

DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES AND CUSTOMER PATRONAGE IN NIGERIA HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Aliyu A. Olokonla¹, Suleiman W. Onimisi² and Joel Ololade³

^{1,2} *Department of Marketing, Federal Polytechnic, Offa, Kwara State.*

³ *Graduate Researcher, University of Ibadan.*

Email: abdulrafi.h.aliyu@fedpoffaonline.edu.ng, (+234) 8066738307

Abstract

With the increasing reliance on digital platforms for information and reservations, there is a pressing need to evaluate how web engagement, online reviews, and digital campaigns influence customer perceptions and decision-making processes. This study investigates the impact of digital marketing strategies on customer patronage within the Nigeria hospitality industry, focusing on online reviews and ratings, digital campaigns. The study was anchored on two objectives, which are to assess the impact of online reviews and ratings in shaping service quality perceptions, determine the impact of digital campaigns on service accessibility. The research employed a quantitative methodology, utilizing a structured survey with a 5-point Likert scale to gather data from 319 respondents. Regression analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses with the aid of SPSS version 29 as the statistical software. The results indicate that, online reviews and ratings affect customer perceptions of service quality with a coefficient of 0.544 ($p < 0.001$) while digital campaigns improve accessibility with a coefficient of 0.827 ($p < 0.001$). The study concludes that robust digital marketing strategies are essential for improving brand visibility, managing customer perceptions, and driving higher booking rates in the hospitality sector. Based on the findings, recommendations include enhancing social media engagement, actively managing online reviews, investing in targeted digital campaign. Future research should explore longitudinal effects, include diverse geographical regions, and consider external factors impacting customer behaviour.

Keywords: digital marketing, online reviews, customer patronage, hospitality industry

Introduction

The hospitality industry, encompassing hotels, restaurants, and various tourism services, has long been a cornerstone of economic activity globally and locally. In Ilorin Metropolis, this sector is not only vital for economic growth but also for cultural and social development. Over the years, the hospitality industry has witnessed significant changes, particularly in how businesses attract and retain customers. Traditional marketing methods, which once dominated the industry, are increasingly being supplemented or replaced by digital marketing strategies. Several factors, including technological advancements, evolving consumer behaviours, and the competitive nature of the market, drive this shift. In today's world, technology has taken over and has made marketing easy. Digital marketing is now an essential element of marketing plans for companies in every sector and of every size. Because of the speedy expansion of digital platforms and technological advancements and their impact on shaping consumer decisions, companies have transitioned to digital marketing strategies and are utilizing various digital channels to engage with consumers. Customers have the option to remain in their own space while receiving goods with minimal effort through delivery services. Digital marketing involves using digital technologies like desktop computers, mobile phones, and online platforms to advertise goods and services.

This study has become increasingly important in recent years due to the fast expansion of digital platforms and technological advancements, which have the power to impact and mould consumer decision-making. Modern advancements in technology have created challenges and opportunities for existing companies, while also serving as fertile ground for new ventures to emerge. Promoting goods and services is consistently difficult because of the expensive nature of the process. Conventional marketing is described as expensive marketing, making it difficult for companies to grow because of limited sales and awareness of their products or services. Digital marketing, which involves utilizing digital channels and technologies to advertise products, is now a necessity for the hospitality sector. This includes various activities like social media marketing, Search Engine Optimisation email campaigns, and content marketing. The shift to digital marketing is not just a fad, but a reaction to significant shifts in consumer interaction with companies. The proliferation of smart phones, high-speed Internet, and social media platforms has drastically altered communication dynamics.

The changing behaviour of consumers is a critical driver of the shift toward digital marketing. In a sector where businesses constantly vie for customer attention, digital marketing offers a cost-effective and efficient way to differentiate from competitors. It allows for precision targeting, where businesses can tailor their marketing efforts to specific demographics, interests, and behaviours.

Online rating and review platforms have emerged as indispensable sources of information for modern travellers seeking insights into accommodation, dining, and other hospitality services. A study conducted by Johnson et al. (2022) underscores the profound impact of online reviews on consumer decision-making processes, revealing that 85% of travellers consider reviews to be as trustworthy as personal recommendations. Furthermore, the study highlights the correlation between positive online ratings and increased bookings, emphasizing the pivotal role of online reputation management in driving business success within the hospitality sector.

With the prominence of online reviews, digital campaigns have emerged as powerful tools for enhancing hospitality brand awareness and fostering customer engagement. Consequently, there is a burgeoning imperative to delve into the intricate relationship between digital marketing strategies and customer patronage within the local hospital landscape; against the backdrop of heightened customer expectations and intensifying market competition, the quest to understand the interplay between digital marketing strategies and customer patronage becomes increasingly urgent in Ilorin hospitality sector. With consumers demanding not only seamless digital experiences but also impeccable service delivery, businesses are confronted with the challenge of harmonizing their digital outreach efforts with the imperative to maintain a high standard of service excellence by exploring how digital marketing initiatives influence various dimensions of customer patronage such as loyalty, satisfaction, trust and behavioural intension as researcher can provide valuable insights that enable hospitality businesses in Ilorin to optimize their marketing strategies while concurrently elevating the calibre of service they deliver to improve customer patronage.

