting process is generally effective, it still faces administrative and communication challenges. Nevertheless, the presence of clear, detailed, and flexible contracts contributes positively to service delivery by enhancing client satisfaction and strengthening relationships with accommodation partners. The study also finds that service effectiveness is significantly supported by the clarity of contractual information and the proactive role of the contracting team in ensuring smooth cross-department coordination. These insights emphasize the importance of a streamlined and collaborative contracting process in delivering efficient and high-quality services within the travel industry.

Keywords: effectiveness, contract process, accommodation, travel agent

A. Introduction

The tourism industry represents one of the fastest-growing economic sectors worldwide and constitutes a vital contributor to national economies, including Indonesia. Beyond its role as a major source of foreign exchange, tourism fosters employment creation and stimulates the expansion of related industries such as transportation, food and beverages, and hospitality. Indonesia, endowed with rich cultural heritage, diverse natural landscapes, and a wide range of tourist attractions, possesses significant potential to advance and consolidate its tourism sector further. In line with the global increase in travel demand, the need for professional and efficient tourism services has intensified. Within this context, travel agents serve a pivotal function as intermediaries between travelers and service providers, including hotels, transportation companies, tour guides, and local attractions. They design tailored travel experiences and guarantee the provision of reliable, high-quality services. Central to this role is the accommodation contracting process, through which formal agreements are established with lodging providers concerning pricing, room allotments, payment arrangements, and service terms. For business-to-business travel agencies such as EXO Travel Indonesia, effective contracting is indispensable to ensuring service quality, competitiveness, and sustainability. Prior scholarship underscores that the success of contracting is contingent on negotiation efficiency, the clarity of agreed terms, pricing flexibility, and responsiveness to market dynamics (Philemon et al., 2018; Solekah et al., 2020).

Despite its strategic importance, accommodation contracting in the tourism industry continues to encounter challenges that compromise operational performance. The dynamic nature of tourism necessitates continuous adaptation, particularly in relation to contract management with accommodation providers. Growth in tourist arrivals, for instance, exerts additional pressure on travel agents to implement contracting strategies that are both efficient and responsive, thereby minimizing delays, mismatches, or financial risks.

According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), international arrivals to Bali Province in July 2024 reached 1,251,330 visits, reflecting a 20.11% increase compared to June 2024. This sharp growth highlights the expanding scale of tourism activity and the imperative of strengthening contract management strategies. Within EXO Travel Indonesia, however, several persistent issues have been identified, including delays in negotiation and contract finalization, price discrepancies, miscommunication between departments, complications in annual contract renewals, and external disruptions such as regulatory adjustments and seasonal price fluctuations (Guo et al., 2020; Sugiarto & Nuruddin, 2024). These concerns indicate a gap between the increasing demands of the tourism market and the effectiveness of current contracting practices, thereby warranting further investigation.

The present study is designed to examine the effectiveness of the accommodation contracting process employed by EXO Travel Indonesia and

to evaluate both internal and external factors that shape the company's operational efficiency. The scope of this research encompasses the stages of price negotiation, formulation of contractual terms, finalization of agreements, and interdepartmental communication, in addition to the influence of broader market and regulatory conditions. Furthermore, this study aims to identify best practices and strategies for improvement that enhance service quality, mitigate risks, and consolidate long-term relationships with accommodation providers.

The significance of this study lies in its theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it extends prior literature linking contract management effectiveness with service quality, operational efficiency, and sustainable partnerships in the tourism sector (Guo et al., 2020; Wardana, 2023). Practically, the findings are expected to provide actionable recommendations for EXO Travel Indonesia, including the integration of technology and standardization of procedures to accelerate negotiations and streamline contract management. The implications extend beyond the case company, offering insights relevant to other B2B travel agencies operating in highly competitive environments. In particular, the study reinforces the notion that effective contract management is critical for sustaining competitiveness and ensuring customer satisfaction (Pramita, 2024).

