E-Marketing and Guests' Patronage of Hotelsin Port Harcourt

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of E-Marketing and Guest Patronage in Hotels in Port Harcourt. In the course of the study, four (4) hypotheses were formulated, all in null form. These hypotheses were tested at 5% level of significance. The quasi-experimental research design was adopted. Our target population is made up of the number of Guests who patronize our selected Hotels in Port Harcourt. One Hundred and thirty two (132) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents and, one hundred and four (104) copies were duly completed and returned. The returned copies of the questionnaire were analyzed statistically using simple percentage, and frequency tables. The data analysis technique used was Spearman's Rank Correlation. The four hypotheses were all tested using the SPSS (statistical package for social sciences). The findings revealed that there is significant relationship between e-marketing and guest patronage. Based on the findings, we recommend that hotels should have secured and trusted website that can't leak customers' personal information. The researchers suggest that more variables on E-Marketing Challenges and online Patronage should be used in subsequent studies.

KEY WORDS: E-marketing, Guests' Patronage, Hotels, Online Patronage and E-Marketing Challenges

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Introduction

Guest satisfaction is a key success factor of any Hospitality organization. The satisfaction of a guest is a function of the relationship that exists between the guest and organization. Improved ability to target customers with integrated channels could improve sales effectively. Also, individualized marketing messages, with customized products will help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Hotels.Guest's requirements for quality products and service in the Hospitality industry have become increasingly evident to professionals [54]. Guest relationships and service quality are strategic assets of an organization. Customer satisfaction is the starting point to define business objectives. Long-term and reciprocally advantageous relationships between customers and Hotel are becoming progressively important because of the high positive correlation between guests' overall satisfaction level and the probability of their return to the same Hotel [54].

Electronic Marketing E-Marketing

E-Marketing could be viewed as a modern business practice involving marketing of goods, services, information and ideas via the Internet and other electronic means. According to [45] E-marketing has achieved marketing objectives through digital technologies. [45], has stressed that when E-marketing is properly utilized, it would provide detailed product information which could improved services and attract more patronage to Hotels. Furthermore, e-marketing

brings about improvement in the market share of Hotels. This could be possible because e-marketing uses all facets of internet advertising to generate response from the prospective and existing customers.

Patronage

Patronage is a choice behavior that represents an individual's preference for a particular brand of product of an organization over another. The decision to patronize a product or services of an organization usually starts with a set of characteristics or attributes that consumers consider important [34]. Consumers often use attributes such a quality of product and price of product to determine which product could cater to their needs. [21], is of the view that patronage behavior involves decision process which could be related to where consumers buy, how they buy, and what they purchase. [39], has said that patronage measures the degree to which a customer makes his/her purchases either from a particular marketer or at a particular outlet in relation to competitors.

Development Of Hotels

The history of Hotels could be traced to the development of the railway system in Britain [37]. It was stated that when the first roads were built in Britain, merchants and other wealthy travelers journeyed to various parts of the country. At some points on their journeys shelter, food and drink were to be found at road side Taverns. Later on Missionaries provided Hospitality to raise money for the church. Large minor houses scattered throughout the country provided services to travelers [43].

When the minor houses began to be taxed, the Lords of the minors began converting their homes into Inns [17]. An Inn could provide Rest but a Tavern could provide only food and drink gradually the Inns and Taverns improved in Quality and Standard. Laws existed then concerning accommodation premises as far back as 1550. From 1750 to 1825English Inns gained reputation of being the first in the world and reached theirpeak of development from 1780 to 1825.

According to [[17], Ellsworth Statler invented the first modern commercial Hotel in 1908. Many services and conveniences that were provided by Hotels today were first introduced in this Hotel to increase the guest comfort. The Hotel is said to contained many structural engineering designs; for this reason, Statler Hotel became the model for the modern Hotel construction for the next forty years, [17].

In the 1950s Motels came up. Intensive competition existed in the Hotel industry during 1970 to 1980 and Hotels were made available depending on the wants and needs of the consumer, such as luxury Hotels, Commercial Hotels, Resort Hotels and Motels [48]. The persistent competitions among the Hoteliers led to the increase in the number of amenities. Guest services such as automatic check out, free parking, airport transportation, twenty-four hour service, and multilingual staff were designed to bolster the Hotel's appeal, which would mean to enhance guests staying longer or coming back again for a repeat experience.

