

MEKELLE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF PALEO ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE
CONSERVATION
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STUDIES



ASSESSMENT OF E-MARKETING PRACTICES IN STAR-RATED HOTELS: A CASE STUDY OF MEKELLE CITY, TIGRAI

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Hospitality Management

By:

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February, 2025

Mekelle, Tigray, Ethiopia

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to God for His countless blessings, guidance, and opportunities that have enabled me to complete this thesis. I am immensely thankful to my advisor, Dejen Gebreyohans (PhD Fellow), for his unwavering support, expert guidance, and patience throughout my Master's journey. His invaluable contributions have been instrumental to the success of this work, and I deeply appreciate his mentorship.

Additionally, I acknowledge Mr. Hailay Gebreegziabher's encouragement and financial support. I am grateful to my colleagues, Mr. Gashaw Girmai, Mr. Yemane Gedlu, and Mr. Brhanu Hishe, for sharing their experiences and knowledge, which greatly assisted me.

My sincere thanks also go to Addisalem Tekulu (PhD Fellow) for his motivation and encouragement, and to Mekelle University and the Tigray Culture and Tourism Bureau for their support.

Lastly, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all the participants in my study. Their willingness to share their experiences and perspectives was invaluable, and without their contributions, this research would not have been possible. Thank you all for your time, support, and guidance in making this thesis a real.

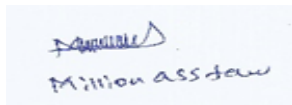
DECLARATION

I, Million Assfaw, declare that this thesis entitled “Assessment of e-marketing practice, in star rated hotels: a case study of Mekelle City Tigray is a product of my original research work.

I confirm that the thesis has not been submitted for the award of any academic degree, diploma, or certificate to earn any degree. The views of the research participants have been properly acknowledged. As far as I know, I have fully admitted the materials and pieces of information used in the study. All the research procedures imitate the expected standards and regulations of Mekelle University.

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Certification

This is to certify Miss Million Assfaw Gebregergs has completed his thesis work entitled by ‘‘Assessment of E-marketing practice, in star rated hotels: a case study of Mekelle City Tigrai’’ submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Master’s Degree of Hospitality Management done by her, is her original work and carried out by strict supervision and has been approved for submission to Mekelle University, Institute of Paleo Environment and Heritage Conservation through the Department Tourism Management and Hospitality studies. The Matter embodied in this thesis work hasn’t been submitted earlier for award of any degree or diploma to the best of our knowledge and beliefs.

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Abstract

This study assesses the effectiveness and implementation of e-marketing practices in star-rated hotels, focusing on Mekelle, Tigray. It examines how digital marketing strategies enhance online presence, attract customers, and drive retention. Despite the growing importance of e-marketing in tourism and hospitality, its adoption remains limited in the city. A mixed-methods approach was used, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Primary data was gathered through semi-structured questionnaires, surveys with open- and close-ended questions, and direct assessments of online platforms such as websites and social media. Secondary data was obtained from published rating criteria. A census sampling technique was applied to collect data from 38 respondents, including hotel managers, marketing managers, receptionists, and government experts. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS v.30, while qualitative insights were examined through content analysis. Findings indicate that while most hotels maintain an online presence through websites and social media, e-marketing remains underutilized. Some hotels employ a multi-channel approach incorporating email marketing, Google Ads, and mobile apps, whereas others rely solely on basic digital platforms. The frequency of updates varies significantly. Key barriers to e-marketing adoption include limited market analysis, many hotels fail to analyze global trends and target markets, restricting their ability to adapt to customer needs. Additionally, a lack of understanding of the competitive landscape prevents hotels from recognizing their market position limiting opportunities for differentiation and growth. Insufficient marketing budgets and lack of technical expertise further hinder the effectiveness of digital marketing efforts, the study recommends enhanced market research initiatives that equip hotels with insights into consumer behavior, industry trends, and competitive positioning. Establishing benchmarking and competitor analysis frameworks would help hotels better understand their market standing and identify opportunities for differentiation. Additionally allocation budget, capacity-building programs, including technical training in digital marketing and the hiring of skilled professionals would further improve adoption and effectiveness. Despite these challenges, the study highlights significant opportunities for improvement. A strategic focus on digital marketing could enhance occupancy rates, strengthen customer engagement, and contribute to the growth of Tigray's tourism and hospitality industry.