B. Literature Review

Effectiveness Theory

Effectiveness refers to the extent to which organizational goals are achieved through the optimal use of resources. Yusendra (2017) defines organizational effectiveness as the degree of success in meeting objectives, including service quality, customer satisfaction, and operational targets. In tourism, effectiveness is often linked to destination management, where efficient planning improves attractiveness and visitor satisfaction. Scholars argue that effectiveness can be measured by the relationship between outputs and intended objectives (Pekei, 2020; Spohn, 2018). In the tourism industry, factors influencing contract effectiveness include legal compliance (Perwira et al., 2019), transparent rate negotiations (Pramita, 2024), the influence of OTAs on pricing (Ginting et al., 2022), contract models under competition (Ye et al., 2022b), and routine evaluation of procedures.

While these studies highlight determinants of contract effectiveness, gaps remain in exploring how traditional B2B travel agencies adapt to digitalization and market volatility. This study addresses these gaps by analyzing the effectiveness of accommodation contracting within EXO Travel Indonesia's operational context. Children's playground facilities in city parks are important in creating a friendly and fun environment for children. Play playgrounds can support children's physical, social and emotional development by providing safe and engaging areas. A good playground offers a variety of play equipment and creates a fun atmosphere for families to interact. The various facilities in children's playgrounds can be designed with safety, creativity and education in mind (Tuzzahra et al., 2023).

Contract Management in Tourism

Contract management involves planning, negotiation, implementation, and evaluation to ensure compliance with agreed terms (Turner, 2013). In tourism, it regulates relationships between travel agents and providers such as hotels and transportation companies. Studies show that structured contracts enhance cooperation and service quality (Ye et al., 2022a), while standardized rates strengthen competitiveness and customer satisfaction (Abdullah & Prihastuti, 2022). However, most research remains descriptive and overlooks challenges such as delays, miscommunication, and digital transformation. This study contributes by examining how contract management practices can be optimized for efficiency and responsiveness in a B2B agency setting.

Tourism Supply Chain Management (TSCM)

TSCM refers to the coordination of stakeholders to deliver tourism services efficiently. Zhao and Hou (2022) highlight its role in cost reduction and tourist satisfaction, while Siburian et al. (2022) confirm its positive impact on business performance. Key components include providers, distributors, consumers, and supporting resources (Huang, 2018). Increasingly, sustainable practices are emphasized as essential for long-term competitiveness (Babu et al., 2018; Nasihin & Retnosary, 2023). Although TSCM studies recognize efficiency and sustainability benefits, little research explores its application in B2B travel agency operations. This study seeks to fill that gap by linking contracting practices with broader supply chain performance.

C. Research Methods

The research employed a qualitative design to analyze the effectiveness of the accommodation contracting process in supporting travel agent services. The study was conducted at PT. EXO Travel Indonesia, located at Jl. Bypass Ngurah Rai No.157, Sanur, Bali, over a six-month period from August 2024 to March 2025. A qualitative approach was chosen to allow for an in-depth exploration of stakeholder perspectives and organizational practices related to contract management.

The population of this study consisted of individuals directly involved in the accommodation contracting process at EXO Travel Indonesia, both from internal departments and external accommodation partners. A purposive sampling technique was applied to ensure that the selected participants were knowledgeable and actively engaged in the contracting process. The sample included 25 informants, comprising managers, travel consultants, reservation staff, and sales representatives from partner hotels.

Primary data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and direct observation of contracting workflows, while secondary data were obtained from company documents, accommodation contracts, internal policies, and relevant literature. The combination of primary and secondary sources allowed for triangulation, ensuring the reliability and depth of the findings.

The main variables examined in this research were related to the effectiveness of the accommodation contracting process. Indicators included time efficiency, clarity of information, pricing flexibility, interdepartmental coordination, and partner satisfaction. These indicators formed the basis of the interview guide and served as benchmarks for evaluating contract management practices within the company.

The research procedure involved several stages: preparation of interview guidelines, selection of participants, and data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format to balance flexibility and focus, while observations provided additional insights into negotiation stages, contract finalization, and interdepartmental coordination. Documentation supported the analysis by providing written evidence of policies and contracts.

Data were analyzed using qualitative methods, combining information from interviews, observations, and documents. The analysis process involved data reduction, categorization according to the identified indicators, and interpretation to identify recurring patterns and challenges in the contracting process. This approach enabled the researcher to generate comprehensive insights into the effectiveness of EXO Travel Indonesia's accommodation contracting practices.

