Effects of Digital Marketing in Nurturing the Hospitality Industry: A Case Study of Upscale Hotels in Hawassa City, Ethiopia

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Abstract

This research study was conducted to explore the effect of digital marketing in nurturing the hospitality industry using digital marketing platforms to promote the hospitality business in Hawassa City, Ethiopia. The study was conducted on 2 up to 4 stars rated hotels and resorts registered and licensed by the Tourism and regulatory authority of Ethiopia. The study's sample population was 150 respondents from the aggregate population of 241 at 13 upscale hotels and resorts in Hawasa city. The stratified simple random sampling technique was employed. The correlation and regression analyses were used to find the association between digital marketing and the performance of upscale hotels. The study included digital marketing, attracting customer, engaging, retaining, learning, and related customer strategies. The study concluded that the correlation between digital marketing practice and hotel performance was positive and significant. The related back customer strategy negatively affected the performances of star hotels.

Keywords: Digital marketing practices, Ethiopia, Hawassa City, Upscale Hotels performance.

Introduction

The swift technological advancement significantly impacted the business sector and employing and adopting these innovative technologies enable efficient and effective global marketing, (Melián-González & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2016). The internet evolution has turned over to connect the customers, product brands, and marketing, making the customary functions of organizations' strategies and structures outdated. Internet technology emerged as a new platform for buying, selling, and promoting all kinds of businesses. The Internet is powerful, replacing traditional promotion platforms like TV, magazine, radio etc., and changing the unsuitable way of doing business and marketing (Gurneet kaur, 2017).

Digital marketing is an online communication activity in different forms. It includes various technologies like search engine marketing, online partnership, social media, online advertising, and e-mail marketing, (Eley & Tilley, 2009). The term digital marketing has been expressed in different styles like hypermedia marketing, digital marketing, online marketing, and e-marketing, (Dholakia, 2005).

Digital marketing is a very innovative thought in business promotion and marketing through using electronic and other digital technologies combined with traditional methods. Today, most of the marketing goals of businesses can be achieved by electronic media like websites, e-mail, interactive TV, IPTV, and wireless media combined with digital data of customers' characteristics & behaviors, (Chaffey et al., 2009).

The digital marketing platform offers many business opportunities for firms. It is very constructive for their marketing activities like spreading information, attracting new customers, retaining existing ones, and developing relationships with existing customers through online customer relationship management, (Ab Hamid, 2008).

Every type of business organization has recently relied on the Internet as an integral part of marketing communications and strategies. The promotional mix is an essential part of marketing communications. Marketing products and services through the Internet is rapidly growing and online mediums serve as a new marketing communication channel, (Jensen, 2008).

According to (Shaik Javed Parvez et al., 2018), hotels focus on developing new marketing competencies and enhancing guest satisfaction and interaction. The hotels promote business online for the gust already staying in hotels and interested in visiting restaurants close to their places.

The effect of digital marketing practices on the performance of star hotels/resorts can be analyzed through Digital Marketing Framework (DMF), and it revolves around essential elements of e-marketing like attracting, engaging, retaining, learning, and finally relating to customers (kierzkowski et al., 1996).

The present study is getting more prominent in the hospitality industry for several reasons in the Ethiopian context. In recent times, digital marketing tools have leveraged the hospitality industry to enlarge its promotion, advertisement, and services toward its target customers. The prospective customers can be attracted by displaying services through digital marketing. Even though the hospitality industry stakeholders still overlook the great benefits offered by internet marketing to develop new target markets, they typically prefer traditional marketing strategies like newspapers, TV, Radio, etc. (Hsu, 2012).

Against this backdrop, this study materialized based on the assumptions of implementing appropriate digital marketing practices and amplifying the performances of star hotels and resorts. The theoretical aspects of digital marketing have been, until now, in their infancy level, and it is required to build up more theories in digital marketing, (El-Gohary, 2012). This study intends to substantiate the practices of digital marketing with the available limited publications and conduct the research to contribute significantly by analyzing the digital marketing platforms current strategies and their effect on performance and the relationship between digital marketing practices and performances of star hotels/resorts.

Literature Review

The Outline of the Hospitality Industry

The hospitality industry is a sub-division of the tourism sector and is an essential part of the domestic and inbound holiday market. The hospitality demand is forecasted based on a reliable demand for tourism, and it amplifies consumer spending and makes awareness of the secondary financial impact, (Robinson et al., 2013). The hospitality industry comprises numerous businesses like hotels, restaurants, fast food, food service management, coffee shops, and boarding services.