Moreover, the study endeavours to assess the impact of these digital marketing strategies on key dimensions of customer patronage, loyalty, trust and satisfaction. This study aims to uncover insights that can inform managerial decision-making and enhance the competitiveness of local businesses. By elucidating the linkages between digital marketing strategies and customer patronage, the study aims to equip hospitality businesses in Ilorin

with the knowledge and tools necessary to thrive in an era defined by technological disruption and shifting consumer preferences.

Statement of the Problem

This study is motivated by numerous key issues that must be tackled to grasp the efficiency and obstacles of digital marketing within the industry. The issues pertaining to digital marketing strategies' adoption, implementation, and impact, consumer behaviour understanding, and competitive dynamics in the hospitality industry. A key research issue is the level of digital marketing usage among hospitality establishments in the Ilorin Metropolis. Although digital marketing has seen substantial growth on a worldwide scale, its implementation in certain local areas, such as Ilorin, could be the same. Technological infrastructure, internet penetration, and digital literacy of business owners and consumers are key factors in determining the success of implementing digital marketing strategies (Statista, 2023). It is important to assess the current state of digital marketing in the local hospitality industry in Ilorin by understanding the level of adoption and barriers faced by businesses.

Another important concern is how well various digital marketing tactics work in drawing in and keeping customers. The hospitality sector includes various businesses with distinct customer bases and requirements. Hence, the effects of methods like social media marketing, SEO, email campaigns, and online advertising could vary among different types of businesses (Leung & Baloglu, 2015). This study seeks to determine the most successful strategies for attracting customers to Ilorin's hospitality industry and to explore factors that influence strategy effectiveness. Another issue is grasping consumer behaviour and preferences within the realm of digital marketing. Contemporary customers are more and more relying on online platforms to choose where to stay, eat, and visit. However, there needs to be more exploration into the particular behaviours and preferences of consumers in Ilorin when it comes to online reviews, social media engagements, and digital ads (Deloitte, 2020). Through an examination of these factors, the study can offer perspectives on how hospitality companies can customize their digital marketing strategies to align with the preferences of their specific audience.

Moreover, Ilorin's competitive dynamics in the hospitality sector present another research issue. The increase in digital marketing has heightened rivalry, enabling companies to connect to a wider audience using specific and customized messages. This prompts inquiries into how local hospitality businesses are positioning themselves in the digital arena and the tactics they are using to stand out from competitors (Leung & Baloglu, 2015). Examining these competitive tactics can provide insight into the impact of digital marketing on the competitive landscape of the hospitality sector in Ilorin.

Furthermore, the study will examine the obstacles and constraints encountered by hospitality enterprises in the adoption of digital marketing strategies. Such obstacles may encompass insufficient financial resources, a deficiency in technical skills, and a reluctance to shift from conventional marketing methods. Recognizing these challenges is crucial for formulating effective solutions and recommendations that can assist businesses in surmounting these barriers and maximizing the advantages of digital marketing (Statista, 2023). Through the investigation of these matters, the research aspires to offer an in-depth understanding of how digital marketing can improve customer engagement and foster business success within the hospitality industry in Ilorin.

Objectives of the Study

The research objective(s) of the study (are) to

- i. Assess the impact of online reviews and ratings on customers' perception of service quality provided by hospitality establishments in the Ilorin Metropolis
- ii. Examine the impact of digital campaigns on the ease of access to quality service in hospitality services in the Ilorin Metropolis

Significance of Study

The study's importance regarding digital marketing strategies and customer patronage in Ilorin's hospitality sector transcends mere academic exploration, offering significant implications for both theoretical frameworks and practical implementations in the discipline. Initially the research outcomes contribute to the enhancement of scholarly dialogue by illuminating the changing dynamics of digital marketing within the hospitality industry. Through an empirical investigation of the effects of social media interaction, online feedback, and digital marketing campaigns on brand recognition, perceptions of service quality, and accessibility to hospitality offerings, this study adds depth to the existing body of literature by providing detailed insights into the relationship between digital technologies and customer behaviour in a specific regional context.

Furthermore, the practical ramifications of this research are extensive, providing valuable recommendations for hospitality enterprises in Ilorin aiming to improve their competitive edge and respond to the challenges posed by the digital era. By clarifying the effectiveness of diverse digital marketing approaches in enhancing brand visibility, shaping perceptions of service quality, and improving service accessibility, the findings furnish businesses with data-driven strategies for refining their marketing efforts and service delivery mechanisms. For industry managers and practitioners, the results will act as a strategic guide for navigating the intricacies of digital transformation, empowering them to utilize digital platforms effectively to engage consumers, enhance brand value, and increase customer satisfaction.

The importance of this study extends beyond the realms of academia and industry, presenting significant societal implications for economic advancement and consumer welfare in Ilorin and its surroundings. By enhancing the comprehension of the elements influencing consumer decision-making and service experiences in the digital age, this research aids in the formulation of informed policies and strategic planning efforts that seek to foster sustainable growth and innovation within the hospitality sector. Ultimately, by connecting theoretical frameworks with practical applications and producing actionable insights that hold real-world significance, the study highlights the transformative capacity of digital marketing in influencing the future development of Ilorin's hospitality industry and improving the overall welfare of its stakeholders.