D. Result

The study collected qualitative data through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document review involving 25 informants from EXO Travel Indonesia's internal departments and hotel partners. Analysis focused on five key aspects of the accommodation contract process: process flow, time efficiency, clarity and transparency, price flexibility, and service effectiveness. The findings show that EXO Travel Indonesia applies a structured five- stage contract process partner identification, price and terms negotiation, contract drafting and finalization, internal distribution of contract information, and annual review. In 2024, a total of 627 accommodation contracts were signed.

Table 1. Distribution of Accommodation Contracts by Region (2024)

Region	Percentage (%)	Number of Contracts
Bali	87.59%	549
Lombok	6.86%	43
Yogyakarta	3.35%	21
Labuan Bajo	2.23%	14
Other Regions	10.53%	66

Time efficiency remains a challenge, with delays primarily due to slow responses from hotels, prolonged document revisions, and late submission of updated contracts. Internal records indicate 32 cases of delayed contract finalization, 17 price discrepancies with the reservation system, and 26 cases of interdepartmental coordination issues. The average completion time for a contract ranges from two to four weeks, depending on document readiness and

partner responsiveness. Clarity and transparency are maintained by ensuring all contract details, such as room rates, facilities, seasonal pricing, cancellation policies, and additional terms, are explicitly documented. This approach reduces operational misunderstandings and supports efficient cross-departmental coordination.

Price flexibility is embedded in many contracts, allowing adjustments for specific market segments, group bookings, or long-stay clients. While this flexibility improves competitiveness and client satisfaction, it requires clear written documentation to avoid operational confusion. Service effectiveness is enhanced when contracts are accurate and comprehensive. Seven out of ten internal staff reported that well-structured contracts significantly improved their workflow, particularly in client communications, booking processes, and handling special requests. The selection of reliable and consistent hotel partners further contributes to higher service quality and client satisfaction. Overall, the contract process at EXO Travel Indonesia is effective in supporting operations and service delivery, although external delays and coordination challenges remain areas for improvement.

Accommodation Contracting Process

EXO Travel Indonesia applies a contractual partnership system with accommodation partners to provide lodging services for B2B clients. The contracts are renewed annually and managed by the Contracting Department. The process generally consists of five main stages:

Table 2. Stages of the Accommodation Contracting Process

Process Stage	Description
Accommodation Partner Identification	Selection of hotels based on location, service quality, and market demand.
Price and Terms Negotiation	Discussions regarding room rates, meal plans, cancellation policies, etc.
Contract Drafting and Finalization	Writing, legal review, and signing of the contract.
Internal Information Distribution	Sharing contract details with reservation, product, sales, and database teams for system input.
Annual Evaluation and Renewal	Reviewing hotel performance and renegotiating contract terms.

According to DK, Contracting Manager:

> *"The accommodation contracting process also helps us in selecting hotels. Previously, there were more than 1000 hotels listed in our system. Through the contract process, we managed to reduce it to 600 hotels. This allows us to focus production on selected hotels. If we have a large volume in those hotels, it makes future negotiations and collaborations easier."*

This statement emphasizes that the contract process is not merely administrative but also serves as a strategy for hotel selection to improve production efficiency and long-term cooperation. Internal parties involved include the contracting, sales, reservation, and product teams, while external parties consist of hotel and resort partners. EXO Travel has implemented a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to ensure consistency and proper documentation throughout the process.

Table 3. Number of Accommodation Contracts by Region in 2024

Region	Number of Contracs	Percentage (%)
Bali	549	87,59%
Yogyakarta	21	3,35%
Lombok	43	6,86%
Labuan Bajo	14	2,23%
Lainnya	66	10,53%
Total	627	100%

Time Efficiency

Time efficiency in the contract process is a critical performance indicator, especially for travel agents that rely on promptness and precision in delivering service products. A timely process enables better interdepartmental coordination, faster quotations, and efficient decision-making. However, in practice, achieving this efficiency is often challenging due to various obstacles such as slow responses from hotels and delays in contract document revisions. These delays impact internal workflows and hinder information delivery to business partners.