From the above it could be concluded that the Hotel industry provides services for people who are away from home regardless of whether it is for long or short periods of time. These services can vary according to the specific needs of both the person away from home and the organization operating those services [4].

Empirically [2] is of the view that homepage presentation is a major antecedent of guest patronage. The other antecedents; such as logical support, technological characteristics, information characteristics and product characteristics; are also predictive factors to satisfaction. [8], has stressed the factors which make commercial web pages popular. It was

stated that a high daily hit-rate is strongly influenced by the number of updates made to the website in the preceding three month period. The links to other websites were also discovered to attract visitors' traffic. Providing feedback section for customers would lead to higher sales. While significant research has been done on the subject matter in the developed nations, evidence from existing literature on this subject matter however suggests that there is a limited knowledge about the phenomenon in most developing countries especially Nigeria. This is particularly with the attitude Nigerians have toward online patronage. This study would highlight various ways of regaining the market shares lost by Hotel operators by itemizing the various strategies necessary for maintenance of their effectiveness over time.

Statement of the Problem

The failure of many Hotels to operate profitably as been blamed on increasingly rapid change in consumer preferences, poor service delivery, faster technological progress, growing competitive rivalry and their inability to formulate strategies within their organizations to generate market information, analyze, and respond accordingly. One observable pattern is that most hotels appear to record declining customer patronage after few years of operation. This is evident by the scanty number of guests and visitors.

Many experts believe that many hotels, especially the small-sized variants are not popular and up to standard because they lack some of the basic facilities needed by fun seekers. Such facilities include; executive rooms, conference rooms, night club bars, fully equipped fitness clubs, swimming pools, shopping villages, outside catering and grounds for outdoor activities. While facility deficits have been identified as factors affecting patronage, it appears that many hotels lack e-marketing channels needed for attracting and increasing guests' patronage and by extension increase revenue and profitability. Hotels have been accused of lacking strategies to seek, gather and store the right information, validate and share it throughout the entire organization for the creation of personalized, unique and guests' experience, hence their dismal performance.

However, this has not been verified empirically. It is in the light of the above that this study is undertaken to examine the importance of e-marketing and its influence on guest's patronage, bearing our empirical focus on selected hotels in Port Harcourt. This study sets to remedy the problems of low patronage of guests by highlighting the various strategies that hotels can implement so as to regain their market share.

Objectives

i) To ascertain the extent of relationship between search engine optimization and repeat visit in hotels.

ii) To ascertain the extent of relationship between engine optimization and repeat purchase in hotels.

iii) To ascertain the extent of relationship between content marketing and repeat visit in Hotels

iv) To ascertain the extent of relationship that exists between content marketing and repeat purchase in hotels.

Research Questions And Hypotheses

7.1: Research Questions:

i) Is there any relationship between search engine optimization and Repeat Visits in Hotels?

ii) What is the relationship between engine optimization and repeat purchase in Hotels?

iii) How does Content Marketing influence Repeat Visits in Hotels?

iv) Does Content Marketing influence Repeat Purchases in Hotels?

7.2**: Null Hypotheses Formulated**:

HO_1: There is no relationship between search engine optimization and repeat visit in Hotels in Port Harcourt.

Ho_2: There is no relationship between search engine optimization and repeat visits in Hotels in Port Harcourt

HO_3: There is no relationship between content marketing and repeat visit in Hotels in Port Harcourt.

HO_4: There is no relationship between content marketing and repeat purchase in Hotels in PortHarcourt.

8 Materials And Method

Descriptive research was carried out. The Quasi-experimental research design was adopted; most suitable for research in administrative sciences. Quasi-experimental research design was also utilized.

1. Method Of Data Collection And Instrument Design

The questionnaire was used in getting the primary data. The descriptive survey was done through the distribution of closed ended and open ended structured questionnaire.

