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E-Marketing Services and Challenges: Perspectives on Tourism Related Businesses in Nigeria

Abstract

The goal of this study is to examine the difficulties that the tourism industry faces in adopting e-marketing in Nigeria. A survey research technique is employed for this study; thereby, the respondents were administered a total of 147 usable questionnaires. The gathered data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). While Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) is employed to ascertain the correlation and relationship between the variables of the hypothesis tested. The finding shows that the difficulties of implementing e-marketing have a significant impact on the online services provided by the case study tourism businesses. They all face similar problems in implementing e-marketing. The challenges of adopting e-marketing in Nigeria are primarily due to the unreliable and unaffordable state of facilities/infrastructure in the country. This study contributes to a greater knowledge of the opportunities, obstacles, and guidance required for successful e-marketing of tourism businesses in an emerging economy. The execution of the recommendation from this study will aid in the promotion of Nigeria's tourism products and enhance tourism sustainability in the country.

Keywords: *E-marketing Challenges, Tourism Businesses, Nigeria, Infrastructure.*

JEL Classifications: O33, Z32, M31

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1. Introduction

Traditional marketing through the aid of radio, television, banners, posters and direct marketing had always been the promotional tool for tourism business entrepreneurs in gaining competitive advantage. Traditional marketing media have remained important in recent years,

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but the need to obtain a competitive advantage has led to the development of e-marketing as a viable alternative for attracting potential tourists. Electronic marketing, also known as e-marketing, is the practice of applying marketing principles and techniques to electronic media, particularly the Internet (Taherdoost and Jalaliyoon, 2014). E-marketing is a modern commercial technique that involves marketing goods, services, information, and ideas using the internet and other electronic means (El-Gohary, 2012). E-marketing gives businesses access to new market segments and expand prospects across geographical borders, lowering international entry barriers (Tiessen and Wright, 2001). According to Chuang (2018), E-Marketing is a mechanism that facilitates the transportation of items or services from producers to visitors via the internet. E-marketing is gradually receiving general attention as a viable tool for tourism marketing strategy due to its price, promptness, and broad scope. Marketing is defined by the Chartered Institute of Marketing in the United Kingdom as “the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating, and profitably satisfying customer requirements” (Bowie and Buttle, 2004). Given the foregoing, marketing’s top responsibility is customer satisfaction. Any tourism business’s success hinges on its marketing efforts. In general, the ability of e-marketing as a marketing venture is client friendly to some level. This is because, thanks to e-marketing, information and some essential services can be obtained quickly and easily over the internet. Tourism marketing refers to the systematic and coordinated efforts made by tourism businesses at the worldwide, national, and local levels to maximize tourist, group, and individual satisfaction in order to maintain tourism growth (Bhatia, 2002). In order to satisfy customers, crucial information about tourism products is often acquired for e-marketing purposes. Electronic data transfer is compatible with the intangible nature of tourism products and services. Because it is simple to offer vital information for purchasing products on the Internet, and the costs for daily updates are comparatively minimal, online travel communities and online ticket sales have a promising future (Egbaji, 2007). This is evidenced by the travel industry’s regular use of e-marketing, as well as the adoption of the global distribution system (GDS), which allows for simple transactions.

Information technology (IT) is increasingly reshaping business operations around the world; the decision to employ e-marketing is no longer a question, because it is now a part of the world’s new reality as a major contributor to business success. The application of e-marketing knowledge to the hotel and tourism industry ensures best practices in customer loyalty, business branding, and effective communications with stakeholders through integrated e-marketing communications (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). This is not to imply that implementing e-marketing in the tourism and hospitality industry is without its obstacles. Tourism businesses must invest a significant amount of resources in the acquisition of reliable internet connectivity, installation, and skill acquisition in order to use e-marketing technologies. The foregoing is subjective to the availability of an enabling environment that presents growth opportunities for tourism industry.

The maintenance of the necessary facilities and infrastructure for the tourism industry to take advantage of is the mandate of a responsive government. Regrettably, Nigeria has notable infrastructural challenges impeding the extensive adoption of e-marketing by the tourism industry. Unstable power supply, unreliable internet network, and exorbitant internet usage fees are the primary hindrance to the adoption of e-marketing on the large scale in the country. Therefore, the difficulties faced by the tourists in obtaining information about tourism and hospitality related services through e-marketing channels are investigated in this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Marketing and Tourism E-Marketing

Marketing is a discipline that identifies needs and wants in order to satisfy both individuals and governments. It also improves the image of the company and raises awareness of its products and services. Marketing is a sociological process through which individuals and groups achieve what they require and desire by creating, promoting, and freely trading valuable items and services. "The art of selling products" is a common description of marketing. Marketing is not just about selling. According to Kotler (2005) the marketing concept comprises identifying and organizing resources to deliver a consumer service or product for which a significant enough number of people are prepared to pay a profit. As a result, businesses begin by recognizing customer needs, determining what those needs are, mobilizing resources to produce products or services that meet those needs, and informing customers of the existence, price, and location of the products or services.