Type of Obstacle	Frequency (2024)	Main Impact
Delayed contract finalization	32 cases	Delay in price distribution to clients
Discrepancies in pricing vs. reservation system	17 cases	Complaints from partners and re-bookings
Lack of coordination between divisions	26 cases	Misinformation to clients
Delays in receiving updated contracts	21 cases	Unavailable new rates on time
External factors (price fluctuations, regulation changes)	15 cases	Sudden contract adjustments

Source: Internal documentation and year-end interviews (2024)

NY, Product Manager, noted:

> *"Sometimes contract revisions take a long time because hotels respond slowly. If we had a document digitization system, it might save time."*

GP, Reservation & Operation Manager, added:

"If contracts are updated late, the reservation process is hindered. We need time to input them into the system, so delays affect our clients too."

WT, Cluster Sales Manager of Dijiwa Sanctuaries, stated:

"We also have many partners. That's why travel agents like EXO need to follow up regularly so we can prioritize their documents."

Delays in the contract process affect data entry, pricing distribution, and ultimately the speed of service delivery to clients. Based on interviews, the average contract completion time is between two to four weeks.

"If all documents are complete and hotel responses are fast, the process can be finished

within 2–4 weeks." (DK, Contracting Manager, 2025)

The negotiation stage is the most time-consuming due to differing expectations on pricing and terms. The contracting team addresses this through active follow-ups and the use of pre-prepared templates.

"We use an internal system for document storage and management, so access is fast and secure." (DK, Contracting Manager, 2025)

With digital systems and improved human resource capacity, the process is now more efficient than in previous years.

Clarity and Transparency

Clarity and transparency in contract content are crucial for smooth cooperation between EXO Travel and accommodation partners, as well as effective coordination across internal divisions. Vague or incomplete contract language can lead to misunderstandings and operational setbacks. EXO Travel ensures that all key elements, room rates, facilities, contract duration, and specific terms are clearly detailed.

DK, Contracting Manager, said:

"We always request a detailed price breakdown, including for high seasons, extra beds, or meal plans. Everything is included in the contract."

TW, Customer Care Manager, shared:

"The accommodation contracting process plays a crucial role. It ensures we work with selected and qualified hotels, leading to high guest satisfaction. If issues arise, the contracting team can handle them."

MT, Luxe Travel Consultant, added:

"Our clients are very detail-oriented. If information isn't clearly written in the contract, we must reconfirm, which wastes time."

From the hotel side, CA, DOS Jimbaran Bay Beach, explained:

"*We are open about prices and benefits as long as communication is clear from the start.*

Problems usually arise when that clarity is lacking."

Formal communication with accommodation partners is done via email or meetings (in-person or online). Any discrepancies between contract and hotel rates are usually resolved quickly, as all information is well-documented.

Price Flexibility

Price flexibility is a key strength in EXO Travel's accommodation contracts. Contract rates differ from public rates, allowing tailored quotations for long stays, family rooms, or specific market demands. This is particularly useful for travel consultants working with foreign agencies and last-minute requests.

> *"We need flexibility for the French market—for example, discounts for long stays or family rooms. Contracts must be adaptable."* (French Inbound Director, EXO Travel)
>
> *"We understand the importance of flexibility, but clarity is also key. That's why negotiations must be two-way."* (PM, Sales Manager, Jeeva)
>
> *"Flexible contract rates help us create custom itineraries, especially for last-minute international requests."* (EP, French Inbound Manager)
>
> *"When pricing is flexible, we can match client budgets without repeatedly consulting the contracting team or hotels."* (AI, Spanish Travel Consultant)
>
> *"Some hotels offer additional discounts for groups or long stays. If not stated in the contract, we need to clarify again. It's better if flexibility is mentioned upfront."* (YA, Reservation Staff)

A good contract balances flexibility with clear documentation to avoid operational confusion. This flexibility helps sales and reservation teams develop competitive offers while maintaining workflow efficiency.

> *"For special price requests, we try to renegotiate with the hotel, especially for group bookings, often with support from the contracting team."* (Travel Consultant, 2025)

Service Effectiveness

An effective accommodation contracting process supports overall travel agent service quality, from quotation and booking stages to client services. Contracts serve as the primary reference for pricing, facilities, and policies. Seven out of ten EXO Travel staff, spanning reservation, sales, product, and customer care, stated that accurate and complete contracts ease their workflow. They help answer client queries, handle bookings, and avoid miscommunication with hotels.

