



A Study on the Impact of E-Marketing on Hotels and Tour Operators in Malawi

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ABSTRACT

The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), has gradually been adopted in almost all the sectors of the world. It is without doubt that we can all agree that it has indeed made operations much easier and it is making the world go round. ICT has also been recognized in the field of marketing through the introduction of e-marketing to help with business growth and expansion. We can see that the integration of the internet and marketing strategies has also become a popular tool for the tourism industry, particularly in the area of hospitality. Therefore, this study investigated the impacts of E-marketing on hotels and tour operators in Malawi. The goal was to identify the various ways in which the hotels and tour operators are affected by the use of e-marketing. The study illustrates the impacts of e-marketing on hotels and tour operators in Malawi based on primary and secondary data collected in a form of questionnaires, direct interviews and published articles. The study also gives its conclusions and recommendations based on its findings.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The discovery and use of the internet has brought about diverse ways of executing tasks. The internet has had an influence in the ways in which people execute their jobs and how businesses operate and transact. As lives and professions have been affected, so have respective disciplines such as marketing.

E-marketing, also known as digital marketing has been a revolutionary discovery as it has improved on how businesses promote their products and services. The term E-marketing is also referred to as internet/online marketing, a term defined in a number of ways. Chaffey et al. (2000) defined e-marketing as the use of the internet and digital technologies to conduct marketing activities. Kotler & Armstrong (2004) stated that e-marketing consists of activities which facilitate the sale of products and services and also promote customer relationships over the Internet. From the definitions of various respected authors, we are able to deduce a common factor, which is the fact that e-marketing/online marketing makes use of interactive, virtual spaces for the aim of promoting and selling goods and services. There has to be the existence and use of an internet platform and/or technology bringing about flexibility, speed of time and cost effectiveness in the conduct of business activities over the internet.

For a business to have an edge over competition in our present day, they must keep up with the current trends and some include having a business website, promoting products through social networks and mobile applications, use e-mail as a channel of communication with its business partners and customers, and apply all available information-communication technology (ICT). It needs to provide all information for potential clients in one place at any time of day, from anywhere in the world. That can be possible by using innovative ways of communication and by adapting business operations to demanding requirements of the modern tourist market. This imposes the innovation of practices and the implementation of new technologies in business processes. Therefore, awareness about the necessity of applying ICT in the hotels and tour operators has been risen and we have seen businesses shifted to these modern applications.

One of the advantages of e-marketing for hotels and tour operators in Malawi has been its ability to offer them access to target markets and engage with larger audiences. With e-marketing, the tourism and hospitality sector can now reach potential customers beyond their local existing markets through the use of social media, search engines and email marketing. Hotels and tour operators in Malawi have been able to demonstrate their unique services by blending cultural experiences, wildlife safaris and luxurious accommodation with the touch the warm heart of Africa feel. E-marketing helps the tourism sector create engaging content through videos, blog posts, photos and even interactive posts. However, e-marketing has also presented some challenges for hotels and tour operators in the Malawi. Some challenges include the lack of reliable infrastructure and internet connection throughout the country as a whole. Malawi hasn't fully evolved to the e-marketing ways and as a result, it is hard to keep up with the competition from online travel agencies (OTAs), booking agencies and Expedia. Such platforms have high-end marketing budgets and they dominate the search results as compared to the country.

It is undeniable that e-marketing has had its impacts on hotels and tour operators in Malawi. It is in the light of this, that this study was conducted with the aim to examine the various impacts of e-marketing on hotels and tour operators in Malawi.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Lack of proper infrastructure, taxation, security issues, privacy concerns, high cost of shipping goods to and from Malawi, low penetration of credit cards usually required to shop online, unreliable distribution and delivery processes, residual distrust of paying online in a society where cash is the king, etc. All these issues are generally common with e-marketing and being faced by hotels and tour operators in any other developing country including Malawi. This study will provide adequate information on the Impacts of E-marketing on hotels and tour operators in Malawi.

