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DIGITAL MARKETING IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: ADOPTION, USE, FIRM PERFORMANCE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Antoneta Njeri Kariru

PhD Hospitality Management, Lecturer, Department of Hospitality, Travel and Tourism Management, Murang'a University of Technology, P.O Box 75-10200, Murang'a, Kenya. anjeri@mut.ac.ke, +254 702861175.

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ABSTRACT

Digital marketing integrates electronic technology with traditional marketing concepts and covers strategies such as social media, video, content, affiliate, mobile and internet marketing. Embracing digital marketing can contribute to firm performance and national development. This review paper explores digital marketing in the hospitality industry. The objectives of the review are to establish how the facilities can adopt and use digital marketing, determine how digital marketing can affect the performance of the firms and highlight how digital marketing can contribute to Kenya Vision 2030 and sustainable development goals. The paper builds on the author's knowledge, observations and experiences on digital marketing in the hospitality industry and explores secondary data from books, journal articles, newspapers and conference papers. The paper highlights the digital tools that the firms can adopt including the internet, mobile, video and social media and shows how the tools can be used to convince, educate and inspire stakeholders. The review also reveals that digital marketing can affect the non-financial and financial performance of hospitality firms. Digital marketing can contribute to customer satisfaction, competitive advantage, profits and costs. This study finds that digital marketing can contribute to Kenya Vision 2030 through selling and marketing hospitality products. Digital marketing also promotes sustainable development goals of climate action and economic growth. The paper concludes that hospitality firms should embrace digital marketing for enhanced performance and national development.

INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing is a modern marketing strategy that has been boosted by the growth in information technol-

ogy, particularly electronic technology. It involves the adoption of marketing tools such as the internet, social media, mobile, video, content, affiliate and search engine optimization (Khan and Nawaz, 2021). It can be a source of competitive advantage for hospitality firms thus enhancing the tourism performance of the country relative to competitors (Leite and Azevedo, 2017). This can be achieved by attractively targeting a wide range of local and international tourists. Researchers like Chaengeheau (2015) and Kaur and Chourasia (2021) have looked at digital marketing in the hospitality industry. However, little has been documented about the adoption and use of digital marketing especially during the covid-19 pandemic and its impact on firm performance and national development. This review paper consequently explored digital marketing in hospitality facilities by answering the following questions:

1. How can hospitality facilities adopt digital marketing?
2. How can hospitality facilities use digital marketing?
3. How can digital marketing affect the performance of hospitality facilities?
4. How can digital marketing contribute to the Kenya Vision 2030?
5. How can digital marketing contribute to the attainment of sustainable development goals (SDG)?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital marketing, also called internet, e-marketing, or web marketing can be defined as "the application of the internet and digital technologies in conjunction with traditional communications to achieve marketing objectives" (Chaffey, 2012 as cited by Kaur, 2017, p. 73). Digital marketing introduces electronic technology to traditional marketing concepts. It uses electronic media, wireless media and digital databases on customers (Farrel, 2017). Instead of using printed media, digital marketing calls for the use of tools such as electronic billboards, videos, mobile phones and internet when marketing (Kariru, Kambona and Odhuno, 2017). These tools offer attractive visual displays and fast communication speeds while targeting wide audience bases (Khan and Nawaz, 2021).

Digital marketing can complement the 4 P's marketing strategies (Ryan and Jones, 2009; Chaengeheau, 2015). The product can be delivered, promoted and sold online via displays and illustrations, the price and purchases can be communicated and performed online via credit cards and debit cards, the distribution can be done via emails, websites and central reservation systems and the promotion can be conducted via electronic tools such as the social media, internet, websites, mobile phones and video.

Almost half the world population uses the internet including social media and mobile technologies (Parlov, Perkov and Sicaja, 2016). This indicates that digital marketing can be an effective tool for reaching a wide customer base. It has therefore gained popularity among the majority of consumers who use it for communication and information search (Stephen, 2015). Popular communication and information search tools in the hospitality

industry include social media particularly Twitter, Instagram, Facebook/Meta, the internet, websites, mobile phones (Leite and Azevedo, 2017) and electronic billboard displays.