A hotel is defined as a business offering paid lodging on a short-term basis with basic accommodation features like a room with a bed, telephone, Wi-Fi network, TV, mini bar and restaurants, etc. Generally, the larger hotels offer extra gust facilities like fitness center, childcare, swimming pool, business center, conference hall facilities, and social function services. The quality and services of hotels signify according to a star rating system ranging from one to five stars.

In general, luxury hotels are termed star (graded) hotels, and they are classified according to the country's standards as four. Five-star ratings and the market is designed for higher-income consumers. The major intention of star luxury hotels is to recognize the hurdle to developing and main-

taining distinguished superior services with innovations and technology support, (Rayna & Striukova, 2009).

Hospitality Marketing Concepts

According to (Dev et al., 2010), the hospitality sector marketing is distinguished from other sectors. Marketing in the hospitality industry is very complex because it deals with the emotional aspects of consumers' decision-making to purchase leisure products, (Scott et al., 2009). The interest of the stakeholders is also involved in hospitality marketing, (Machlouzarides, 2010). The hospitality organization's main output is performance and services which are distinguished from the goods market in terms of unique characteristics. It is explained as intangibility, inseparability, variability, inability, and vulnerability. Therefore, hoteliers must find ways to ensure their services gain a competitive advantage in the present competitive environment, (Zigan & Zeglat, 2010). When comparing the hotel business with other businesses, it is required to motivate the customers through efforts and costs to make them loyal, (Emir & Koza, 2011). Prospective customers can attract through product formulation, pricing, promotion, and place. It determined that consumers can convert their buying intentions into purchases by seeking a convenient place and gaining sufficient information (Middleton et al., 2009).

Promoting the Hospitality Industry

Upscale hotel promotion is required primarily by creating demand for services, establishing good relationships with intermediaries like travel agencies and tour operators, introducing modern services and innovations, and increasing and sustaining prestige and revenue per guest staying at the hotel in the market. The essential promotional tools required to develop hotel businesses are advertisement, public relations, personal selling and sales promotions, communication tools, and direct marketing to gain importance and a competitive edge in the hospitality industry.

The Growth of Digital Marketing

A broad range of technologies is mutually facilitating the upswing of digital marketing. The constantly growing technologies like the Internet, browsers, widespread computing, and database technologies are the backbone of digital marketing progress, (Debra, 2015). A new trend has built the internet technologies in advertisement and marketing of products and services, (Batra & Keller, 2016). The number of users of Facebook has incredibly increased to billions. (Ladkin & Buhalis, 2016).

One of the professional platforms which connected more than 396 million users and companies across the world is LinkedIn. It is a handy online platform tool for several marketing companies, and it also can seek and approach people from any location around the world. (Hudson & Thal, 2013). According to statistics, more than $400 billion has been spent annually on marketing activities through social media platforms comprising videos, images, e-mails, web portals, online banners, and research (Kim & Ko, 2012).

Impact of Digital Marketing in Transforming the Hospitality Industry

The advent of the Internet and its fabulous development in computer and telecommunication technology have made the world a global village. Data transfer is possible across the globe fastest with the cheapest cost through communication networks satellites and sharing among millions of computers by the Internet. (Batinic, 2013). The Internet is a collection of computer networks connecting millions of computer users and sharing all kinds of information globally like text, sound, and images, (Batinic, 2015).

The increasing practice of digital marketing tools in the hotel sector has significantly changed guests' engagement behavior, management, and marketing strategies. It enables targeting

the customers, support managers, and marketers to plan an appropriate digital marketing strategy in both form and content. According to the world tourism organization opinion, (2014), the potential of the Internet and innovative technologies have brought digital marketing to the tourism and hospitality industry. The tourism and hotel industry's marketing strategies are supported by digital marketing tools like E-mail marketing, websites, weblogs, and social networks combined with mobile applications and online booking platforms. The digital marketing framework helps engage customers and develop marketing strategies, create interest, and encourage customers to participate on their web page, (Martin, 2011).

The visitors may revisit the online platform sites based on swift interaction and posting high quality content of pictures and images encourages the valuable customers to engage through user friendly sites. The most significant challenge in hotel industry marketing is to engage the customers, and it may accomplish by digital promotions, (Danyl, 2014).