Key words: E-marketing, Tourism, Star-rate hotel, Hospitality, Online presence, Google Ads, Mekelle.

Key words

E-marketing is electronic marketing or online marketing, digital marketing which refers to the strategies and techniques used to promote products or services over the Internet.

Tourism is the business of providing travel, accommodation, food, entertainment, etc., for tourists.

Hotel a hotel is an establishment that provides lodging.

Hospitality is industry that provides services like accommodation, food, and entertainment to guests and travelers.

Mekelle The capital city of Tigray, Ethiopia, known for its historical sites and growing hospitality sector.

Online presence A business's visibility on digital platforms, including websites, social media, and online directories

Google Ads is an online advertising platform by Google that allows businesses to create targeted ads, typically using a pay-per-click model, to appear on Google search results, websites, and YouTube, helping increase visibility and attract customers.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAA	American Automobile Association
WWW	World Wide Web
B2B	Business-to-Business
B2C	Business-to-Customer
E-business	Electronic business
E-commerce	Electronic commerce
E-marketing	Electronic marketing
E-mail	Electronic mail
EMM	Electronic Marketing Mix Model
E-performance	Electronic Performance
E- Payments	Electronic Payments
E-promotion	Electronic Promotion
E-Price	Electronic Price
E-service	Electronic Service
E-privacy	Electronic Privacy
E-Interface	Electronic Interface
E-tourism	Electronic Tourism
TCTB	Tigray Culture &Tourism Bureau
ICT	Information and Communications Technology

IDT	Innovation Diffusion Theory
IT	Information Technology
ISP	Internet Service Provider
TAM	Technology Adoption Model
STD	Standard Deviation
ROI	Return on Investment.
USP	Unique Selling Proposition
KPI	Key Performance Indicator

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The hotel industry is a complex and multifaceted sector, with services that are personal, intangible, heterogeneous, and delivered simultaneously (Brander Brown, 2006). Scholars emphasize the importance of ensuring long-term success through customer satisfaction, which drives repeat business and contributes to a hotel's performance (Kaplan & Norton, 2012). Performance measurement in the hotel sector should go beyond financial aspects to include customer satisfaction, innovation, and service quality (Harris, 2006; Bailey, 2010). Moreover, embracing e-marketing strategies has become a key tool for enhancing customer value and improving profitability (Scarborough, 2011; Kotler, 2006). However, many hotels still face challenges in fully leveraging digital marketing tools, which affects their performance in an increasingly competitive environment.

The advancement of technology, particularly the rise of the internet, has revolutionized marketing strategies across industries. In the hospitality sector, e-marketing has emerged as a critical component for attracting customers and improving operational performance. E-marketing tools, such as email marketing, social media, and mobile marketing, offer cost-effective and efficient ways for hotels to reach a global audience and build strong customer relationships (Kotler, 2006; Procter et al., 2013). Despite the rapid growth of internet usage, many hotels, especially in emerging regions, have yet to adopt these tools to their full potential (Balogu & Beckan, 2006).

The theoretical foundation for this study draws upon relationship marketing (Berry, 1995), which emphasizes the importance of creating long-term relationships with customers through personalized marketing. Additionally, the study considers technology adoption models (Rogers, 2003), which suggest that the adoption of new technologies, including e-marketing tools, depends on factors like perceived benefits, ease of use, and organizational readiness.