2. Population of the Study

Our target population is made up of the number of customers who patronize the selected Hotels in Port Harcourt.The researchers selected a population of four (4) Hotels in Port Harcourt and sampled only the numbers of customers available in the selected Hotels. The distribution is as shown in Table 1 belo

Table 1: Sample Distribution of the Study

S/N	**Names of Hotels**	**No. of Customers**
	Emerald Hotel	43
	Landmark Hotel	30
	Le' Meridien Hotel	46
	Presidential Hotel	77
	Total	196

Source: Field work, 2017.

3. Sample Size

The simple random sampling technique was adopted in the study. This technique gives all respondents equal chance of being selected for the study. Therefore, the Taro Yamen Formula as stated below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where, n= sample size
N= population
e = level of significance (0.05)
1= constant

$$n = \frac{19_6}{1 + 196\ (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{19_6}{1 + 196\ (0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{19_6}{1 + 0.4_9}$$

$$n = \frac{19_6}{1.4_9} \quad n = 132$$

4**Validity and Reliability**

12.1: **Validity**

Validity is the extent to which data collected are relevant to be the specific objectives of the research. The validity of a questionnaire is its ability to generate responses that are needed in order to study the problem of the research. Validity is therefore the ability of the instrument to measure what it is intended to measure. The questionnaire is validated by the researchers for assessment and finally corrections were effected for final production.

12.2: **Reliability**

The reliability of the questionnaire in generating required data was determined using Cronbach's Alpha and used to test for consistency of the research instrument adopted for the study.

The reliability of the questionnaire was ascertained with the use of the test-retest reliability technique. The instruments were administered to 25 respondents not involved in the study. After two weeks the test was carried out again on the same respondents. The findings gave a correlation coefficient value of 0.76 which is generally accepted to be high according to the Cronbach Alfa test statistics.

4 **Data Analysis And Interpretation**

The Spearman Rank correlation coefficient was used. This statistical tool was considered appropriate for testing the hypotheses of the study since it was necessary to measure the degree of relationship that exists between two variable

The spearman ranking correlation formula is thus:

$$\text{Rho} = 1 - \frac{6\Sigma d^2}{N(N^2 - 1)}$$

Where Rho = rank of correlation coefficient

$\sum d$ = rank of X minus rank of Y

N = number of observation

Interpretation of the data discussed under the following sub-headings:

i) Questionnaire administration and response rate
ii) Univarate Analysis
iii) Bivarate Analysis

14.1 Questionnaire Administration And Response Rate

Table 2: Response Rates To Questionnaire Distributed

Table 2.1: Number of Retrieved Questionnaire

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	System	104	79

Table 2.2: Number Of Unreturned Questionnaire

	Frequency	Percent
Missing System	30	21.0

Table 3: Response rate of distributed questionnaires

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Distributed Questionnaire	132	100	100.0	100.0
	Dully Returned Questionnaire	104	79.0	79.0	79.0
	Incomplete/Unreturned Questionnaire	30	21.0	21.0	100.0
	Total	132	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

14.2: Univarate Analysis

14.2.1: Analysis of Research Questions And Hypotheses

Table 4: Response on items of search engine optimization

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	STRONGLY AGREE	25	24.0	24.0	24.0
	AGREE	34	32.7	32.7	56.7
	NEUTRAL	28	26.9	26.6	83.3
	DISAGREE	11	10.6	10.6	93.9
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	6	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	100.0	

Source: survey data, 2017.

The above data shows that 25 (24.0%) strongly agreed, 34 (32.7%) agreed, 28 (26.9%) was neutral, 11 (10.6%) disagreed and 6 (5.8%) strongly disagreed.

Table 5: Response on items of content marketing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	44	42.3	42.3	42.3
	Agree	21	20.1	20.1	62.4
	Neutral	15	14.4	14.4	76.8
	Disagree	18	17.3	17.3	94.1
	Strongly Disagree	6	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey Data, 2017.

The above data shows that 44 (42.3%) strongly agreed, 21 (20.1%) agreed, 15 (14.4%) was neutral, 18 (17.3%) disagreed and 6 (5.8%) strongly disagreed.

Table 6: Responses on items of repeat visit

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	33	31.7	31.7	31.7
	Agree	34	32.7	32.7	64.4
	Neutral	20	19.2	19.2	83.6
	Disagree	3	2.9	2.9	86.5
	Strongly Disagree	14	13.5	13.5	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	100.0	

Source: survey data, 2017.