After enticing and engage the customers they should retain and the relationship can be maintained with the customers through updating their contacts, keep renewing of content on profile pages are attracting them to revisit the sites frequently. The marketer can make use of switching cost concept by increasing time and energy to spend customers on the sites or develop virtual community on the web, (Martin, 2011). The business invests more resources to establish the relationships with customers to retain them and to prevent switching competitor's sites, (Chan & Guillet, 2011).

The learning of customers is supported by the social media sites that provide opportunity to marketers to find out preferences of customers and test their products and services from the feedback through their interactions in the sites and it would help to business enhancement in future service. The bidirectional communication offered by interactive media, personalized services and communication about availability of those services. The marketer required to maximize the maximum potential of interactive media according to the applicability of products and service category to get the related back of customers.

Methodology
Description of the study area
The research study was conducted in the Hawassa city at sidama region in Ethiopia. According to the central statistical agency in Ethiopia, the aggregate population of the city was 3, 35,508 including male and female 1, 66,009, and 1, 69,499 respectively.

Research approach
The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Qualitative data were collected by in-depth interviews whereas quantitative data was gathered through structured questionnaire with different categories of selected upscale hotels/resorts employees in Hawassa city.

Research Design
This research used the descriptive cross sectional survey and descriptive and explanatory design. The intention of engaged the cross- section analysis to investigate the apparent of association between the digital marketing and performance of star hotels/resorts. The descriptive and exploratory study used to discover digital marketing practices in promoting hospitality industry and its effect on performances of star hotels/resorts.

Sample Size Population
In the total of 14 international hotels, 13 upscale hotels/resorts were selected with ranging from two to four star statuses in Hawassa city. From the aggregate of 241 respondents 150 were se-

lected as sample population under stratified simple random technique. The sample size was determined according to the Yamane Taros (1967), formula n = N/ (1+N (e) 2).

n =241/1+24(0.05)² = 150, therefore the sample size population was 150 respondents. The sample respondents included Information Technology, marketing and front office departments' employees of selected hotels/resorts.

Data sources and collection methods

The study employed both primary and secondary sources to collect the required data. The primary data collected through a structure questionnaire by conducting interview and observations from the selected sample respondents of star hotels/resorts at Hawassa city. The related secondary data were collected from different journals, research studies, books, articles, newsletters and web pages.

Data Analysis Method

The collected quantitative data were analyzed by statistical software package SPSS version 26.0. A five points Likert scale was used to analyze various elements of digital marketing strategies like attract, engage, retain, learn and related back and measure the overall performances of star hotels/resorts like brand equity, market share, customer satisfaction and profitability ranging from 1 to 5 scales i.e. very small extent (1), small extent (2), moderate extent (3), large extent (4) and very large extent (5).

Results and Discussion

The results and discussion part of the study comprised of descriptive and inferential statistics. The qualitative and quantitative data of the study were analyzed, interpreted and presented. The data collected from Information Technology, front office and marketing departments' staffs and marketing managers through interview and observations in selected star hotels/resorts at Hawassa city.

Response Rate of Questionnaire Distribution

The total questionnaires distributed to the selected respondents were 150 in which 142 questionnaires were collected back and remaining 8 questionnaires rejected due to incompletes and not returned by the respondents. These 142 questionnaires were represented about 94.66% response rate.

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics used to analyze, encapsulate and bestow the quantitative data through various tables, percentage, cumulative percentage and Mean and SD.

Economic profile of the Respondents

The economic profile of the selected respondents include gender, age, educational background, work experience, position, number of rooms and star ratings of upscale hotels/resorts were presented and interpreted properly in this section.

Table 1. The economic profile of the respondents

S.No		Variables	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
1	Gender	Male	96	67.60	67.60
		Female	46	32.40	100.00
		Total	142	100.00	
2	Age	Less than 25 years	18	12.68	12.68
		26-35 years	110	77.46	90.14