Efforts have been undertaken over time to develop strategies to improve the marketing of tourism-related services. The evolution of the tourism product and market conditions over the decade has prompted a new approach to commercial transaction procedures (Cooper et al., 2008). The technological revolution had changed marketing in ways that went beyond traditional methods, ushering in a new era of electronic marketing, which included tourism e-marketing. Tourism e-marketing is the process of combining and enhancing tourism services in order to provide tourists with a memorable and fulfilling experience while also achieving the host community's social, economic, and environmental development goals (Mousavi, 2012). Tourism and technological advancements are inextricably linked. The availability of time and disposable income accelerated the industrialization of tourism as a new phenomenon, allowing working-class people to incorporate travel and vacations into their annual activities and budget. As a result of numerous major breakthroughs, IT and ICTs are now a crucial factor of organizational competitiveness (Buhalis and O'Connor, 2005). The tourism industry had high hopes for the Internet from the beginning; being an intangible service commodity, it adapts itself well to technological data transmission. Online travel communities and online ticket sales were predicted to have a bright future due to the ease with which vital information for purchasing products may be presented on the Internet, as well as the relatively low costs of daily updates (Egbaji, 2007). This highlights the strong ties that exist between the tourism industry and social media marketing, as well as how effectively they may complement each other due to shared traits. Tourism has just found its way into the hands of decision-makers in Nigeria. Despite the fact that rural areas still make up a substantial portion of the country, metropolitan areas can be packaged as tourism destinations to attract both local and international tourists. Within Nigeria, tourism brands are growing their business alongside social media, encouraging customers to engage with them on these platforms, while also providing services through those platforms. In this way brands are realizing the significance of being a part of these networks and connecting with their customer base in non-traditional ways (Asikhia, 2009).

In a world where the information technology is changing the way business are conducted, the decision to start an e-marketing is not something that one can postpone for the future. Today, e-marketing is not only a good business idea, but it is a business imperative, because it brings fundamental alterations to the way entire business relationships are conducted (Asikhia, 2009).

2.2. Communication Theory and Tourism E-Marketing Business

Scudder's (1980) communication theory provides the theoretical framework for this research; the theory states that "all living beings, whether plants, animals, or humans, communicate through sound, speech, visible changes, body movements, gestures, or in the best possible way to make others aware of their thoughts, feelings, problems, happiness, or any other

information” (Nadejda, 2013). This means that all living beings on the globe communicate, although in their own unique ways. Plants, animals, and people all have diverse ways of communicating their needs and desires. This theory defines the process by which tourism business owners digitally convey information to the recipient (tourist), who then decodes the information and acts in accordance with his or her preferences, and interacts through the feedback loop (Wise, 2006). Customers require information on product’s features, pricing, and accessibility in order to make informed purchasing decisions. The implication is that a good and effective communication channel adds value to a company’s product because it increases customer confidence (Potluri, 2008). It uses e-marketing and distinctive digital advertising and selling proposals to reach big audiences of potential tourism customers. On the web page, tourist business owners express the uniqueness of their services and facilities, raising knowledge of the availability of tourism services, sparking curiosity and desire for trial in the customer’s mind, and ultimately leading to the purchase of the service (Scudder, 1980 cited in Nadeijda, 2013). Tourism and hospitality marketing communication is an important part of service delivery. Because of the unique qualities of the services provided, the tourism industry is strongly reliant on marketing (Cirikovic, 2014). Marketing communications, on the other hand, involves much more than just advertising. One of the most essential criteria in determining the success of a tourism business is getting the appropriate messages to the right people (Cirikovic, 2014). Marketing communication has a critical part in achieving a business’s competitive position as well as in tourism. Tourism firms hope to spread as much information as possible about their activities, products, and services, as well as collect feedback on how their services are received and appreciated, through their communication policy and the ways by which they implement it (Bogan, 2014).