In the context of Mekelle city, Tigray, the adoption of e-marketing tools in star-rated hotels remains underexplored. Despite the growing global trend of digitalization, hotels in Mekelle city still face barriers to adopting e-marketing practices, such as limited digital skills, inadequate resources, and

the underdevelopment of internet infrastructure. Internet penetration in Ethiopia remains relatively low compared to global averages, and while urban areas like Mekelle city are seeing improvements, the full potential of online marketing has yet to be realized (Internet World Stats, 2024). This gap in the research highlights the need to understand the specific challenges and opportunities faced by hotels in Mekelle city when it comes to adopting and utilizing e-marketing tools. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how Mekelle's hotels are using e-marketing strategies, with a focus on the local context. For instance, social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram play a significant role in reaching customers, but it is unclear how effectively they are being used by hotel businesses (Kotler et al., 2009). Understanding the role of these platforms, as well as the challenges hotels face in implementing e-marketing tools, is crucial for improving their operational performance and gaining a competitive advantage.

Furthermore, the study were explore the practical implications of these findings. For example, how can hotel managers in Mekelle city improve their e-marketing strategies to enhance customer engagement and increase bookings? By investigating the current use of e-marketing in Mekelle's hotel industry, this research aims to offer actionable insights that can help hotels in the region better utilize digital tools to attract and retain customers, leading to improved business performance and growth in the competitive hospitality market.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In the increasingly digital world, the hospitality industry, particularly star-rated hotels, relies heavily on digital platforms and e-marketing strategies to engage customers, enhance brand visibility, and foster business growth. E-marketing plays a pivotal role in attracting new customers, retaining loyal ones, and boosting a hotel's market presence. However, despite the growing use of digital tools among consumers, many hotels, especially in emerging markets like Ethiopia, fail to fully leverage e-marketing.

According Cheng (2003), the rise of economic marketing has fundamentally changed how customers search for information before making purchasing decisions. Internet platforms have become essential for marketing due to time constraints, advertising costs, and the increasingly sophisticated needs of modern consumers (Teixeira, 2014). E-marketing offers the most flexible and cost-effective means of communication for hotels, providing interactive and direct exchanges with customers (Eid & El Gohary, 2013). However, despite the widespread internet use, it appears that many hotels underutilize social media and other digital marketing tools (Solomon, 2003; O'Connor, 2011). Many hotels in Ethiopia have an online presence, but their use is limited, leading to poor visibility and lack of engagement (O'Connor, 2011). This lack of full digital integration negatively impacts the hotel's ability to attract and engage customers, which in turn hinders their competitiveness.

While global studies on e-marketing practices in the hospitality sector exist, such as those by Hinson & Amid (2006) and Teixeira (2014), there is a clear research gap in the context of Mekelle and Tigray. Specifically, the e-marketing practices of star-rated hotels in Mekelle, Tigray, remain largely unexplored. Previous studies have focused on Addis Ababa and other parts of Ethiopia (e.g., G/her Naizghi, 2009; Abebaw Shimelis, 2020), with some investigating the role of social media marketing (Seifu Desalegn, 2018) or e-marketing strategies for crisis management (Biniyam Alemu, 2022). However, no significant research has been conducted to assess the current e-marketing strategies employed by star-rated hotels in Tigray, particularly Mekelle.

The region Tigray, Mekelle city presents a unique economic, social, and tourism landscape, making it crucial to explore how e-marketing practices can enhance the competitive edge of local hotels. Given the increasing technological adoption in Ethiopia, the effective use of e-marketing tools can significantly improve hotel performance, helping them stay competitive in both local and

international markets. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive evaluation of how these hotels can optimize their digital marketing efforts to enhance customer satisfaction, improve their online visibility, and boost sales growth.