Limitation of the Study

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The study was restricted to selected hospitality establishments within Ilorin Metropolis, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings to other geographical locations. The use of purposive sampling and the focus on only five hotels may not adequately represent the entire hospitality industry in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study adopted a quantitative survey approach, which limited respondents to structured responses and excluded in-depth qualitative perspectives. The research also examined only online reviews and ratings and digital campaigns as dimensions of digital marketing strategies, while other relevant digital marketing variables were not considered. Additionally, the cross-sectional

nature of the study restricted the examination of changes in customer behavior over time. Finally, reliance on self-reported data may have introduced response bias that could affect the accuracy of the results. Despite these limitations, there is a need to state how the researcher will endeavour to minimise their impacts, if not eliminate them, on the outcomes of the research. Future studies should address these limitations by adopting broader geographical coverage, mixed-method approaches, longitudinal designs, and additional digital marketing variables.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Overview of Digital Marketing Strategies

Businesses use various approaches in digital marketing to utilize digital channels effectively for marketing objectives and engaging with their target audience. In the current ever-changing business environment, it is crucial to comprehend and utilize efficient digital marketing tactics to remain competitive and connect with consumers on their preferred platforms. Abdulquadri and Dixon-Ogbechi (2022) stress the important role that digital marketing plays in contemporary business activities, underlining its importance in fostering brand awareness, engaging customers, and, ultimately, achieving business prosperity. The flexibility of digital marketing strategies is a key element in meeting a variety of business objectives and reaching different target audiences. Businesses can adjust their strategies to suit different goals such as boosting brand visibility, growing website traffic, capturing leads, or boosting conversions - thanks to this flexibility. Different strategies in digital marketing like SEO, content marketing, social media advertising, email marketing, and influencer partnerships provide businesses with a wide range of choices to connect with their audience on various digital channels. Moreover, digital marketing strategies offer businesses valuable insights and analytics that enable decision-making based on data. Businesses can gain valuable insights into consumer behavior, preferences, and brand interactions by utilizing analytics tools and monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs) like website traffic, engagement rates, conversion rates, and customer acquisition costs. This information allows companies to improve their marketing tactics, enhance campaign results, and allocate resources efficiently to reach their goals.

Furthermore, digital marketing techniques provide unmatched access and flexibility, allowing companies to expand their market presence outside of typical location boundaries and effectively target specific audiences. Businesses now have unique chances to engage with consumers around the clock, thanks to the prevalence of mobile devices and the extensive use of social media platforms. Scholars like Uloko and Ogbadu (2021) emphasize how important digital marketing strategies are in connecting with digitally savvy consumers who are turning to digital platforms for information, entertainment, and shopping.

Digital marketing strategies serve as a cornerstone of modern business operations, providing businesses with powerful tools and tactics for effectively promoting their products or services, driving brand awareness, and achieving marketing objectives in an ever-evolving digital landscape. By harnessing the diverse array of digital marketing tactics available and leveraging insights from analytics, businesses can build stronger connections with their audience, foster brand loyalty, and drive sustained business growth in today's competitive marketplace.

Digital Marketing Strategies Adopted in Hospitality Industry

In the hospitality industry, the utilization of digital marketing tools has become imperative for reaching potential guests, enhancing brand visibility, and driving bookings. These tools encompass various platforms and strategies specifically tailored to meet the unique needs and preferences of hospitality businesses. Understanding and effectively employing these tools are essential for maintaining competitiveness and maximizing revenue opportunities in the digital era. These include:

- **Social Media:** Social media marketing is a vital instrument for hospitality enterprises to connect with prospective guests and advertise their services. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn offer hotels the chance to highlight their facilities, disseminate user-generated content, and engage with their audience in real-time. Research by Lee, Lee, and Kim (2019) underscore the significance of social media marketing in the hospitality field, illustrating its contribution to enhancing brand visibility, encouraging guest interaction, and facilitating direct bookings.
- **Online Reputation Management Tools:** Utilizing online reputation management tools is essential for overseeing and enhancing a hotel's online presence across various review platforms and social media outlets. These tools empower hotels to monitor guest feedback, respond to reviews in a timely manner, and discern patterns in guest satisfaction. A study by Gu and Ye (2019) highlights the influence of online reviews on hotel performance, underscoring the necessity of proactive online reputation management to foster guest trust and loyalty.

Data Analytic Tools

- i. Data analytics tools are vital for assessing the effectiveness of digital marketing campaigns and refining marketing strategies. By monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs) such as website traffic, conversion rates, and return on investment (ROI), hotels can acquire critical insights into the success of their digital marketing efforts. Research by Xie and Wang (2018) emphasizes the importance of data analytics in the hospitality sector, highlighting its role in promoting ongoing optimization and innovation within digital marketing strategies.