S.No	Variables		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
		35-45 years	14	9.86	100.00
		Total	142	100.00	
3	Level of education	Diploma holder	9	6.30	6.30
		Degree holder	114	80.30	86.60
		Second Degree holder	19	13.40	100.00
		Total	142	100.00	
4	Work experience	0-5 years	83	58.45	58.45
		6-10 years	38	26.76	85.21
		11-15 years	16	11.27	96.48
		16 and above years	5	3.52	100.00
		Total	142	100.00	
5	Position	Managerial position	14	9.90	9.90
		Supervisory position	11	7.70	17.60
		Employee position	117	82.40	100.00
		Total	142	100.00	
6	Number of Rooms	20-79 Rooms	21	14.80	14.80
		80-139 Rooms	110	77.50	92.30
		140-199 Rooms	11	7.70	100.00
		Total	142	100.00	
7	Star Ratings	Two stars	16	11.30	11.30
		Three stars	50	35.20	46.50
		Four stars	76	53.50	100.00
		Total	142.00	100.00	

Source: Primary source

The above table clearly depicted the demographic profile of the selected respondents of upscale hotels/resorts in Hawassa city. Out of 142 respondents, the gender consisted of male respondents 96 (67.4%) more than female respondents 46 (32.4%). The majority of respondents 110 (77.5%) were fallen in between 26-35 years. The respondents belonged to degree qualification were more 114 (80.3%) than other categories. Most of the upscale hotels/resorts respondents 83 (58.5%) work experience were in between 0-5 years. A large number of respondents 117 (82.4%) were supervisory positions. A good number of upscale hotels/resorts 110 (77.5%) had commonly 80-139 bed rooms. The most of the upscale hotels/resorts 76 (53.5%) got four star ratings status.

Descriptive Analysis of Study Variables

The study was made use of descriptive analysis to examine comprehensively about the various digital marketing strategies like attraction, engaging, retaining, learning, and related back of customers by upscale hotels/resorts. In this section, the digital marketing strategies used by star hotels/resorts were investigated and presented in the form of tables. The respondents' responses were rated and presented like very small extent (1), small extent (2), moderate extent (3), large extent (4) and very large extent (5). The tables were presented as follows:

Table 2. Digital marketing Platforms, strategies and performance indicators of star hotels/resorts

1. Digital marketing platforms	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Social media	2 (1.40 %)	137 (96.50 %)	3 (2.10 %)	4.01	0.188
Search engines	8 (5.60 %)	110 (77.50 %)	24 (16.90 %)	4.11	0.463
E-commerce websites	5 (3.5 %)	102 (71.8 %)	35 (24.6 %)	4.21	0.489
E-mail marketing	14 (9.9 %)	103 (72.5 %)	25 (17.6 %)	4.08	0.520
Content marketing	11 (7.7 %)	114 (80.3 %)	17 (12.0 %)	4.04	0.444
Mobile advertising	16 (11 %)	103 (72.5 %)	23 (16.2 %)	4.05	0.524
Average mean and SD				4.08	0.438
2. Customer attraction strategy					
Present profile page is very attractive	2 (1.40 %)	124 (87.30 %)	16 (11.30 %)	4.10	0.343
The website is showed all digital platforms information	4 (2.80 %)	105 (73.90 %)	33 (23.20 %)	4.20	0.469
The website is showed services offering along with pictures	4 (2.80 %)	98 (69.00 %)	40 (28.20 %)	4.25	0.497
The Website home page is provided hotels/resorts phone numbers	12 (8.5 %)	99 (69.7 %)	31 (21.8 %)	4.13	0.536
The digital platforms are offered attractive discounted services for Promotion	9 (6.3 %)	110 (77.5 %)	23 (16.2 %)	4.10	0.466
Average mean and SD				4.15	0.462
3. Customer engaging strategy					
Instant response for guests enquires on digital marketing platforms	7 (4.90 %)	115 (81.00 %)	20 (14.10 %)	4.09	0.428
Handling guests complaints on digital platforms	7 (4.90 %)	94 (66.20 %)	41 (28.90 %)	4.24	0.532
Updating the new service offerings to guests on digital platforms	4 (2.80 %)	105 (73.90 %)	33 (23.20 %)	4.20	0.469
Clear clarifications Providing to customers on web site pages	4 (2.80 %)	96 (67.60 %)	42 (29.60 %)	4.27	0.504
Offering lucky draws and contests to engage customer	10 (7.00 %)	94 (66.20 %)	38 (26.80 %)	4.20	0.549
Average mean and SD				4.20	0.496
4. Customer retaining strategy					
Offering attractive games, contest and forums to customers to retain	2 (1.40 %)	137 (96.50 %)	3 (2.10 %)	4.01	0.188
Hyperlinks are provided on home pages related sites	4 (2.8 %)	95 (66.9 %)	43 (30.3 %)	4.27	0.507