This research seeks to fill this gap by assessing the e-marketing strategies employed by star-rated hotels in Mekelle, identifying the challenges faced in implementing these strategies, and exploring the impact on hotel performance. By focusing on the local context, this study aims to provide recommendations for improving digital marketing practices in Mekelle's hotel industry, contributing to the broader tourism development in Tigray and Ethiopia.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1.3.1 General objective

The general objective of this research is to assess the effectiveness and implementation of e-marketing practices in star-rated hotels in Mekelle, Tigray.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

1. To evaluate the current e-marketing tools and strategies used by the star-rated hotels in Mekelle City
2. To assess the impact of e-marketing practices on customer engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty in star-rated hotels in Mekelle City.
3. To identify the challenges and limitations faced by star-rated hotels in Mekelle city in implementing e-marketing strategies.
4. To propose practical recommendations for enhancing and optimizing e-marketing practices in star-rated hotels in Mekelle City.

1.4 Research Questions

- ✓ What are the current e-marketing tools and strategies used by star-rated hotels in Mekelle city?
- ✓ How do e-marketing practices impact customer engagement and satisfaction in star-rated hotels in Mekelle city?
- ✓ What challenges and limitations do star-rated hotels in Mekelle city face in implementing e-marketing strategies?
- ✓ What recommendations can be made to enhance e-marketing practices in star-rated hotels in Mekelle city?

1.5. Significance of the study

This study is significant as it provides valuable insights into the e-marketing practices of star-rated hotels in Mekelle, contributing to a broader understanding of digital marketing in the hospitality industry. By evaluating the effectiveness of current e-marketing tools and strategies, the research helps hotel managers and marketers identify best practices and areas for improvement. Strengthening online presence and customer engagement through digital marketing can enhance competitiveness, drive business growth, and contribute to the overall development of the hospitality sector.

Beyond Mekelle city, the study's findings have implications for the hospitality industry in Ethiopia and potentially across Africa, where digital marketing adoption in tourism is still evolving. Understanding regional and global e-marketing trends allows for benchmarking against international best practices, helping hotels in Tigray adapt to an increasingly digital marketplace.

Furthermore, this research fills a gap in existing academic literature on e-marketing within the Ethiopian hospitality sector, particularly in the under-researched context of Tigray. By identifying challenges and limitations in digital marketing adoption, the study provides a foundation for targeted interventions, offering actionable recommendations for hotel management, policymakers, and tourism development initiatives.

The findings can also inform government programs and tourism stakeholders working to support the digital transformation of the hospitality industry in Tigray. Given the rapid evolution of digital marketing, the study's insights remain relevant in the long term, guiding future research and industry practices in response to emerging digital trends.

1.6. Scope of the study

To make the study manageable it is necessary to define the delimitation of the study. Thus, the study was delimited conceptually, methodologically, and geographically.

Conceptually, The fact that the discourse in marketing issues is broad and multi-dimensional. Hence, the study will be delimited focusing its analysis on the potential & prospects of E-marketing for tourism business development in Tigray by providing empirical evidence from hotel business, which are mainly located in Mekelle city. Specifically, much more concerned with their awareness, practices, and challenges toward E-marketing usage and their business performances. However, it probably suffers from the fact that was conducted in overall E-marketing aspects of the tourism and hospitality industry rather it spot on the tour operating business.

Methodologically, the study was delimited to a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. According to Cooper and Schindler (2000), a descriptive research design is concerned with finding out the; who, what, where, when, and how much. Besides, a research design is structured, has investigative questions, and is part of formal studies. Furthermore, in this research study, both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were solely be employed.

Geographically, This study is geographically delimited to the star-rated hotels in Mekelle City, Tigray, and does not extend to other cities or regions within Tigray. The choice of Mekelle is based on its role as a major urban and economic hub in the region, where the hospitality industry is more developed, making it a suitable case for assessing e-marketing practices.

Time Frame, The data collection and analysis were conducted in 2024, providing a snapshot of e-marketing practices during this period. This time frame limits the study's ability to assess long-term trends or seasonal variations in e-marketing effectiveness.

Additionally, the study is constrained by factors such as limited financial and logistical resources, which made it impractical to include all star-rated hotels across Tigray. Access to reliable data was also a challenge, as some hotel owners were hesitant to share detailed marketing information, potentially leading to gaps in the findings. Survey and open ended questioner responses may also be subject to biases, as participants might overstate the effectiveness of their e-marketing efforts.