Web Engagement

A well-designed and user-friendly website is essential for all hospitality businesses so as to provide customers with essential information about services, amenities, and booking options. Web engagement encompasses factors such as website design, navigation, functionality, and content optimization, all of which contribute to enhancing the customer experience and driving conversions. By prioritizing web engagement, businesses can create seamless and enjoyable online experiences for customers, ultimately leading to increased Patronage and loyalty.

Digital marketing tools are essential for hospitality businesses to promote their offerings effectively, engage with guests, and drive bookings. By leveraging SEO, social media marketing, email marketing, online reputation management, and data analytics tools, hotels can enhance their online presence, build stronger relationships with guests, and achieve their marketing objectives in a competitive digital landscape.

Overview of Customer Patronage

Njelita and Marcus (2020) state that Patronage involves trading goods or services for money or other forms of compensation. Njelita and Marcus (2020) elaborate on how customer patronage involves a customer buying goods or services from a vendor. The consumer buys

goods or services and anticipates receiving satisfaction in return for the money they have paid. Jim and Kim (2003) elaborate that the patronage motive is what drives customers to the marketplace to fulfil their internal needs. Previous researchers' findings indicate that having positive attitudes and making repeated purchases were essential in defining Patronage within the scope of marketing. According to Olayinka and Odunlami (2018), customer patronage means customers consistently choosing a business's products and services over those offered by rival companies. Clients tend to be drawn to and stay loyal to companies that use effective marketing tactics and offer outstanding products and services.

Customer patronage, a crucial concept in the field of marketing and business management, encompasses the loyalty and support that consumers consistently provide to a business through repeated purchases and ongoing engagement. This concept is integral to the success and sustainability of any business, as it directly influences both short-term profitability and long-term market positioning. At its core, customer patronage refers to the regularity and frequency with which customers choose a specific brand or business over its competitors. According to Berry, Seiders, and Grewal (2002), this regular support is essential for business success, impacting immediate sales and contributing to long-term viability. Businesses thrive when they can cultivate a base of loyal customers who repeatedly purchase their products or services, thereby ensuring a steady stream of revenue. This consistent Patronage helps businesses maintain a stable market share and enhances their ability to plan and execute long-term strategies effectively.

Therefore, fostering customer loyalty and Patronage can lead to significant cost savings in marketing and customer acquisition efforts.

In addition to its financial benefits, customer patronage plays a critical role in strategic market positioning. A strong base of loyal customers can serve as a competitive advantage, making it difficult for competitors to lure them away. This competitive edge is particularly important in markets with high levels of competition, where customer loyalty can be a key differentiator. Overall, customer patronage is a vital element of business strategy, influencing not only immediate sales but also long-term success and sustainability. By understanding and nurturing customer loyalty, businesses can enhance their market position, reduce costs, and ensure a steady stream of revenue. The insights provided by Berry, Seiders, and Grewal (2002), as well as Kotler and Keller (2019), highlight the multifaceted nature of customer patronage and its significant impact on business performance and strategic positioning.

Relationship between Digital Marketing and Customer Patronage

Digital marketing in Nigeria has undergone changes over time. As per Africa Internet Usage and Population Statistics, approximately 43,982,200 individuals in Nigeria are estimated to be internet users, resulting in a 28.9% internet penetration rate. Due to the vast marketing opportunities present in digital media within the marketing mix, along with the rising Internet usage among Nigerians, brands are seeking out agencies with expertise in digital marketing to maximize media investments. Technology has progressed quickly along with the passing of time. Using the Internet makes it possible to quickly find and purchase a preferred product with just a few clicks. Computers, mobile phones, batteries, memory cards, pen drives, earphones, headphones, and other items can be purchased. Previously, marketing focused on exposing potential customers to numerous messages until they made a purchase. Presently, it is not enough for businesses to simply communicate loudly with their customers and expect positive results; they must establish connections with potential clients through methods such as content marketing, social media, and public relations. Consumers' behavior has changed as

mobile searches surpass desktop searches, the world becomes more digital, and influencers become the key to attracting customer loyalty. Businesses must adapt to current trends in acquisition and Choice, or they face the possibility of becoming outdated. One effective method to boost customer loyalty is promoting and establishing a brand for your product through different digital marketing strategies. This will provide a current customer with motivation to continue purchasing your products. To stay ahead of competitors and maintain customer loyalty, it is essential to provide top-notch service, monitor competition, and stay updated on customer service and marketing trends. Taking initiative in the online realm boosts longevity and customer awareness.

Theoretical Frameworks

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), conceived by Davis in 1989, offers a foundational framework for understanding users' perceptions and attitudes toward the adoption of new technologies. TAM posits that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are pivotal determinants influencing users' intention to adopt and utilize technology. Within the scope of the research focusing on digital marketing strategy and service quality in Ilorin's hospitality industry, TAM emerges as a pertinent theoretical lens through which to examine consumers' acceptance and utilization of digital platforms and services. By investigating factors such as the perceived usefulness of online reviews and the ease of use of digital booking systems, the study can discern the underlying drivers shaping consumers' engagement with digital channels within the hospitality sector in Ilorin. Understanding consumers' attitudes toward digital technologies is essential for hospitality businesses in Ilorin as they strive to craft effective digital marketing strategies tailored to resonate with target audiences and foster positive service experiences.