The communication theory is relevant to this research because tourists will choose to patronize the case study establishments based on the efficacy of the marketing communication channel employed in stimulating interest and the communication of product information. Therefore, due to the relevance of the communication theory to this study, the researchers examined the opinions of tourists on their preference and limitations in getting information about tourism products and services through e-marketing in Nigeria. Against this backdrop, the current study proposes the following hypothesis;

***Null Hypothesis (Ho):** There is no significant relationship between challenges of adopting e-marketing and online services rendered by tourism businesses.*

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Design

This study adopted a survey research design with the aid of questionnaires as the primary instruments for data collection. The study went further to consulting journals, textbooks, projects, brochures, e-library as secondary sources of data. A total of one hundred and sixty (160) copies of questionnaire were administered and one hundred and forty-seven (147) copies were returned and validated; therefore, making the response rate 91.8%. The model tourism related businesses studied were; Ilaji Hotel and Resort, Akanran, Ibadan with 68 questionnaires, The Zoological Garden, University of Ibadan with 31 questionnaires and Premier Hotel, Mokola, Ibadan with 61 numbers of questionnaires.

3.2. Sample Size and Population

The target population includes the entire tourist that visited the three tourism businesses at the time of this study. Hence, this study targeted the tourist that visited Ilaji Stadium and Resort, Premier Hotel and UI Zoological Garden Ibadan, Oyo State. Inclusion criteria are considered on the bases of all tourists in the target population. Individuals who were not tourist were not

included in the study. A simple random technique was used to determine respondents' view of e-marketing.

The sample size is determined by the Slovin's formula as indicated below and in Table 1:

$$n = N / (1+Ne^2)$$

Where n = sample size

N= population

1= Constant, e = Margin of error (0.05)

NB: the (0.05) margin of error signifies that there is a 95 percent validity.

Therefore, using the formula, the sample size is 146 participants.

14 questionnaires (10%) were added, thus 160 questionnaires were admitted so as to give room for inappropriate filled and unreturned questionnaires.

$$\text{Sample size per tourism business} = \frac{\text{Number of tourist in each tourism business} \times 160}{\text{Total number of tourist in all the three tourism business}}$$

Table 1: Showing the sample size of each of the selected tourism business.

| Tourism business | Sample frame | Sample Size |
|--------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Ilaji Stadium and Resort | 98 | 68 |
| Premier Hotel | 87 | 61 |
| UI Zoological Garden | 45 | 31 |
| Total | 230 | 160 |

Sum of the average number of tourist on the sample frame: 98+87+45=230

Sum of the sample size: 68+61+31=160

4. Results

4.1. Challenges of E-marketing

According to table 2, 63.3 percent and 12.9 percent of respondents strongly agreed and strongly disagreed that they do not have a device to access the internet, respectively. While 69.4 percent and 10.2 percent of respondents strongly agreed and strongly disagreed that they do not have regular access to the internet, and 78.2 percent and 4.1 percent of respondents strongly agreed and strongly disagreed that an unreliable power supply stops them from using the internet, respectively. In addition, 92.0 percent and 4.8 percent of respondents strongly agreed and strongly disagreed, respectively, that having internet access is expensive. While 78.9 percent and 2.0 percent of respondents strongly agreed and strongly disagreed that they don't know how to use the internet, respectively. Apart from the unreliable power supply, this implies that there are several obstacles to e-marketing adoption in the tourism/hospitality industry.

Table 2: Challenges of adoption e-marketing on tourism/hospitality business.

| Challenges of adoption e-marketing | Tourism Business | | | Total |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| | Ilaji Stadium and Resort | Premier Hotel | UI Zoological Gardens | |
| I don't have a device to access internet | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 12(18.8%) | 5(9.1%) | 2(7.1%) | 19(12.9%) |
| Disagree | 9(14.1%) | 8(14.5%) | 1(3.6%) | 18(12.2%) |
| Agree | 8(14.1%) | 5(9.1%) | 4(14.3%) | 17(11.6%) |
| Strongly Agree | 35(54.7%) | 37(67.3%) | 21(75.0%) | 93(63.3%) |
| Total | 64(100%) | 55(100%) | 28(100%) | 147(100%) |
| I don't have regular access to the internet | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 4(6.3%) | 4(7.3%) | 7(25.1%) | 15(10.2%) |
| Disagree | 4(6.3%) | 5(9.1%) | 2(7.1%) | 11(7.5%) |
| Agree | 12(18.8%) | 4(14.5%) | 3(10.7%) | 19(12.9%) |
| Strongly Agree | 44(68.8%) | 42(76.4%) | 16(57.1%) | 102(69.4%) |
| Total | 64(100%) | 55(100%) | 28(100%) | 147(100%) |
| Unstable power supply prevents me from using internet | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 4(6.3%) | 1(1.8%) | 1(3.6%) | 6(4.1%) |
| Disagree | 7(10.9%) | 5(9.1%) | 3(10.7%) | 15(10.2%) |
| Agree | 6(9.4%) | 2(3.6%) | 3 (10.7%) | 11(7.5%) |
| Strongly Agree | 47(73.4%) | 47(85.5%) | 21(75.0%) | 115(78.2%) |
| Total | 64(100%) | 55(100%) | 28(100%) | 147(100%) |
| It is expensive to have internet access | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 4(6.3%) | 4(7.3%) | 2(7.1%) | 7(4.8%) |
| Disagree | 7(10.9%) | 5(9.1%) | 3(10.7%) | 7(4.8%) |
| Agree | 3(4.7%) | 3(5.5%) | 1 (3.6%) | 7(4.8%) |
| Strongly Agree | 53(82.8%) | 47(85.5%) | 26(92.9%) | 126(92.0%) |
| Total | 64(100%) | 55(100%) | 28(100%) | 147 (100%) |
| I don't know how to surf internet | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 0(0.0%) | 2(3.6%) | 1(3.6%) | 3(2.0%) |
| Disagree | 6(9.4%) | 3(5.5%) | 2(7.2%) | 11(7.5%) |
| Agree | 4(4.7%) | 6(10.9%) | 7(25.0%) | 17(11.6%) |
| Strongly Agree | 54(84.4%) | 44(80.0%) | 18(64.3%) | 116(78.9%) |
| Total | 64(100%) | 55(100%) | 28(100%) | 147(100%) |