Modern firms are embracing digital marketing in keeping up with changing marketing trends and tools for enhanced competitiveness (Parlov *et al*, 2016). Such trends include the rapid changes in technology, technological advances and ever-changing demographic habits and preferences which include heavy reliance and use of digital tools such as smartphones, laptops, tablets and ipads.

Many firms are also investing in digital marketing because of its advantages. The internet offers fast, cost-effective, quality communication that breaks down physical communication barriers such as remote locations (Mulholland and Cachon, 2004). It offers privacy, 24 hours access and appealing visual effects. The internet and social media hasten communication and breakdown geographical barriers in communication while reducing administration costs for the business thus enhancing competitiveness.

The key advantage of digital marketing is its interactivity (Parlov *et al*, 2016). Digital tools allow for live conversations and the exchange of information via videos and chats. This interactivity facilitates direct communication among tourism stakeholders including businesses and customers (Kaur, 2017). This hastens the speed at which useful information is exchanged and transactions are made.

Digital marketing can, however, "be uncontrolled involving live conversations, time intensive, with imitators and with many updates and platforms that are difficult to keep up with" (Farrel, 2017, p. 14). Live conversations generally limit the control of the contents of information exchanged. Time is needed to keep track of and respond to queries and transactions which have been made online. The wide reach which is a characteristic of digital communication, especially via mobile, social media and internet provide a continuous and 24-hour exchange of information which can lead to the accumulation of updates. It is difficult to ascertain the identity of online users who may use fake names and identities. The wide range of popular media available for use can also make it difficult to track every piece of information communicated.

Digital marketing calls for heavy investment in information technology and dedicated sales teams to constantly keep track of online queries, leads and sales. Mulholland and Cachon, (2004) found that lodges incurred digital marketing as the greatest expense on their marketing budgets as it requires heavy investment in monetary and time resources. Mahmutovic (2021) established a negative relationship between digital marketing orientation and hotel marketing performance hence advocating for elaborate planning before adopting it. High costs can therefore deter the adoption of digital marketing coupled with challenges such as an unskilled workforce, fear, bureaucracy, ever-changing technology, obsolete technologies, cyber-crime, fraud, lack of management support and limited resources and infrastructure. Cunha, Correia and Costa (2021) also found that three-star hotels paid less attention to digital platforms for promotions than four-star hotels thus showing that hospitality facilities have room to improve their digital marketing strategies.

This review paper was guided by the contingency theory. According to Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1995), the

contingency theory describes the organization as an open system that interacts with its environment. Siu and Kirby (1995) posit that the relationship between strategy and performance will vary based on the size of the firm and the business environment. Zeithalm, Varadarajan and Zeithalm (1988) identify contingency variables such as consumer behaviour attributes, organizational characteristics, resources and broader environmental uncertainty; response variables such as marketing strategies; and performance variables such as key performance indicators as essential aspects of this theory. Heiens and Pleshka (2011, p. 32) believe that there should be a fit between "strategy, organizational structure and the environment to guarantee success". According to Ginsberg and Venkatraman (1995) as cited by Heiens and Pleshka (2011), the theory links organizational factors, environmental characteristics and strategic responses. The contingent variable in this review was the prevailing environment during the covid-19 pandemic. The response variables were the adoption and use of digital marketing by the facilities. The performance variables were reflected by non-financial and financial measures of performance and national development.

This paper mostly reports secondary data on the adoption and use of digital marketing and the relationship between digital marketing and firm performance and national development. The author reviewed materials like books, journal articles, newspapers and conference papers. Some observations were based on the author's knowledge and experiences. Parlov *et al.* (2016) similarly looked at new trends in tourism destination branding, digital marketing by reviewing literature and secondary sources of data. Stephen (2015) likewise studied the role of digital and social media marketing on consumer behaviour and reviewed articles published in four leading consumer research journals.