While these delimitations help maintain focus and feasibility, future research should consider expanding the geographical scope and incorporating a broader range of stakeholders and customers to provide a more comprehensive understanding of e-marketing in the hospitality sector.

1.7 Limitations of the study

There is no as such enough availability of local research on digital marketing in Ethiopia's hospitality industry. Due to this gap, the study relied on international literature, which may not fully reflect the unique context of Ethiopian hotels. Additionally, the sampling process presented challenges, as the study focused on hotel employees, governmental experts, an analysis of hotel rating criteria, and a review of hotel websites and social media platforms. However, this selection may not fully represent the perspectives of all stakeholders in the hospitality industry. The study was also limited to star-rated hotels in Mekelle due to resource constraints, which may affect the generalizability of the findings.

Another limitation was the potential for response bias and data accuracy issues. Some respondents may have misunderstood the survey questions or provided socially desirable answers rather than accurately reflecting actual e-marketing practices. Additionally, while reviewing hotel websites and social media platforms, the study relied on publicly available data, which may not capture the full extent of hotels' digital marketing strategies. Furthermore, the analysis of hotel rating criteria may have limitations, as the criteria may not be regularly updated to reflect advancements in digital marketing, potentially influencing the findings. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable findings that contribute to a better understanding of e-marketing practices in star-rated hotels in Mekelle.

1.8. Organization of the Thesis

The paper is organized in to five chapters which are sub-divided into small sections. The first chapter deals with an overall introduction and provides an overview of the entire study. Which comprise the Background, Statement of the problem, Objectives of the study, Research questions, Significance of the study, Limitations of the study, and Scope of the study. A detailed review of related literature- theoretical, empirical, and conceptual related research articles which have been conducted on the area of E-marketing practices, awareness, and challenges to their business and its significance to business performance specifically on the star-rated hotels appear in Chapter Two. The third chapter will present the study design and methods that will be used in the study. This chapter encompasses a discussion on the type and source of data, sampling design, data collection instruments and procedures, and data analysis methods. The fourth chapter gives a brief summary of the data analysis, interpretation, discussion, and result presentation. Finally, the last chapter fifth chapter, attempts to conclude the result and forward relevant recommendations based on the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the review of E-marketing and hotel-related literature that pertains to the tourism business specifically the Hotel business. Here, the researcher digs out theoretical concepts relating to the study area are highly synthesized and discussed. Moreover, empirical-related literature which are strongly associated with the philosophy of E-marketing principles and strategies is aggressively assessed.

2.2. Basic concepts and theories

2.2.1. Tourism

Tourism is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing social, cultural, and economic aspects, involving the relocation of individuals to destinations beyond their habitual surroundings for personal or professional reasons. These individuals, referred to as visitors, can be either tourists or excursionists, residents, or non-residents. Tourism revolves around various activities, some of which include expenditures related to tourism (UNWTO 2000). Tourism's immediate impacts are evident in industries like hotels, restaurants, transportation, entertainment, and souvenir shopping. Literature highlights its global recognition as a catalyst for economic growth, agriculture, energy development, and poverty alleviation. While widely believed to drive economic growth, there is scholarly disagreement on the empirical evidence (Khan et al. 2020).

2.2.2. History of Hotels

The history of hotels traces back to the Latin root of hospitality, meaning host or hospice. Initially, hotels were private homes open to the public, although many had poor reputations. With the influence of the Roman Empire, inns and hotels began catering to pleasure travelers to encourage visitors. (Montgomery 1995), The first recorded inn in America was in 1607, leading to various milestones in the hospitality industry, such as the first publicly held hotel in New York in 1792 and the first modern hotel in Boston in 1809. This trend continued with the emergence of prominent hotel chains like Radisson, Marriott, and Hilton (Cooper, 1998).