4.2. Online Services

Table 3 shows that 77.6 percent and 4.2 percent of respondents strongly agreed and strongly disagreed that they prefer to book my accommodation online, respectively, and that 81.6 percent and 3.4 percent of respondents strongly agreed and strongly disagreed that there should be attractive product images available online. In addition, 84.4 percent and 4.1 percent of respondents strongly agreed and strongly disagreed, respectively, that reviews and comments of online services should be provided. While 77.6 percent and 3.4 percent of respondents strongly agreed and strongly disagreed that tourism/hospitality business facilities should be provided online, 70.7 percent and 3.4 percent of respondents strongly agreed and strongly disagreed that tourism/hospitality business customer services should be provided online, respectively. This suggests that the majority of tourism product buyers questioned are eager to conduct online transactions with tourist/hospitality enterprises.

Table 3: Online services rendered on tourism/hospitality business.

| Online Services Rendered | Tourism Business | | | Total |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| | Ilaji Stadium and Resort | Premier Hotel | UI Zoological Gardens | |
| I prefer to book for my accommodation online | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 1(1.6%) | 1 (1.8%) | 2(7.1%) | 4(2.7%) |
| Disagree | 1(1.6%) | 1(1.8%) | 0(0.0%) | 2(1.4%) |
| Agree | 9(14.1%) | 13(23.6%) | 5(17.9%) | 27(18.4%) |
| Strongly Agree | 53(82.8%) | 40(72.7%) | 21(75.0%) | 114(77.6%) |
| Total | 64(100%) | 55(100%) | 28(100%) | 147(100%) |
| There should be presence of attractive images of the product they offer online | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 2(3.1%) | 2(3.6%) | 1(3.6%) | 5(3.4%) |
| Disagree | 0(0.0%) | 2(3.6%) | 0(3.6%) | 2(1.4%) |
| Agree | 8(12.5%) | 7(12.7%) | 5(17.9%) | 20(13.6%) |
| Strongly Agree | 54(84.4%) | 44(80.0%) | 22(78.6%) | 120(81.6%) |
| Total | 64(100%) | 55(100%) | 28(100%) | 147(100%) |
| There should be reviews and feedbacks of services rendered Online | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 2(3.1%) | 3(5.5%) | 1(3.6%) | 6(4.1%) |
| Disagree | 3(4.7%) | 2(3.6%) | 1(3.6%) | 6(4.1%) |
| Agree | 1(1.6%) | 8(14.5%) | 2 (7.1%) | 11(7.5%) |
| Strongly Agree | 58(90.6%) | 42(76.4%) | 24(85.7%) | 124(84.4%) |
| Total | 64(100%) | 55(100%) | 28(100%) | 147(100%) |
| Facilities of tourism/hospitality business must be provided Online | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 2(3.1%) | 2(3.6%) | 1(3.6%) | 5(3.4%) |
| Disagree | 1(1.6%) | 0(0.0%) | 0(0.0%) | 1(0.7%) |
| Agree | 12(18.8%) | 7(12.7%) | 8 (28.6%) | 27(18.4%) |
| Strongly Agree | 49(76.6%) | 46(83.6%) | 19(67.9%) | 114(77.6%) |
| Total | 64(100%) | 55(100%) | 28(100%) | 147(100%) |
| Tourism/hospitality business customer services should be provided Online | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 2(3.1%) | 3(3.6%) | 1(3.6%) | 5(3.4%) |
| Disagree | 0(0.0%) | 6(10.9%) | 0(0.0%) | 6(4.1%) |
| Agree | 13(20.3%) | 11(20.0%) | 8(28.6%) | 32(21.8%) |
| Strongly Agree | 49(76.6%) | 36(65.5%) | 19(67.9%) | 104(70.7%) |
| Total | 64(100%) | 55(100%) | 28(100%) | 147(100%) |