The above data shows that 33 (31.7%) strongly agreed, 34 (32.7%) agreed, 20 (19.2%) was neutral, 3 (2.9%) disagreed and 14 (13.5%) strongly disagreed.

Table 7: Responses on items of repeat purchase

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	STRONGLY AGREE	25	24.0	24.0	24.0
	AGREE	34	32.7	32.7	56.7
	NEUTRAL	28	26.9	26.6	83.3
	DISAGREE	11	10.6	10.6	93.9
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	6	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	100.0	

Source: survey data, 2017.

The above data shows that 25 (24.0%) strongly agreed, 34 (32.7%) agreed, 28 (26.9%) was neutral, 11 (10.6%) disagreed and 6 (5.8%) strongly disagreed.

14.3 **Bivarate Analysis**

To examine the relationship between the data collected and the hypotheses. Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Co-efficient (SPSS Version 21.0) was used to either accept or reject the null hypotheses formulated at (0.05) level of significance

14.3.1: **Test of Hypothesis One**

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between search engine optimization and repeat visit in hotels in Port Harcourt

.Correlations

			Search engine optimization	Repeat visits
Spearman's rho	Search engine optimization	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.784*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.042
		N	104	104
	Repeat visits	Correlation Coefficient	.784*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.042	.
		N	104	104

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

14.3.2: Test Of Hypothesis Two

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between search engine optimization and repeat purchase in hotels in Port Harcourt.

Correlations

			Search engine optimization	Repeat purchase
Spearman's rho	Search engine optimization	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.673*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.012
		N	104	104
	Repeat purchase	Correlation Coefficient	.673*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.
		N	104	104

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

14.3.3: Test Of Hypothesis Three

Ho_3: There is no significant relationship between content marketing and repeat visit in hotels in Port Harcourt.

Correlations

			Content marketing	Repeat visits
Spearman's rho	Content marketing	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.891*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.032
		N	104	104
	Repeat visits	Correlation Coefficient	.891*	1.000

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	.
	N	104	104

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

14.3.4: Testing Hypothesis Four

Ho_4: There is no significant relationship between content marketing and repeat purchase in hotels in Port Harcourt.

Correlations

			Content marketing	Repeat purchase
Spearman's rho	Content marketing	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.915
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.015
		N	104	104
	Repeat purchase	Correlation Coefficient	.915*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.
		N	104	104

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

15.0 Discussion of Findings

HYPOTHESES	RESULT	OUTCOME
HO_1: There is no relationship between search engine optimization and repeat visit in selected travel agencies in Port Harcourt.	Reject Null Hypothesis and accept alternate	+ve
HO_2: There is no relationship between search engine optimization and repeat purchase in selected travel agencies in Port Harcourt.	Reject Null Hypothesis and accept alternate	+ve
HO_3: There is no relationship between content marketing and repeat visit in selected travel agencies in Port Harcourt	Reject Null Hypothesis and accept alternate	+ve
HO_4: There is no relationship between content marketing and repeat purchase in selected travel agencies in Port Harcourt.	Reject Null Hypothesis and accept alternate	+ve

16:**Summary of Findings**

From the discussion of findings the respondents agreed to a large extent that the influence of the E-marketing on the Guest Patronage. The population of one hundred and ninety six purposively selected from four (4) hotels in Port Harcourt for this study and the outcome represents the entire Hotels both in RiversState, and beyond.

17: Conclusion

In the investigation of the relationship between E-marketing and Guest Patronage, all the four (4) Null Hypotheses formulated were rejected. This means that there is a relationship between E-marketing and Guest Patronage. The Spearman's Rank Correlation Co-efficient showed very high influence between E-marketing and Guest Patronage.

18: **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following were recommended:

i. Some customers are highly socially connected and rely on other peoples' opinions when making purchase decision tend. Therefore, Hotels using electronic marketing channels should provide online helps for customers; his will help create social connection.
ii. Hotels should create attractive and user friendly websites. This is because customers may be influenced by the image of the web site when they decide on which website they should buy from.
iii. Hotels should have secured and trusted website that would not leak customer's personal information. This is because customer's enthusiasm to patronize online services is affected by consumer's trust in giving personal information and security for payment through credit card transactions.

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