> *"If contract data is complete, our work becomes easier. We can respond to clients quickly and accurately."* (DN, English Travel Consultant)
>
> *"French clients are very detail-oriented. They ask about breakfast times, balconies, everything must be clear from the beginning."* (VV, French Travel Consultant)
>
> *"We feel more respected when travel agents fully understand the contract. It shows they are serious about long-term partnerships."* (Sales Manager, Jiwa Jawa)

The contracting team also provides vital support in resolving accommodation-related issues:

> *"The contracting team helps a lot. Their support makes it easier for us to resolve any issues involving hotel contracts and to sell confidently to clients."* (Travel Consultant, 2025)

From a customer care perspective, contract quality directly impacts accommodation selection and guest satisfaction:

> *"The contracting process ensures careful hotel selection, which leads to more satisfied guests. If any complaints arise, the contracting team handles them effectively."* (Customer Care Manager, 2025)

This confirms that a well-executed accommodation contract process significantly enhances travel agent service quality and satisfaction across all stakeholders.This section should explore the significance of the results of the study. A combined Findings and Discussion section is also appropriate. This section allows you to offer your interpretation and explain the meaning of your results. Emphasize any theoretical or practical consequences of the results. The Discussion section should be a reasoned and justifiable commentary on the importance of your findings. This section states why the problem is important; what larger issues and what propositions are confirmed or disconfirmed by the extrapolation of these findings to such overarching issues.

F. Conclusion

The research findings demonstrate that the accommodation contracting process at EXO Travel Indonesia is systematically organized into five stages: partner identification, price and terms negotiation, contract drafting and finalization, internal distribution of information, and annual evaluation. This structured approach functions not only as an administrative mechanism but also as a strategic process that supports operational efficiency and long-term partnerships. The results show that clarity of information, pricing flexibility, and well-documented contracts contribute significantly to service delivery, client satisfaction, and the ability of sales and reservations teams to provide competitive travel products. Furthermore, selective partnerships with reliable hotels and the adoption of digital systems enhance the accuracy of information and responsiveness to market needs.

Despite these strengths, the study identifies several limitations. Time efficiency remains a persistent challenge, particularly when hotels delay in responding to negotiations or in submitting updated contract documents. Such delays can disrupt internal coordination across departments, affecting service readiness and product availability. Another limitation lies in the scope of the study, which focused exclusively on EXO Travel Indonesia, thus limiting the generalizability of findings to other travel agencies or regions. Additionally, the study was conducted within a six-month period, which may not fully capture long-term variations in contracting practices influenced by seasonality or external shocks such as regulatory changes.

In light of these limitations, further research is recommended in several areas. First, comparative studies across multiple travel agencies and destinations would provide broader insights into the effectiveness of contracting practices within the tourism sector. Second, future studies could adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data, to measure the impact of contract effectiveness on financial performance and customer satisfaction. Third, research on the

role of technology in automating contract processes and fostering real-time coordination with partners could expand practical solutions for efficiency improvements.

This study contributes to both academic knowledge and practical applications in tourism management. Theoretically, it enriches the literature on contract effectiveness by providing an in-depth case study of a B2B travel agency, linking organizational processes with service quality outcomes. Practically, it offers recommendations for improving contract management, such as standardizing procedures, leveraging digital systems, and strengthening interdepartmental coordination. These contributions underscore the critical role of effective accommodation contracting in sustaining competitiveness, ensuring service quality, and supporting long-term growth in the tourism industry.

G. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that no financial interests or non-financial commitments concerning EXO Travel Indonesia or its accommodation partners constitute a competing interest in this study.

H. Declaration of AI Use

Google Gemini provided spelling and grammar suggestions during the language review of this manuscript. The authors checked each proposed correction against the original text to preserve the intended meaning, technical terminology, and accurate description of the accommodation contracting process. They approved the final revisions and remain fully accountable for the manuscript's accuracy, originality, references, and integrity.

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