RESULTS

How hospitality facilities can adopt digital marketing

Businesses can use a variety of tools when adopting digital marketing. Digital marketing tools include website, social media, search engine optimization, email, content and mobiles (Kaur, 2017). Similar tools for digital marketing are content marketing, search advertising, online advertising, social media, affiliate marketing, video marketing and mobile marketing (Stokes and the minds of Quirks, 2013).

Parvez, Meyenudin, Aruns and Janahan (2018) found that hotels had embraced social media marketing, Search Engine Optimization, video marketing and Property management systems (PMS). Likewise, four- and five-star hotels in Kenya have embraced social media such as Twitter, Facebook and trip advisor in keeping up with advances in marketing trends (Kariru *et al*, 2017).

The Covid-19 pandemic began in the year 2019 (World Health Organization, WHO, 2020). The pandemic, directly and indirectly, affected the marketing of hospitality firms globally. During the pandemic, travel was restricted and tourist numbers and travel across the world dropped (UNWTO, 2020). As a result, the benefits of traditional marketing tools such as personal selling, sales promotion and advertisements through brochures were

reduced as physical interactions and experiences including travel, hospitality stays and entertainment were discouraged. Since physical movement was limited, one way for hospitality firms to safely maintain contact and communication with their public was through digital media such as social networks (Bovsh, Rasulova, Bosovska, Boiko and Okhrimenko, 2020). Virtual products offered through social media platforms became popular as a replacement for actual travel to tourist sites (Kariru and Ndungu, 2021).

Several studies have explored digital marketing during the covid-19 pandemic. Saha and Kar (2020) investigated the impact of digital marketing on consumer perception during the lockdown in India and found that most respondents used digital marketing to acquire new products hence proposing the use of digital marketing especially social media during lockdowns associated with the pandemic. Kumar (2020) likewise found that digital marketing is important during the pandemic as it increased safety and trust. Oliveira, Santos, Sousa and Lopes (2021) moreover conducted a qualitative study on 9 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and found that the firms had embraced both digital and traditional marketing during the pandemic. The authors further concluded that "digital marketing tools tend to be free, easy to handle and manage and allowed great interactivity with the target audience, and they become the preferred ones for the SMEs". Kaur and Chourasia (2021) and Mataram, Jendra, Siwantara and Dewi (2021) as well advocated for the adoption of website and social media experiences to manage the negative impact of covid-19 on hotels.

Hospitality facilities can therefore adopt the different digital marketing strategies and tools that were posited by Farrel (2017) and are illustrated in Table 1.

• Social media marketing	• Affiliate marketing
• Content marketing	• Internet marketing
• Video marketing	• Mobile marketing
• Search engine optimization (SEO)	• Online marketing
• Website marketing	• Pay per click
• Online advertising	• Online public relations
• E-newsletters and promotional services	• E-contact strategy
• Social customer relationship management	• Social commerce
• Coupon and promotion sites	• Search advertising
• Electronic billboard displays	• Email marketing
• Viral marketing	• Loyalty sites (points, cashback or charitable organizations)

Table 1: Digital marketing strategies and tools that can be adopted by hospitality facilities

As shown in Table 2, the hospitality firms can adopt social media tools such as Twitter, Instagram, Linked In and Facebook/Meta for communication with stakeholders.

• Tumblr	• Pinterest
• Instagram	• Facebook/Meta
• Linked In	• Twitter

Table 2: Social media tools that can be adopted by hospitality facilities

Table 3 gives content marketing tools that can be important to the firms including games, quizzes and competitions for stakeholders.

• Entertainments	• Quizzes
• Virals	• Competitions
• Branded videos	• Games

Table 3: Content marketing tools that can be adopted by hospitality facilities

How hospitality facilities can use digital marketing

Digital marketing tools are important for most businesses. Hospitality facilities can use digital marketing in different ways as suggested by Farrel (2017) and illustrated in Table 4.