2.2.3. Hotel Industry in General

Hotels serve as a home away from home for the traveling public. When the first roads were built in Britain, Merchants and other wealthy travelers journeyed to various parts of the country. At points on their journeys shelter, food and drink were to be found at road side taverns. Later on,

monasteries provided hospitality to raise money for the church. Large manor houses scattered throughout the country provided services to travelers. When the manor houses began to be taxed the lords of the manors began converting their homes into inns. An inn could provide rest but a tavern could provide only food and drink. Gradually the inns and taverns improved in quality and standard (Krishna 1995).

The hospitality industry in America marked several significant milestones, leading the way for developments in the field. Notably, the first publicly held hotel, the City Hotel, debuted in New York in 1792. Following this, the Tremont, recognized as the first modern hotel, opened its doors in Boston in 1809. Later, in 1908, the Buffalo Statler became the pioneer business hotel. These landmarks sparked a surge of hotel establishments across America and globally, featuring renowned names like Radisson, Marriott, and Hilton (Krishna, 1995). One of the distinctive aspects of hotel investment lies in its substantial upfront construction costs. This dynamic influences developer behavior significantly, as heavy initial expenditures create a reliance on future revenue streams to cover these costs. This immediate need to generate revenue can lead to instability, particularly in volatile demand scenarios, thus characterizing hotel investment with a 'high operating leverage'. With a large portion of fixed costs and a smaller share of variable (operating) costs, hotels with high operating leverage tend to experience volatility in profit levels (Freeman and Felsenstein, 2007).

The returns to hotel investment are inextricably linked to tourist demand both local and foreign. Therefore, the relationship between the hotel industry and the wider tourism industry is two-directional. Without tourists, there can be no hotel industry and without hotels, there can be no tourism industry. This symbiotic relationship is reflected on the supply side as well. Furthermore, public incentives for construction and expansion can stimulate both local and foreign investment in the hotel sector, further reinforcing this interdependence (Ixigo, 20132.2.4.)

2.2.4. Star-Rated Hotel

Star-rated hotels serve as a global benchmark for categorizing accommodations based on the quality of services, facilities, and amenities offered to guests. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), star ratings provide travelers with an easy-to-understand system that reflects the expected standards of hospitality within a specific establishment. These ratings help differentiate hotels based on their ability to meet the varying needs of travelers (UNWTO, 2023).

The classification system typically ranges from one star, denoting basic services and budget-friendly accommodations, to five stars, which represent luxury and comprehensive services. In some cases, ultra-luxurious properties may be rated as seven stars to reflect their exclusivity and extravagance (Forbes Travel Guide, 2023). Each star level corresponds to a specific set of criteria, including room quality, customer service, food and beverage offerings, and additional amenities such as fitness centers or business facilities (AAA Diamond Program, 2023).

A one-star hotel is generally characterized by minimal services and a focus on affordability, catering to budget-conscious travelers. On the other hand, a five-star hotel exemplifies luxury, offering a wide range of premium services such as fine dining, personalized concierge services, and opulent accommodations designed to exceed guest expectations. Mid-tier categories, such as three- and four-star hotels, balance affordability with comfort and quality, making them popular among business and leisure travelers (TripAdvisor, 2022).

Studies in the hospitality sector suggest that star ratings significantly influence customer perceptions and booking decisions. Travelers often rely on star ratings to ensure that a hotel meets their specific requirements, ranging from basic needs to luxurious experiences (Kim & Lee, 2021). Moreover, these ratings are often linked to revenue generation, as higher-rated hotels tend to attract more affluent clientele willing to pay premium prices for superior services (Chung et al., 2020).

2.2.5 Hotel Industry in Mekelle City

Mekelle is said to have been founded in the 13th century. During the late nineteenth century, when Yohannes IV was crowned King of Kings of Ethiopia, he chose Mekelle to be the capital of his realm. Mekelle is fast becoming an economic hub and educational center, boasting a new airport, medical school, teaching hospital, and opportunities in tourism, agriculture (bees, poultry, livestock) agro-processing (honey, dairy, leather), and solar, with more "blue-sky" days than most spots on the planet. Yet the city, like the region, faces an increasingly severe water crisis, producing less than half the amount its citizenry consumes each day (Berhanu hishe 2017).