1.3 RESEARCH GAP

As you look into previously conducted studies, you find that selected authors explored and identified some different pros and cons faced by different sectors in reference to the application and use of e-marketing. However, it has been found that this stream of research was mainly focused on other sectors excluding hotels and tour operators, who have notably shifted towards the use of ICT to run and promote their businesses. Therefore, the aim of this study is to fill the research gap by investigating the various impacts of hotels and tour operators in Malawi.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to investigate the impacts of e-marketing on hotels and tour operators in Malawi. The specific objectives are:

To establish the prevalence of the use e-marketing in the hotels and tour operators in Malawi.

To examine the reasons for the use of marketing in the hospitality industry in Malawi.

To investigate the impacts of e-marketing on hotels and tour operators in Malawi.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

These are some of the questions the study is designed to answer:

What is the prevalence of the use e-marketing in the hotels and tour operators in Malawi?

What are the reasons for the use of e-marketing in the hospitality industry in Malawi?

What are the impacts of e-marketing on hotels and tour operators in Malawi?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

One key promotional activity used by the tourism industry in Cyprus – but also in general – is the promotion of the tourism products on the Internet. The use of the internet to promote products is called e-marketing. This process, i.e. the design and implementation of e-marketing, is not an easy process but it encompasses all those elements also included in traditional marketing starting from understanding customer/consumer behavior and ending with advertising distribution. This becomes even more complex in the field of tourism industry since, in this particular case, the customer acts within a complicated network that is difficult to understand its entirety. Apart from the factors that relate to the product (e.g. the price) there are also other factors involved, such as emotional and psychological factors, that play a significant role in the decision making process of a tourist regarding his destination, the transport means and company he shall use, the services he shall purchase etc. One of the fundamental advantages of e-marketing is that it can easily segment the market and use the customer's web experience to record the characteristics of his online behavior (Constantinides, 2004).

The tourism industry in Malawi has been growing in recent years with hotels and tour operators focusing on providing services that are eco-centric, cultural and with a touch of adventure. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), in 2019, the direct contribution to the country's GDP was MWK231.7bn, accounting for 5.5% of the total GDP. The industry also supported 321,000 jobs, representing 6.8% of total employment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This section covers the methods used to address the objectives of the study. The section also discusses the research design, research population, sampling technique, the instrument for data collection, the method of data analysis and the analytical software used for the study.

This chapter provides and allows the reader to find the detailed information about research methodology. Research methodology is a term that refers to the various sequential steps to be undertaken by a researcher in studying a problem with certain objective in place. Research methodology leads towards the possible solutions to the research problem. This chapter focuses and deals with the following aspects or methodology.

Research.

Nature of data and source of data.

Method of data analysis.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design defines the task of defining the research problem. According to Polit and Beck (2017), a research design outlines the arrangement of conditions, for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. In fact, the research design is the conceptual structure within which the research is conducted.

In this study, a survey research design is adopted and the survey is selected based on the researcher's objectives of the study. A survey studies the sampling individual units from an already existing population and survey data collection techniques e.g. the methods for improving the number and accuracy of responses to a survey.

3.2 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

According to the World Tourism Organization, as of 2019, there were 592 registered accommodation establishments in Malawi, which included hotels, lodges, guesthouses and tour operators. The researcher chose the population of this study to comprise hotels and tour operators in the capital city of Malawi, Lilongwe.

3.3 SAMPLING AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A simple random sampling technique will be used to select 200 respondents from the population. The respondents will consist of equal proportions from both the hotel and tour operators.

3.4 INSTRUMENT/METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The study utilized primary data as a source of deriving data. In relation to the collection of the primary data, a questionnaire was formulated and used to gather the data. The questionnaire was formulated to be a four-point rating scale (Likert scale), which started from strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). The questionnaire ensured that the research questions be related to the research questions of the study.

3.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT

The instrument was face validated 3 experts in the field of measurement and evaluation and research.