• Communication	• Generate positive word of mouth
• Enhance guest satisfaction	• Provide interesting content
• Ensure guest delight	• Provide level online playing field
• Inspire	• Cater to mobile consumers
• Convince	• For brand reputation
• Educate	• Better return on investment (ROI)
• Entertain	• Earn people's trust
• Online business survival	• Entice people to take favourable action
• Book marking	• Networking
• Streaming	• Publishing
• Providing customer service	• Blogging
• Advancing social knowledge	• Conducting searches
• Generate better revenue	• Deliver conversions into leads, subscribers and sales
• For more cost effectiveness than traditional marketing	• Facilitate interaction with targeted audiences

Table 4: How to use the digital tools

According to Farrel (2017), different digital tools can be used for various purposes as highlighted in Tables 5 to

15.

Table 5 shows that digital tools such as reviews and community forums can be used to inspire stakeholders.

• Widgets	• Community forums
• Celebrity endorsements	• Reviews

Table 5: Digital tools used to Inspire

Table 6 shows that digital tools like articles and press releases can be used to educate stakeholders.

• Articles	• E-books
• Infographics	• Press releases
• Guides	• Trend reports
• Reports and web papers	• Demo videos
• E news	• Blogs

Table 6: Digital tools used to Educate

Table 7 shows that digital tools including webinars, events and case studies can be used to convince stakeholders.

• Events	• Ratings
• Product features	• Interactive demos
• Webinars	• Calculations
• Data sheet	• Case studies
• Check lists	• Price guide

Table 7: Digital tools used to Convince

As indicated in Table 8, some digital tools like Reddit and Digg can be used for social bookmarking.

• Reddit	• Digg
• Delicious	• Pinterest

Table 8: Digital tools used for Social Bookmarking

As illustrated in Table 9, digital tools such as Linked In, Twitter and Facebook/Meta can be effective for social networking.

• Linked In	• Facebook/Meta
• Twitter	• Google docs
• Slide share	• YouTube

Table 9: Digital tools used for Social Networking

Popular digital tools for social streaming include Youtube and Vimeo as highlighted in Table 10.

• Itunes	• Fickr

• Vimeo	• YouTube
• Tiktok live	• Instagram live
• Twitter	• Linked In
• Facebook/Meta	• Company website

Table 10: Digital tools used for Social Streaming

Blogs, niche and general media sites are digital tools that can be used for social publishing as shown in Table 11.

• Google display/Network publishers	• Blogs
• General media sites	• Niche sites

Table 11: Digital tools used for Social Publishing

Table 12 displays digital tools like Twitter and social commerce reviews that can be used for social customer service.

• Social commerce reviews	• Get satisfaction
• Twitter	• Facebook/Meta

Table 12: Digital tools used for Social Customer Service

Mobile apps and company blogs and forums are digital tools that can be used for social blogging as highlighted in Table 13.

• Company blog	• Company forum
• Mobile apps	• Company website

Table 13: Digital tools used for Social Blogging

Digital tools such as Wikipedia, article sites and Niche communities provide effective tools for advancing social knowledge as illustrated in Table 14.

• Wikipedia	• How to sites
• Article sites	• Niche communities
• Q & A (Questions and Answers) sites	• Blogs

Table 14: Digital tools used for Advancing Social Knowledge

Yahoo bing, Google shopping, Google my business and Google text are digital tools that can be adopted for social searches as indicated in Table 15.

• Google shopping	• Google text
• Google my business	• Yahoo bing

Table 15: Digital tools used for Social Searches

How digital marketing can affect the performance of hospitality facilities

Digital marketing is needed for business sustainability (Kaur, 2017). It is important for hotels (Kumar and Syed, 2021). It can be used to attract new customers and retain old ones thus ensuring constant business for the facility. Social media marketing is important and effective in hospitality marketing (Yogitha, 2018).

Digital marketing can affect the different dimensions of the non-financial performance of hospitality facilities as shown in Table 16.