Empirical evidence corroborates the relevance and applicability of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) within the hospitality industry. Studies by Moon and Kim (2001) and Wu and Wang (2005) have applied the TAM framework to investigate consumers' acceptance and adoption of technology-driven innovations in the hospitality sector, underscoring the model's utility in predicting and explaining user behaviour. In the context of the research on digital marketing strategy and service quality in Ilorin's hospitality industry, TAM provides valuable insights into the factors influencing consumers' engagement with digital platforms and services. By examining consumers' perceptions of the usefulness and ease of use of digital marketing tools, such as online reviews and booking systems, the study can inform hospitality businesses in Ilorin about the design and implementation of effective digital strategies that align with consumers' preferences and drive positive service experiences.

Consumer Behavior Theory

Consumer Behavior Theory provides valuable insights into the psychological and sociological factors that drive consumer choices (Solomon, 2016). In the context of hospitality industry in Ilorin metropolis understanding these factors is essential for hotel brand awareness to tailor their strategies effectively.

Motivation

Motivation is a fundamental driver of consumer behavior. In Ilorin, where convenience often ranks high among consumer priorities, Hotels brand can leverage this motivation.

Perception

How customers perceive the quality of service provided by hotels profoundly influences their choices. Positive perceptions of product quality, safety, and reliability are paramount. Brands that consistently meet or exceed regulatory standards for service quality establish themselves as trustworthy and build strong brand equity based on favourable consumer perceptions (Kotler, 1973).

Attitudes

Consumer attitudes are shaped by a complex interplay of social norms, cultural beliefs, and personal values. Understanding and aligning with these attitudes can be a powerful strategy. For example, if hotels brands and services provide align with cultural norms of hospitality and trustworthiness, customer may be more inclined to choose these brands (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

Socio-demographic Characteristics

Factors such as age, income, and education level influence consumer preferences. Tailoring marketing strategies to resonate with these characteristics can foster brand loyalty among specific consumer segments. For instance, if data suggests that younger consumers in Ilorin prioritize convenience, marketing efforts can target this demographic with messaging that emphasizes the convenience of customer for quality service delivery (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007).

Empirical Review

Sulaimon's (2022) investigation on the impact of Digital Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour in the Ilorin Metropolis delved into the effects of digital marketing on consumer purchasing behaviour within the Ilorin Metropolis. It employed a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods to gather insights into consumer perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours regarding digital marketing strategies. Quantitative approaches like surveys or experiments provided data on digital marketing tactics and their influence on consumer buying decisions. The findings shed light on the effectiveness of various digital marketing channels and tactics in shaping consumer purchasing behaviour in the Ilorin Metropolis. This includes insights into the factors driving consumer engagement with digital marketing efforts and any notable correlations observed between digital marketing activities and consumer behaviour. Ultimately, the conclusions drawn from the study offered valuable implications for businesses and marketers aiming to leverage digital marketing strategies effectively in the local market.

Abdulquadri and Dixon-Ogbechi (2022) examined how e-marketing strategies influence customer patronage in the commercial banking sector, with a focus on Guaranty Trust Holding Company PLC in Lagos, in their study "Effects of e-marketing on customer's patronage of commercial banks, a study of Guaranty Trust Holding Company PLC, Lagos." The research utilized a quantitative approach to thoroughly investigate the correlation between e-marketing strategies and consumer actions. The research provided valuable information on how e-marketing impacts customer loyalty towards commercial banks, with a particular emphasis on Guaranty Trust Holding Company PLC in Lagos. This involves understanding the efficiency of different e-marketing channels and campaigns used by the bank to attract and keep customers, and the factors impacting customers' choices in selecting a bank. The study's findings offer practical implications for banks aiming to use e-marketing to boost customer loyalty and support.

Al-Azzam and Al-Mizeed (2021) provided proof that digital marketing had a notable impact on enhancing firms' purchasing choices in Jordan. Uloko and Ogbadu (2021) also investigated how digital marketing impacts the consumer behavior of 378 surveyed consumers in Nigeria. The investigation's findings indicated a positive correlation between perceived ease of use and consumer behavior in specific Nigerian states, with a statistically significant effect ($p < 0.05$) aligning with prior expectations. Perceived usefulness had a negative association with consumer loyalty in certain Nigerian states, but this did not show statistical significance ($p > 0.05$) and did not align with the researchers' initial hypothesis.

A study conducted by Adebayo (2019) at Kwara State University in 2019 focused on how communication strategies affect customer satisfaction in the hospitality sector in Kwara State, Nigeria. Adebayo has used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in their research to thoroughly investigate how communication efforts impact customer satisfaction. Adebayo's research results offered valuable information on how communication affects customer satisfaction in the hospitality sector of Kwara State. This may involve understanding how various communication channels and messaging tactics can meet customer expectations and improve overall satisfaction levels. The study's findings could provide practical suggestions for hospitality businesses in Kwara State to improve their communication strategies in order to better serve their customers' needs and preferences. Furthermore, Adebayo could have pinpointed potential areas for future research or suggested ways to enhance communication strategies in the hospitality industry, based on the study results.