3.6 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

A mean score rating method was used to analyses the data based on the 2.5

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter are the researcher's summary, conclusions and recommendations based are on the analysis of the previous chapter are outlined. The findings are based on the study conducted to analyze the impact of e-marketing on hotels and tour operators in Lilongwe, Malawi.

5.1 SUMMARY

This study focused on the impacts of e-marketing on hotels and tour operators in Lilongwe, Malawi. The study was set to address objectives which included the following:

- I. To establish the prevalence of the use e-marketing in the hotels and tour operators in Malawi.
- II. To examine the reasons for the use of marketing in the hospitality industry in Malawi.
- III. To investigate the impacts of e-marketing on hotels and tour operators in Malawi.

OBJECTIVE 1: TO ESTABLISH THE PREVALENCE OF THE USE OF E-MARKETING IN THE HOTELS AND TOUR OPERATORS IN MALAWI

The first objective of this study was to establish the prevalence of the use of e-marketing in the hotels and tour operators in Lilongwe Malawi. It was found that the prevalence of the usage of e-marketing in the hotels and tour operators in Malawi is low. In order to derive to this, an extensive literary survey was conducted. Adopting these research approaches did not only help the researcher identify the prevalence, it also helped them understand the reasons behind the finding. Using these research approaches also helped the research collect and analyze numerical data.

OBJECTIVE 2: TO EXAMINE THE REASONS FOR THE USE OF E-MARKETING IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN MALAWI

The second objective of this study was to examine the reasons for the use of e-marketing in the hospitality industry in Malawi. As per findings in chapter 4, it was found that e-marketing is used to increase the level of productivity in the businesses. Hotels and tour operators that have implemented e-marketing in their operations are able to keep up with the trends of competition and deliver services appreciated by their customers. Another reason for using e-marketing is to boost aware of the populace, create jobs for the youth, increase access to the service and also increase the foreign investment in an economy.

OBJECTIVE 3: TO INVESTIGATE THE IMPACTS OF E-MARKETING ON HOTELS AND TOUR OPERATORS IN MALAWI

The third objective of this study was to investigate the impacts of e-marketing on hotels and tour operators in Lilongwe, Malawi. It has been found that the impacts of e-marketing on hotels and tour operators include increased productivity of operations, boosts awareness of the populace, creates employment for the youth, increases access of services with no limits by increased target audiences while increasing foreign investment in the economy.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study was to assess the various impacts of e-marketing on hotels and tour operators in Lilongwe, Malawi. Three research questions were formulated and guided the flow and course of the study.

In this study, a survey research design was adopted. The population comprises of 10 hotels and 10 tour operators in the capital city and a simple random sampling technique was used to select 200 respondents for the study in the businesses and a questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Relevant literatures were reviewed which guided the objectives and methodology of this study. As result of the field study and analysis of results, the following findings were made:

That the prevalence of the use of e-marketing in the hotels and tour operators in Malawi is low.

That the reasons for the use of e-marketing in the hospitality industry in Malawi include to increase productivity; to boost awareness of the populace; to create employment for the youths; it increases access to the service rendered in the hospitality industry and to increase foreign investment in an economy.

That the impacts of e-marketing on the hotels and tour operators in Malawi include that it increases productivity; it boosts awareness of the populace; it creates employment for the youths; it increases access to the service rendered in the hospitality industry and it increases foreign investment in an economy.

5.3 RECOMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- I. Efforts should be made to reduce the difficulty and complexity in applying, running and managing e-marketing technologies in Malawi.
- II. Government should equally ensure that only qualified experts are allowed to work in the hospitality industry in the state. That way, the industry is well promoted and the best practices are applied to ensure positive growth the industry.
- III. There should be proper orientation the stakeholders on the need to promote the hospitality industry in Malawi.
- IV. Awareness of technology and practices used in e-marketing by hotels and tour operators must be made to the public to reduce the level of distrust between hospitality firms and consumers to boost and encourage business.