4.3. The Relationship between Challenges of Adopting E-marketing and Online Services

As indicated in table 4, there was a negative significant relationship between the challenges of adopting e-marketing and online services provided by the tourism enterprises ($r = -.130$, $n = 147$, $p < .05$). As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected. The analysis revealed that the difficulties in implementing e-marking have a significant influence on online services

provided by the selected tourism and hospitality firms. Thus, this implies that possibly the prompt delivery of information about product offers to prospective tourists are often delayed or in some instances totally inaccessible due to the challenges associated to the utilization of e-marketing channels.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis.

| Variable | Mean | Std. Dev. | N | R | P | Remark |
|--------------------------|-------|-----------|-----|--------|------|--------|
| Online Services Rendered | 40.47 | 4.29 | 147 | -0.130 | .007 | Sig. |
| Challenges of adopting | 19.39 | 1.55 | | | | |

Note: Sig. at 0.05 level.

5. Conclusions, Implications and Limitations

The purpose of marketing is to disseminate information and pique potential customers' interest in a product. In line with the report of El-Gohary (2012), tourism-related businesses in Ibadan are embracing information technology to promote their products in order to maintain market share through internet marketing. Tourist and hospitality business owners utilize electronic marketing to make personal contact with customers as well as to guarantee that the brand message is consistent across all marketing channels. The outcomes of this study back up Ighomereho and Iriobe's (2019) claim that the challenges to e-marketing adoption in Nigeria are unstable power supply, expensive internet service, and an inconsistent internet network. Tung et al. (2006) found that the poor general state of economic infrastructure and inadequate internet infrastructure are some of the key hurdles of adopting e-marketing, which is consistent with the findings of this study. Despite these challenges, the majority of tourists/guests are willing to engage with tourism/hospitality businesses via online transactions. Regardless of the fact that many of them lack the technological skills required to effectively take advantage of online tourism product offers. The challenges of adopting e-marketing strategies have a significant negative influence on services rendered by the tourism firms investigated.

The tourism industry's long-term sustainability is dependent on the adoption of new ideas to improve its situation. However, in order to reach these goals effectively, tourist organizations must evaluate the impact of e-marketing as a pull factor, as well as the potential hurdles of implementing e-marketing techniques. Furthermore, the issues revealed in this study indicate that e-marketing can have a significant impact on the success of services provided by tourism-related enterprises. Customer satisfaction is the most crucial component that any business should focus on, in order to thrive. Therefore, every organization should strive to meet its consumers' expectations based on their demands. An efficient implementation of e-marketing strategies is a viable medium in achieving the goal of measuring up to the demands and expectations of consumers. People's busy daily routines make it tough for them to find the time to go to the store and buy their daily necessities. People nowadays prefer to utilize the internet to choose their daily needs from a variety of online portals that provide access to a lot of information and product details. On the website or online portal, people choose their goods based on specifications and demand. As a result, it is critical to satisfy the rapidly rising population of online customers/consumers of tourism products by using electronic marketing to provide them with accurate information. Because it is relatively easy to communicate with customers utilizing the internet through various forms of social applications, electronic commerce enhances communication between different types of customers and product/ service providers. Although e-marketing has the potential to boost

business growth, it is contingent on the presence of an enabling environment with dependable facilities and high-quality infrastructure development.

The government, as the country's principal stakeholder in any development initiative, should embark on a nationwide infrastructure renovation program. In order to extend the reach of the Nigerian tourism industry's products, supporting infrastructures for e-marketing, such as electricity, internet, and communication facilities, must be prioritized. In order to alleviate the high tariff and difficulties associated to internet access/usage in the country, network service providers' operations should be properly monitored and regulated.

Despite the study's insightful findings, there are several drawbacks. One of the study's shortcomings is that it is only focused on the opinions of tourists at the selected tourism establishments in Ibadan. Further research could be conducted in other parts of the country to confirm that the challenges of implementing e-marketing in tourism operations are similar across the country. The knowledge of this could possibly hasten the effort towards the improvement of infrastructures for tourism growth and national development in the country.

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