The study conducted by Akinnitire and Oluwatobi (2021) focused on how hospitality firms in Nigeria have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of online marketing and customer loyalty. This study aimed to investigate how customer loyalty to Nigerian hotel companies was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to various online marketing strategies such as mobile marketing, email marketing, social media marketing, and content marketing. The study discovered that in Nigeria, despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a substantial correlation between internet marketing (such as mobile marketing, email marketing, social media marketing, and content marketing) and customer support for hospitality businesses.

Methodology

A survey research design was utilized for this study, targeting customers from five specific hotels in the Ilorin Metropolis: Bovina View Hotel; Henry George Hotel; Elite Tranquil Hotel; Princess Luxury Hotel and; De Peace Hotel and Suites: The Population is infinite. A purposive sampling technique was employed to choose these three hotels based on their 3-star categories with facilities such as online presence, Bar, Café, Restaurant etc.

The surveyed customers represent a diverse range of categories to ensure varied perspectives. The sample size was set at 319 customers, determined using the formula for infinite

$$\text{Population: SS} = \frac{Z^2 p(1-p)}{C^2}$$

SS = required sample size

Z = Z-value (e.g., 1.95 for 95 per cent confidence level)

P = percentage of population picking a choice, expressed as a decimal in this case (0.6)

C = confidence interval expressed as decimal (e.g. .05 = +/- 5per cent points) Therefore;

$$\frac{SS = 1.952(0.6) \times (1 - 0.6)}{0.052}$$

$$\frac{SS = 3.8025(0.6) \times (0.4)}{0.0025}$$

$$\frac{SS = 2.2815 \times 0.4}{0.0024}$$

$$\frac{SS = 0.798525}{0.0024SS} = 319.$$

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data Presentation

Data for this study were collected through a structured questionnaire administered physically to customers of the selected hospitality establishments in Ilorin Metropolis. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A captured respondents' demographic characteristics, while Section B measured the study variables, namely online reviews and ratings, digital campaigns, customers' perception of service quality, and ease of access to quality services.

The questionnaire items were adapted from previously validated scales in digital marketing and customer patronage literature and modified to suit the hospitality industry context in Nigeria. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. To ensure content validity, the instrument was reviewed by experts in marketing and research methodology who assessed the relevance, clarity, and adequacy of the items. A pilot study involving 30 respondents outside the study area was conducted to test the reliability and comprehensibility of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency. A total of 319 questionnaires were distributed to customers of the selected hotels using a purposive sampling approach. Out of the questionnaires distributed, 289 were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of approximately 90%. Data collected were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 29. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize the data, while simple linear regression analysis was employed to test the hypotheses at a 5% level of significance.

Demographic Analysis

This section provides critical context for understanding how different demographic factors may influence perceptions and behaviours related to digital marketing strategies in the hospitality sector. The details of the respondents that partake in this study were summarized in the table below:

Table 1: Respondents Profile

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender:		
Male	180	62.3
Female	109	37.7
	289	100.0
Age:		
18-24 years	16	5.5
25-34 years	58	20.1
35-44 Years	96	33.2
45-54 Years	108	37.4

55-55 Years and above	11	3.8
	289	100.0
Education:		
Diploma	72	25.0
Higher National Diploma	11	3.8
Bachelor's Degree	126	43.6
Master's Degree	69	23.9
Doctorate Degree	11	3.8
	289	100.0
Level of Income:		
Below ₦100,000	42	14.5
₦100,000- ₦150,000	194	67.1
₦151,000- ₦200,000	27	9.3
Above ₦200,000	26	9.0
	289	100.0
Frequency of Patronage:		
Daily	52	18.0
Several Times a Week	93	32.2
Weekly	90	31.1
Occasionally	54	18.7
	289	100.0
Choice of Hotel:		
Bovina View Hotel:	45	16.0
Henry George Hotel:	81	28.0
Elite Tranquil Hotel:	79	27.3
Princess Luxury Hotel:	50	17.3
De Peace Hotel and Suites:	34	12.0
	289	100.0

Note. From Researcher's Survey (2026)

The sample consists of 62.3% male respondents and 37.7% female respondents. This indicates a male-dominated sample, which could influence the study's findings regarding digital marketing strategies and customer patronage. This implies that it is essential to consider whether digital marketing strategies might be more or less effective based on gender preferences and if the strategies are inclusive of both genders.

The respondents are predominantly in the 35-44 years (33.2%) and 45-54 years (37.4%) age brackets, accounting for over 70% of the sample. This suggests that the majority of patrons are middle-aged, which might affect their engagement with digital marketing platforms differently compared to younger age groups. For instance, younger individuals might be more active on social media and more responsive to digital marketing campaigns.

The educational profile reveals that 43.6% of respondents hold a Bachelor's Degree, with significant proportions having a Diploma (25.0%) or a Master's Degree (23.9%). This suggests a relatively well-educated sample, which may correlate with a higher level of sophistication and critical engagement with digital marketing content. The effectiveness of digital marketing strategies could vary based on the educational background of the target audience.