• Competitiveness	• Service quality
• Resource utilization	• Quality products and services
• Customer satisfaction	• Innovativeness
• Positive word of mouth	• Competitive positions
• Qualified and competent employees	• Guest benefits
• Response to guest needs and wants	• Meeting customer requirements on time
• Market penetration	• Low employee turnover
• Guest loyalty	• Competitive advantages
• Annual product innovations	• Timely delivery of supplies
• Corporate sponsorship	• Community service projects
• Community service projects	• Low equipment breakdown frequency
• Environmental projects	• Environmental/Community perspective
• Employee motivation	• Better occupancy levels than competitors
• Enhance employee training and development programs	• Maintaining star rating classification level
• Delivering guest products and services on time	• Environmental conservation schemes and projects

Table 16: Dimensions of non-financial performance that can be affected by digital marketing

Digital marketing can also affect the different dimensions of financial performances of the facilities as highlighted in Table 17.

• Profitability	• Turnover
• Sales	• Daily average room rate
• Return on investment (ROI)	• Share prices
• Earnings per share	• Net profit
• Gross profit	• Labour cost percentage

• Total revenue	• Cost
• Total operating costs	• Food cost percentage
• Daily average meal check	• Beverage cost percentage
• Market share percentage	• Total sales
• Sales growth	• Room turnover
• Seat turnover	• Daily room occupancy
• Inventory turnover	• Food and beverage sales
• Current assets to current liabilities ratio	• Capital/Shareholder's capital investment

Table 17: Dimensions of financial performance that can be affected by digital marketing

How digital marketing can contribute to the Kenya vision 2030

Kenya is a leading tourist destination in Africa (UNWTO, 2022). The Kenya Vision 2030 aims at marketing tourism to a wide array of guests including the domestic and international market in addition to new and emerging markets other than the traditional markets. Digital marketing is a modern type of marketing that embraces modern tools and technologies which hasten and increase the efficiency and attractiveness of the marketing content delivered to target audiences. Adopting digital marketing when promoting Kenya as the preferred long and short-haul tourist destination to both local and international tourists can increase tourism activities in the country. It can also enhance destination marketing by providing attractive displays of tourist sites and fast and reliable communication and transactions.

How digital marketing can contribute to sustainable development goals (SDG)

The United Nations (UN) came up with the sustainable development goals (SDG) on the 25th of September 2015. The sustainable development goals (SDG) were developed to protect the natural and manmade resources including products and destinations on which the tourism and hospitality industries thrive while addressing the needs of the host communities in the areas where tourism is practised. The seventeen sustainable development goals (SDG) address different agendas (United Nations, UN, 2017). The goals proposed by the United Nations, UN, (2017) as listed in Table 18 are;

1.	No poverty
2.	Zero hunger
3.	Good health and wellbeing
4.	Quality education
5.	Gender equality

6.	Clean water and sanitation
7.	Affordable and clean energy
8.	Decent work and economic growth
9.	Industry, innovation and infrastructure
10.	Reduced inequalities
11.	Sustainable cities and communities
12.	Responsible consumption and production
13.	Climate action
14.	Life below water
15.	Life on land
16.	Peace, justice and strong institutions
17.	Partnerships for the goals

Table 18: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

Digital marketing in hospitality firms can contribute to the goals of zero poverty, ending hunger, quality of education, economic growth and climate action.

DISCUSSION

How hospitality facilities can adopt digital marketing

The tourism industry has competitively embraced digital marketing (Kaur, 2017). Both hospitality businesses and their customers and tourism stakeholders such as suppliers and distributors like travel agents and tour operators are relying on digital marketing platforms for their hospitality dealings, transactions and communication. Chaengeheau (2015) found that most travellers in Thailand used digital marketing tools for communication and information search. The tools include websites, internet, search engines, social media, mobile phones and email. Social media and mobile phones are gaining popularity (Stephen, 2015). These media are convenient and easy to use. Social media provides wide geographical coverage and allows for interactivity and visual displays of products. Mobile phones facilitate personal calls to businesses and prospective clients and downloading of applications which can support online searches and mobile payments and transactions.