1. Digital marketing platforms	3	4	5	Mean	SD
A well security features and privacy statements are offered to maintain the guest details on web pages	4 (2.80 %)	88 (62.00 %)	50 (35.2 %)	4.32	0.527
Listened and responded to negative comments of gusts immediately	9 (6.30 %)	91 (64.10 %)	42 (29.60 %)	4.23	0.554
Average mean and SD				4.20	0.444
5. Customer learning strategy					
Considering the customers' expectations and requirements	5 (3.50 %)	85 (59.90 %)	52 (36.60 %)	4.33	0.542
Provided support to chat groups needs and prospects	4 (2.80 %)	89 (62.70 %)	49 (34.50 %)	4.32	0.524
Perform continuous market research with the customers used digital platforms	4 (2.80 %)	82 (57.70 %)	56 (39.40 %)	4.37	0.539
Average mean and SD				4.34	0.535
6. Customer relate back strategy					
Update the customers about content changes in the digital platform	13 (9.20 %)	91 (64.10 %)	38 (26.80 %)	4.18	0.575
Engage in time interaction with the customers through digital platform	6 (4.20 %)	89 (62.70 %)	47 (33.10 %)	4.29	0.540
personalized services and responses provided via digital platform	4 (2.8 %)	95 (66.9 %)	43 (30.3 %)	4.27	0.507
Provided linkages to core business	4 (2.80 %)	88 (62.00 %)	50 (35.20 %)	4.32	0.527
Average mean and SD				4.26	0.537
7.Performance indicators					
Brand equity	13 (9.20 %)	100 (70.40 %)	29 (20.40 %)	4.11	0.534
Brand charms	7 (4.90 %)	94 (66.20 %)	41 (28.90 %)	4.24	0.532
Brand visibility	5 (3.50 %)	105 (73.90 %)	32 (22.50 %)	4.19	0.475
Increase in market share	5 (3.50 %)	97 (68.30 %)	40 (28.20 %)	4.25	0.508
Increase in sales volume	13 (9.20 %)	97 (68.30 %)	32 (22.50 %)	4.13	0.549
Customer loyalty	5 (3.50 %)	84 (59.20 %)	53 (37.30 %)	4.34	0.544
Increased customer satisfaction	4 (2.80 %)	89 (62.70 %)	49 (34.50 %)	4.32	0.524
Increase in profit	4 (2.80 %)	82 (57.70 %)	56 (39.40 %)	4.37	0.539
Average mean and SD				4.24	0.525

Source: Primary source

The preceding table revealed the digital marketing platforms, strategies and performance indicators of upscale hotels/resorts with the highest Mean and SD. According to the table E-commerce websites were mostly used by large number of upscale hotels and resorts Mean 4.21, SD=0.489 were employed for the users. Majority of the customers were attracted by services offered along with the picture in the websites Mean 4.25, SD 0.497. The customers were engaged by clear clarifications provided on the website pages mean 4.27, SD 0.504. The customers were retained by well security features and privacy statements established to maintain the guest details through web pages Mean 4.32, SD 0.527.The continuous performance in conducting market research through customers frequently used the digital platforms would help to learn the customers effectively Mean 4.37, SD 0.539.The providing proper websites links to access the core business would greatly help the customers to interact and giving their feed backs immediately 4.32, 0.527. None of the respondents were replied very small and small extent. The average mean and SD of digital marketing platform, customer strategies and performance indicators were 4.08, 0.438, 4.15, 0.462, 4.20, 0.496 4.20, 0.444, 4.34, 0.535, 4.26, 0.537 and 4.24, 0.525 respectively.

Inferential Statistics

The study employed the inferential statistics to analyze the association between the independent and dependant variables. The reliability and validity test, normality test, spearman correlations and ordinal logistic regression model were used analyze the objectives of the study.

Reliability Test

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to investigate the internal consistency of research instrument. The instrument regarding digital marketing platforms 0.745, digital marketing strategies like customer attracting 0.843, engaging strategy 0.826, retaining 0.725, learning 0.806, relate back strategy0.863 and hotel performance indicators 0.878 were above the standard of Cronbach's alpha value 0.7. Therefore, the relationships among the items were reliable for further analysis of the study.

Normality test

The normality test was conducted to examine the normal distribution of data set based on Skewness and kurtosis Z-test value, Shapiro wilk test p value, histograms, normal Q-Q plots and box plots were visually showed the normal distribution imprecise. Since the data set were not normally distributed the study employed non-parametric method.