Most respondents (67.1%) fall within the income range of ₦101,000- ₦150,000. This indicates a middle-income bracket for the majority, which may influence their spending behaviour and responsiveness to different types of digital marketing strategies. Understanding how income levels impact the effectiveness of digital marketing can help tailor strategies to meet the needs of different income groups better.

The frequency of patronage is relatively high, with 32.2% visiting several times a week and 31.1% visiting weekly. This high level of regular patronage suggests a strong customer base that is likely to be responsive to digital marketing efforts. The effectiveness of digital marketing strategies could be evaluated based on their ability to maintain and potentially increase this frequency of patronage.

The choice of hotel among respondents shows that Bovina View Hotel 16.0%, Henry George Hotel 28.02%, Elite Tranquil Hotel 27.3%, Princess Luxury Hotel 17.3%, De Peace Hotel and Suites 12.0%. This even distribution suggests that digital marketing strategies should be uniformly applied across all Five hotels to ensure consistent brand presence and engagement across all customer bases.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

In an attempt to test the hypothesis that Online reviews and ratings do not have any significant effect on customers' perceptions of the quality of services offered by the hospitality industry in the Ilorin Metropolisa regression analysis was conducted, and the results were presented in tables 1a, 1b, and 1c, respectively.

Table 1a

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.630 ^a	.397	.395	3.52283

a. Predictors: (Constant), Online_Reviews_and_Ratings

Note. Researcher's Survey (2026)

The results, as shown in Table 1a, indicate that the model has an R-value of 0.630 and a R Square value of 0.397. This suggests that approximately 40% of the variance in customers' perceptions of service quality can be explained by online reviews and ratings. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.395 further confirms the model's robustness, while the Standard Error of the Estimate is 3.52283, representing the average deviation of observed values from the predicted values. These results imply a moderate relationship between online reviews and ratings and service quality perceptions, providing evidence against the null hypothesis and supporting the significant impact of online reviews and ratings on customer perceptions of service quality.

Table 1b: ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	2347.282	1	2347.282	189.139	.000 ^b
Residual	3561.769	287	12.410		
Total	5909.052	288			

a. Dependent Variable: customers perceptions

b. Predictors: (Constant), Online Reviews and Ratings

Note. Researcher's Survey (2026)

The regression model shows a Sum of Squares of 2347.282 with 1 degree of freedom, yielding a Mean Square of 2347.282. The F-value is 189.139, with a p-value of 0.000, indicating that the regression model significantly explains the variance in customers' perceptions compared to a model with no predictors. The Residual Sum of Squares is 3561.769 with 287 degrees of freedom, resulting in a Mean Square of 12.410. The significant

F-value confirms that online reviews and ratings have a statistically significant effect on customers' perceptions of service quality, thus supporting the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Table 1c: Coefficient

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.182	.866		4.830	.000
	Online_Reviews_and_Ratings	.544	.040	.630	13.753	.000

a. Dependent Variable: customers perceptions

Note. Researcher's Survey (2026)

The unstandardized coefficient for the constant is 4.182 with a standard error of 0.866, and it is statistically significant with a t-value of 4.830 and a p-value of 0.000. For online reviews and ratings, the unstandardized coefficient is 0.544 with a standard error of 0.040, and the standardized coefficient (Beta) is 0.630. The t-value for online reviews and ratings is 13.753, with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a highly significant effect. These results suggest that online reviews and ratings have a moderate positive impact on customers' perceptions of service quality, with a standardized effect size of 0.630, supporting the conclusion that online reviews and ratings significantly influence customers' evaluations of service quality in the hospitality sector.

Hypothesis 2

In an attempt to test the hypothesis that Digital campaigns do not have any significant impact on the ease of access to quality service in hospitality services in the Ilorin Metropolis a regression analysis was conducted, and the results were presented in Tables 2a, 2b, and 2c, respectively.

Table 2a: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.738 ^a	.545	.544	3.77097

a. Predictors: (Constant), Digital campaigns

Note. Researcher's Survey (2026)

The results, presented in Table 8a, indicate an R-value of 0.738 and an R Square value of 0.545. This suggests that digital campaigns account for approximately 54.5% of the variance in the ease of access to quality service. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.544 indicates the model's effectiveness and the Standard Error of the Estimate is 3.77097, representing the average deviation of observed values from the predicted values. These results reveal a strong relationship between digital campaigns and the ease of access to quality service, challenging the null hypothesis and supporting the view that digital campaigns have a significant impact on enhancing access to quality hospitality services.