Digital marketing offers a safe option for hospitality firm marketing during crises such as pandemics when social interaction between people may be restricted. It facilitates fast, affordable and live communication with minimal physical contact. Coupled with visual appeal and widespread internet connectivity, digital marketing can be used to remind, educate and encourage customers to consume hospitality products especially when physical communication through traditional marketing such as brochures, sales promotions and personal selling becomes impossible or restricted. It can be used to deliver hospitality experiences at the convenience of the cus-

tomer through streaming and facilitate the sharing of experiences through social media, networking and blogging.

Therefore, the digital marketing strategies and tools that can be adopted by hospitality facilities include social media, content, website, online, affiliate, internet, mobile, email, viral, search engine optimization and video marketing. The firms can use the social media tools like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook/Meta to inform customers about their products and encourage the sharing of photos, videos, experiences and information. They can use tools such as Linked In to attract and communicate with prospective and existing employees. The content marketing tools including virals, entertainment and branded videos can provide entertainment and interaction forums for stakeholders like customers. Tools such as quizzes, competitions and games can be used to create fun environments and attract customers while rewarding them for participating.

How hospitality facilities can use digital marketing

Digital marketing can be a niche marketing tool (Parlov *et al.*, 2016). It can be used to communicate, inform, educate, convince, inspire, network, generate interest and entertain customers. It can be used to reach many customers simultaneously, attractively and competitively display unique products and services which distinguish businesses and highlight the competitive benefits to be enjoyed from visiting the facility. Digital platforms like Tripadvisor have been established to influence word of mouth (Cunha *et al.*, 2021). The firms can also use digital tools to stream, blog and publish information.

Among the tools used to inspire, widgets provide attractive, fast and easy access to apps on electronic devices like mobile phones. Community forums can be used to bring together customers who thereafter share positive experiences in the facilities thus providing free marketing and selling platforms. Reviews can provide firms with information on stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes towards their products and services. Celebrity endorsements can further instil consumer trust in the products and services.

As for the tools used to educate stakeholders, E-news, reports, web papers, articles, press releases, infographics and trend reports can be used to provide detailed information and reports to stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, employees, shareholders and the media thus making them effective tools for internal and external communication. Digital tools like E-books, guides and demo videos can be used to educate stakeholders about the firms' facilities, products, services and operations.

Tools used to convince including ratings, data sheets, price guides, checklists and calculations can be used to attract customers and investors through favourable ratings and positive figures. Case studies can provide real-life events that have succeeded. Events, interactive demos and webinars can bring together stakeholders like customers thus facilitating personal interactions and marketing. Product features can provide comprehensive information about hospitality firms' products and services.

Social bookmarking tools like Reddit and Delicious can provide means of conveniently and quickly saving in-

formation and pages that seem appealing or interesting to stakeholders like customers while online.

Popular tools for social networking like slide share can facilitate the sharing of slides and presentations while Youtube can be used to share videos and other visual content. Social networking tools can be used to build relationships with stakeholders such as customers and employees thus enhancing communication and interactions.

Social streaming tools such as Facebook/Meta, Tiktok live, Youtube and Twitter can be used to record, run and share videos and features on the firms' products, services and experiences including live events.

Social publishing tools like blogs and general media sites can enable the firms to display information that may be relevant to stakeholders like customers, media and employees. Such information could include offers, events and experiences at the hospitality facilities. Niche sites can be used to target niche markets such as the youth and elderly. Google displays/network publishers can be effective when advertising the facilities on Google Ads.

Social customer service tools including Twitter and Get Satisfaction can help initiate and maintain communication with customers about products, services and experiences thus enhancing service delivery throughout the consumer buying process.

For social blogging, company blogs provide effective ways for sharing experiences in the form of narratives and stories. The firms can use company websites to attractively share information about products, services and experiences thus attracting stakeholders such as customers and investors. Company forums encourage internal communication among employees. Mobile apps include Whatsapp and Tiktok which can be used to communicate with customers and other stakeholders like suppliers and employees and share contents.

The tools for advancing social knowledge such as Wikipedia, How to sites and Article sites can display information about the firms' products, services and operations and be used to enlighten stakeholders like the media, customers and existing and prospective employees thus enhancing public relations and communication. Niche communities can enable hospitality customers with similar interests to interact and share information.