Non-parametric test

To satisfy the conditions of the non parametric methods, the model fitting information, goodness of fit, pseudo R-square and test of parallel lines were used.

The results in table 3 indicated the model fitting information statically significant because the P value is below 0.05. Therefore, the calculated P value was 0.000 it showed the model fits the data set very well.

Table 3 was depicted the goodness of fit comprised of Pearson and Deviance Chi-square used to verify the model good fit to the data set. The test result was 1.000 above 0.05 and it indicated insignificance. Therefore, the model fit the data set very well.

Table 3 was showed the Pseudo r-square indicates the proportion of variance explained by the independent variable on the dependant variable in the regression model. The Nagelkerke value was 1.000 which meant 100% change in star hotels/resorts performances on independent variables change.

Table 3 illustrated the parallel lines test was conducted to know the violation of assumption of model. According to the result P value was 1.000 greater than 0.05 and it was not statistically significant. Therefore, the model did not violate the assumption of this test of proportional odds.

Table 3 Results for non-parametric test

Model fitting information				
Model	**-2 Log likelihood**	**Chi-square**	**df**	**Sig.**
Intercept only	493.048	-	-	-
final	0.000	493.048	7	0.000
Goodness of fit				
Model	Chi-square	df	sig	-
Pearson	486.265	860	1.000	-
Deviance	78.904	860	1.000	-
Pseudo r-square				
Cox and Snell	0.969			-
Nagelkerke	1.000			-
Mc Fadden	1.000			-
Test of parallel lines				
Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Null Hypothesis	0.000	-	-	-
General	0.000[b]	0.000	104	1.000

Spearman rank correlation analysis

The research study employed the Spearman rank correlation analysis to present the correlation between the digital marketing platforms (DMP), digital marketing strategies and performance of star hotels/resorts. The effect of digital marketing practices on performance of star hotels/resorts were investigated through correlation analysis.

Table 4. Spearman rank correlation between practices of digital marketing and hotel performance

spearman's rho		DMP	ACS	ECS	RCS	LCS	RBCS	HP
DMP	Correlation coefficient	1.000	0.842[**]	0.739[**]	0.670[**]	0.504[**]	0.594[**]	0.715[**]
	Sing.(2-tailed)	.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142	142
ACS	Correlation coefficient	0.842[**]	1.000	0.805[**]	0.793[**]	0.590[**]	0.602[**]	0.768[**]
	Sing.(2-tailed)	0.000	.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142	142
ECS	Correlation coefficient	0.739[**]	0.805[**]	1.000	0.882[**]	0.798[**]	0.889[**]	0.904[**]
	Sing.(2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142	142
RCS	Correlation	0.670[**]	0.793[**]	0.882[**]	1.000	0.818[**]	0.846[**]	0.880[**]

spearman's rho		DMP	ACS	ECS	RCS	LCS	RBCS	HP
	coefficient							
	Sing.(2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	.	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142	142
LCS	Correlation coefficient	0.504**	0.590**	0.798**	0.818**	1.000	0.892**	0.913**
	Sing.(2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	.	0.000	0.000
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142	142
RBCS	Correlation coefficient	0.594**	0.602**	0.889**	0.846**	0.892**	1.000	0.854**
	Sing.(2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	.	0.000
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142	142
HP	Correlation coefficient	0.715**	0.768**	0.904**	0.880**	0.913**	0.854**	1.000
	Sing.(2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	.
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142	142

**correlation is significant at the 0.01level (2 tailed)

The table 4 expressed the result of correlation analysis between independent variables like customers Attracting, engaging, retaining, learning, relating back strategies, and digital marketing platform and dependent variable i.e. hotel performance. According to the P value (P<0.01) at 99 % confident level, they were positively and significantly correlated with each other.

The correlation results were ordered from highest to lowest values according to the significance of customers' strategies like learning customer strategy (LCS) (r= 0.913), followed by engaging customer strategy (ECS) (r= 0.904), retaining customer strategy (RCS) (r= 0. 880), relating back customer strategy (RBCS) (r=0.854), attracting customer strategy (ACS) (r= 0.768) and digital marketing platform (DMP) (r=715).