Table 2b

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Df	Mean	F	Sig.
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		Squares			Square	
1	Regression	4891.032	1	4891.032	343.950	.000 ^b
	Residual	4081.197	287	14.220		
	Total	8972.228	288			

a. Dependent Variable: ease of access

b. Predictors: (Constant), Digital campaigns

Note. Researcher's Survey (2026)

The regression model shows a Sum of Squares of 4891.032 with 1 degree of freedom, leading to a Mean Square of 4891.032. The F-value is 343.950, with a p-value of 0.000, indicating that the regression model significantly improves the prediction of ease of access compared to a model without predictors. The Residual Sum of Squares is 4081.197 with 287 degrees of freedom, resulting in a Mean Square of 14.220. The highly significant F-value confirms that digital campaigns have a statistically significant effect on the ease of access to quality service, thereby supporting the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Table 2c

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.475	.686		6.527	.000
	Digital_campaigns	.827	.045	.738	18.546	.000

a. Dependent Variable: ease of access

Note. Researcher's Survey (2026)

The unstandardized coefficient for the constant is 4.475 with a standard error of 0.686, and it is statistically significant with a t-value of 6.527 and a p-value of 0.000. For digital campaigns, the unstandardized coefficient is 0.827 with a standard error of 0.045, and the standardized coefficient (Beta) is 0.738. The t-value for digital campaigns is 18.546, with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a highly significant effect. These results suggest that digital campaigns have a strong positive impact on the ease of access to quality service, with a standardized effect size of 0.738. This supports the conclusion that digital campaigns significantly enhance access to quality hospitality services, reinforcing the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Findings

In testing the first hypothesis, which states that online reviews and ratings do not significantly affect customers' perceptions of service quality in the hotel business in Ilorin, a regression analysis was performed. The results, as presented in Tables 1a, 1b, and 1c, reveal a substantial influence of online reviews and ratings on customer perceptions. With an R Square value of 0.397 and an F-value of 189.139 (p-value of 0.000), the model indicates that online reviews and ratings explain a significant portion of the variance in customer perceptions of service quality. The unstandardized coefficient for online reviews and ratings is 0.544, with a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.630 and a high t-value of 13.753, all of which are statistically significant. These results are consistent with recent studies highlighting the critical role of online reviews in shaping customer perceptions. For instance, Cheung et al. (2017) found that online reviews significantly impact customer evaluations of service quality, aligning with the current study's findings.

Similarly, Zhang and Zhao (2019) demonstrated that both positive and negative reviews substantially influence customer perceptions and decision-making processes. However,

research by Lee and Youn (2020) suggested that the impact of reviews might be moderated by other factors, such as the credibility of the reviews and the reviewer's reputation. Additionally, Kim and Lee (2021) indicated that while online ratings are influential, their effect varies depending on the context and customer patronage dimensions assessed.

To test the second hypothesis, which states that digital campaigns do not have a significant impact on the ease of access to quality service in hotel services in Ilorin, a regression analysis was conducted. The results, as shown in Tables 2a, 2b, and 2c, reveal a strong positive effect of digital campaigns on the ease of access to quality services. The analysis produced an R Square value of 0.545 and an F-value of 343.950 (p-value of 0.000), indicating that digital campaigns account for a significant proportion of the variance in ease of access. The unstandardized coefficient for digital campaigns is 0.827, with a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.738 and a high t-value of 18.546, all statistically significant. These findings corroborate existing literature on the effectiveness of digital campaigns in enhancing service accessibility. For instance, Chae et al. (2019) found that digital marketing strategies significantly improve customer access to services by providing detailed information and streamlined booking options.

Similarly, Li and Kim (2020) highlighted that targeted digital campaigns increase customer awareness and simplify the decision-making process, aligning with the results of this study. However, research by Johnson and Choi (2021) noted that while digital campaigns are beneficial, their effectiveness can be influenced by factors such as campaign design and target audience engagement. Additionally, Wang et al. (2022) emphasized that the success of digital campaigns in improving access depends on the integration of various digital tools and platforms.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were informed:

- i. Online reviews and ratings have a big impact on how customers perceive the quality of services provided by hospitality businesses. The study shows that good reviews can improve how customers view a business, while bad reviews can discourage potential customers. Hence, it is important for hospitality establishments to proactively monitor their online reputations by promoting good reviews and dealing with criticisms quickly.
- ii. Digital campaigns are essential in simplifying access to high-quality hotels services for customers. The results indicate that focused digital marketing strategies enhance visibility and convenience, ultimately making services more accessible. This underscores the significance of developing captivating and educational digital strategies to draw in and keep customers by simplifying their decision-making and booking procedures.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations were suggested:

- i. In order to uphold a positive brand reputation, hospitality businesses must proactively monitor their online reviews. Develop a system to consistently track and address customer feedback across different review platforms. Encouraging happy customers to share positive reviews and quickly dealing with any negative feedback can enhance overall perceptions of service excellence. Delivering outstanding customer service and maintaining uniform quality will lead to positive reviews.

- ii. Hotels need to concentrate on developing precise digital marketing strategies to enhance service availability and customer interaction. This involves utilizing data-focused marketing tactics to create campaigns that target the appropriate audience with pertinent promotions. Enhancing the visibility of digital campaigns can be achieved by investing in search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click (PPC) advertising. Furthermore, incorporating explicit prompts for action and simplifying the booking procedures in these initiatives can make it easier for customers to utilize services.

By implementing these suggestions, hospitality establishments in Ilorin can effectively utilize digital marketing tactics to boost their brand visibility, enhance customer opinions, and increase booking rates, ultimately leading to greater operational success and customer contentment.

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