From 1970-1975 there were many hotels from small to medium range that have been developed throughout the country, especially to the northern parts of the country many government hotels flourished following the tourist attractions of Ethiopia. (TCTB, 2018).

The hotel industry consists of many different services, including accommodation, restaurants, cafes, and catering. The market for the hotel industry, especially classified hotels in a developing

country like Ethiopia, is closely linked to the tourism industry because a majority of consumers for the sector services come from international tourists.

Name of hotel	Ranked star	City/town
Yeha hotel	*	Aksum
Consular international hotel	**	Aksum
Yared Zema international hotel	**	Aksum
Ramhai hotel	*	Aksum
Sabiean international hotel	**	Aksum
Brana hotel	**	Aksum
Armah hotel	*	Aksum
Axum hotel 1	*	Mekelle
Axum hotel 2	***	Mekelle
Desto hotel	***	Mekelle
Planet hotel	****	Mekelle
Hatsey Yohannes	**	Mekelle
Zemariyas hotel	***	Mekelle
Ze Jordan's hotel	*	Mekelle
Noble house hotel	****	Mekelle
Gebar shire hotel	*	Shire
Hadas hotel	**	Shire
Africa hotel	*	Shire
Canaan international hotel	*	Adigrat
Agamos hotel	*	Adigrat
Meaza hotel	*	Almata

Table 1 Number of accredited Star Rate Hotels in Tigray

Source: Tigray Culture and Tourism Bureau 2018

2.3 Conceptual literature

2.3.1 Electronic Marketing (EM)

Electronic marketing (EM), according to Hoge (1993), is the practice of providing consumers with goods or services from manufacturers through one or more electronic channels. E- marketing, according to Chaffey (2002), is the use of digital technologies to support marketing goals and produce lucrative customer retention, including the Web, e-mail, databases, mobile/wireless, and digital TV. Chaffey.D and Smith (2002) defined e-marketing as the use of digital technology to further commercial objectives. E-marketing, according to Chaffey et al. (2006), is the utilization of a company's website along with online advertising strategies such search engine marketing,

interactive advertising, e-mail marketing, and collaborations with the websites of other companies. In order to design, carry out, and express consumers values as well as manage customer relationships in a way that optimizes benefits for the firm and its stakeholders, e-marketing was described as the use of information technology (Strauss and Ansary, 2006). E-marketing can also meet the needs of both business and private clients (Kalra, 2010). How travelers interact with vacation destinations has altered due to the quick growth of the newly created scientific discipline of digital marketing, which is considered to be the marketing of the future (Wertime & Fenwick, 2012). Neuhofer et al. (2013), claims that the use of mobile technology has the ability to significantly boost customer and business involvement and produce a more individualized experience. Digitalization has improved the business ecosystem, which has an effect on how businesses compete in the market. In order to thrive and compete in the contemporary market, tourist destinations need a successful and effective e-marketing channel (Raju, 2009). As a result, travel firms and locations all over worldwide are paying close attention to digital marketing. Academics that acknowledge the significance of digital marketing in enhancing destination competitiveness have advised the establishment of comprehensive destination advertising strategies that enable the use of digital marketing methods (Kannan et al., 2017). E-marketing is a creative endeavor since it develops fresh channels for connecting with customers. Because it develops fresh channels for connecting with customers, e-marketing is a creative endeavor (Lovelock, 1995). E-marketing varies from traditional marketing methods in that it enables customers to access information while leveraging interactive technologies to allow these customers to offer information to the firm. Technology is required to make e-marketing interactive (Brodie et al., 2007). Since the advent of the internet, electronic marketing has become more crucial for anyone seeking success in this field (Kaur, 2017).