Ordinal logistic regression

The study employed the ordinal regression coefficients to interpret the estimated or predicted change in the Log odds in a higher as opposed to lower group or category on the dependent variable per unit increase on the independent variables. Positive estimates or coefficients were used to interpret one for every one unit increase on an independent variable, there is a predicted increase (of a certain value) in the Log odds of following at higher level on the dependant variable.

The above ordinal logistic regression results (table 5) showed the one unit of increase on customers' strategies caused increment on performances of star hotel/resorts. Therefore, one unit of increase on customers' attraction, engaging and learning strategies were led to increase on hotel performance by 9.380, by11.479, 9.487 respectively. The Digital marketing platforms were significant and one unit of increase on digital platforms increased the hotel performance by 10.206.

However, the customer retaining strategy was insignificant, but it was positively increased on hotel performance by 2.286. The customers relating back strategy was insignificant and negatively decreased on the hotel performance like one unit of increase on related back strategy decreased the hotel performance by create negatively decrease by -3.085.

Table 5. The Ordinal logistic regression

		Esti-mates	Std. er-ror	Wald	df	sig	95% confidence	
							Lower bound	Upper bound
Thre-shold	[HP = 3.50]	107.731	12.926	69.459	1	.000	82.396	133.066
	[HP = 3.75]	114.306	13.603	70.610	1	.000	87.644	140.967
	[HP = 4.00]	121.066	14.155	73.153	1	.000	93.323	148.809
	[HP = 4.13]	121.577	14.210	73.198	1	.000	93.725	149.428
	[HP = 4.25]	127.160	14.869	73.135	1	.000	98.017	156.304
	[HP = 4.38]	128.790	14.988	73.832	1	.000	99.413	158.167
	[HP = 4.50]	135.409	15.779	73.646	1	.000	104.483	166.334
	[HP = 4.63]	138.864	16.635	69.683	1	.000	106.260	171.468
	[HP = 4.88]	141.656	16.945	69.889	1	.000	108.445	174.867
Loca-tion	ACS	9.380	2.502	14.058	1	.000	4.476	14.283
	ECS	11.479	2.536	20.488	1	.000	6.509	16.450
	RCS	2.286	2.227	1.053	1	.305	-2.079	6.651
	LCS	9.487	1.390	46.610	1	.000	6.764	12.211
	RBCS	-3.085	1.833	2.834	1	.092	-6.678	.507
	DMP	10.206	1.242	67.529	1	.000	7.772	12.640
	[Gender=0]	-.663	.573	1.340	1	.247	-1.785	.460
	[Gender=1]	0[a]	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[Edu=1]	-.019	1.181	.000	1	.987	-2.335	2.296
	[Edu=2]	.342	.739	.214	1	.644	-1.106	1.790
	[Edu=3]	0[a]	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[Position=1]	-1.586	.911	3.029	1	.082	-3.373	.200
	[Position=2]	.604	.933	.418	1	.518	-1.225	2.433
	[Position=3]	0[a]	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[Star grade=2]	.442	.825	.287	1	.592	-1.175	2.059
	[Star grade=3]	.489	.573	.729	1	.393	-.634	1.613
	[Star grade=4]	0[a]	.	.	0	.	.	.

Conclusion

The conclusion was derived based on the research study results on Effects of Digital Marketing in Nurturing the Hospitality Industry. The digital marketing platforms (social media, search engines, e-commerce websites, e-mail marketing) were widely employed by majority of upscale hotels/resorts for their business promotion in the Hawassa city. Nevertheless, the various customers' strategies (attraction, engaging, retention and learning) were greatly supported to increase the performances of star hotels/resorts; on the other hand it was adversely affected by the customers' related back strategy. The reason behind that, there was an ineffective framework and focus on customers' feedback mechanism. The causes for failure and negative impact on the performance of this strategy due to impersonal physical and emotional services, lack of personal intimacy, intermittent review and updating customers profile, sluggish response to customers request, query, grievances and experience during their stay, sporadic contact with tours and travel agencies, unable to get appropriate

information via oral or web portals and ineffective follow-up mechanism on customers complaints, suggestions and actions.

The posh hotels/resorts administrations have to focus more on this strategy to improve their performances adequately by incorporating auto response reply service round the clock, automatically tagging the customers comments, complaints and suggestions to concerned managers, online complaints verifications and proper enquiry, accepting and taking responsibility without ignoring and eliminating the negative comments from the top management notice, providing much importance for online hotel reviews and feedback mechanism, encourage intimate treatment for customers before and after their stay.

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