The social search tools like Yahoo bing can help market the firms through search engine optimization and increase online visibility. Google my business can be used to market the firm as a destination. Google shopping can be used to list and market hospitality products on online shopping websites.

How digital marketing can affect the performance of hospitality facilities

Digital marketing can affect non-financial and financial performance of hospitality firms. Digital marketing particularly via Facebook/Meta can be used to attract customers, communicate, brand, run events, competitions and research (Farrel, 2017). This contributes to the firm's communication and promotional efforts through long-term strategies such as advertisements, short-term incentives and public relations initiatives. Tools like Pinterest can be used to "find out how products and services fit into the lifestyle of target markets" (Farrel, 2017, p. 34) thus providing an alternative to traditional marketing research methods which mostly relied on the administration of questionnaires and interviews to customers. Google search can be used in search engine optimization (Farrel,

2017) which can increase the business's visibility on online platforms.

Digital marketing can be used to harness modern techno-savvy customers thus giving competitive advantages, especially if and when targeting online audiences with products and services that are suited for digital marketing while keeping in mind business goals, competitors, customers and performance (Ryan and Jones, 2009). The visual display of hospitality products such as food and beverage items, conference facilities, room amenities, ancillary facilities and guest rooms on digital marketing platforms like the internet and websites can increase sales by generating queries which can be converted into successful leads and sales.

Digital marketing can be used for branding and meeting customer needs (Kaur, 2017). Internet marketing can help attract new customers and retain old ones and reach a wide customer base (Mulholland and Cachon, 2004). This is due to its fast nature coupled with 24-hour access, security, worldwide reach and confidentiality.

Digital marketing reduces organizational costs, allows diversification of customer base, reaches a wider customer base and has the potential to convert leads into customers (Mulholland and Cachon, 2004). Digital marketing can reduce costs on items such as stationery needed for the production of printed promotional materials, reach a global audience and be used to convince customers to make a purchase online which influences sales growth.

How digital marketing can contribute to the Kenya vision 2030

Adopting digital marketing when promoting Kenya can provide avenues to attractively and quickly present information on tourism products and destinations in interactive platforms such as social media, mobile phones, videos and internet. Digital marketing tools can facilitate fast communication and exchange of information with guests. The tools can enable quick and secure transactions. They can contribute towards the positive word of mouth and sharing of experiences through online platforms like Trip advisor.

How digital marketing can contribute to sustainable development goals (SDG)

Digital marketing in hospitality firms can contribute to the attainment of sustainable development goals (SDG). Digital marketing can provide an effective and interactive platform for educating stakeholders on sustainable tourism destinations and products. Local communities trained on digital marketing tools and strategies can use the media to promote sustainable tourism and get employment as marketers thus ending poverty and promoting zero hunger. Research and seminars on digital marketing can provide information and knowledge on modern trends and tools in the marketing field consequently improving the quality of education. Local communities equipped with knowledge and skills in digital marketing can secure decent work hence promoting economic growth. Embracing digital marketing can reduce the use of traditional marketing media such as printed materials which encourage the depletion of forests thus embracing climate action. However, the appealing nature and wide audience reach due to digital marketing can lead to an influx of tourists to popular destinations therefore

negatively affecting tourism development.

Conclusion

This paper investigated digital marketing in the hospitality industry in light of performance and national development. The review found that hospitality facilities have embraced digital marketing tools including internet, viral and content marketing. The facilities use these tools to communicate, educate and inform their stakeholders. The findings show that digital marketing can impact non-financial and financial performance and positively contribute to Kenya Vision 2030 and sustainable development goals (SDG). The adoption and use of digital marketing can therefore affect the performance of hospitality firms and national development.

This review has provided important information on digital marketing in the hospitality industry. It is however based on secondary data and the author's knowledge, experiences and observations thus lacking empirical findings derived from the collection of primary data through questionnaires, focus group discussions, observations or interviews. The author consequently recommends empirical studies with similar research objectives for further bridging of gaps in knowledge.

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