2.3.1 Digital marketing over view

According to Chamboko-Mpotaringa, M. & Tichaawa, T.M. 2021, there are different definitions given for e-marketing based on several scholars. According to Kotoua & Ilkan 2017, e-marketing is defined as the use of the internet (websites, social media and electronic platforms in providing different types of tools and marketing channels to facilitate communication and engagement with potential tourists and their information needs. Haneef 2017 also defied e-marketing as the evolution of communicating advertising arenas using electronic media and technology for communication and information. According to Lagiewski & Kesgin 2017, e-marketing is the use

of digital technologies such as the internet, mobile devices and global positioning systems as a key instrument in marketing visitor attractions. The use of internet markets to promote tourist destinations, services, and goods in order to reinforce marketing campaigns, boost sales, and maximize profits as of Abou- Shouk's definition in 2018. A method for communicating with a target market that combines the use of the Internet and other digital marketing tools is also referred to as e-marketing according to Srinivaasan & Kabia 2020.

E-marketing refers to the application of marketing principles and techniques via electronic media and more specifically the Internet. As the Internet revolution becomes advanced and running fast enterprise owners and managers apply to their point of sale and marketing medium. E-marketing now uses as a media of transaction so as to reduce costs and save time which is associated with business, such as providing information about the E- marketing mix(E-product/service, E-price, E-interactivity, E-payment, E-privacy, E- promotion, E-precision, and pull and push factors) and other related services. In addition to that, companies used World Wide Web to offer a wider variety of products and information to massive consumers at a lower price compared to physical traditional marketing system (Couclelis, 2004). E-marketing describe as a company's efforts to inform and communicate buyers to sell its products and services over the Internet. If a company does its e-mail campaign right, not only will it build customer relationships but also reap additional profits which includes direct marketing responses and helps to connect businesses to their customers. kotler and P.foertsch (2007).

2.3.2 Internet platforms/online marketing platforms

Tourism business are using internet synchronization and asked public IP address for its remote communication with its out lets. The telecommunications platforms are based the internet protocol (IP) protocol suite as a standard. They are provided by Ethio- telecom and Safari com which are the only Internet Service Provider (ISP) in the country (FDRE-MCIT, 2023). The broad band internet connection is digital subscriber line. Today, even a large firm does not have the staff, the skills, the budget, or the necessary experience to deploy and maintain the entire ICT infrastructure by them. Tourism business has also outsourced enterprise software applications like CNET Software Technology PLC, Network platform to Omicron Engineering PLC which is Cisco certified, and tourist link.com, package holiday.com, tripadvisor.com, Europage.com online marketing platform that is outsourced by tourism business in Ethiopia IMF e-library 2020).

2.3.3 Marketing mix elements

The controllable resources that marketers utilize to communicate with their target market through online platforms are referred to as the "digital marketing mix." The study provides examples of the factors hotels can use to affect consumer demand for their goods and services using digital and internet resources (Ivy, 2008). By transforming the old marketing mix into a technological medium based on internet technology, the digital marketing mix's main objective is to effectively reach the target market. In his book "Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach," Jerome McCarthy introduced the 4 Ps marketing mix concept, which later evolved into the 7 Ps of marketing. Product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidences are the seven components that make up the digital marketing mix. According to Kotler et al., 2010, in the tourism industry, the product might be the destination, a specific attraction, a lodge, hotel, a room, and the service of meal. Pricing is the sum of values that consumers exchange for the advantage of owning or utilizing a good or service. (Kotler & armstrong 2012). According to Mahmood & Khan 2014, place allows the customer to gain access to the service when it's convenient to them to buy. Promotion is the digital means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade and remind consumers directly or indirectly about the products and brands that they sell. Process describes actual digital or online procedures, mechanisms and flow of activities by which the service is delivered (Ziethamel et al., 2006). People refer to all human actors who participate in the delivery of services. The interaction between an organization's employees and its customers within the digital services has strong influence on the service quality according to Ziethamel et al., 2006. Also the digital environment in which the service is provided where the business and the customer interact physically and tangible elements that make it easier to perform or communicate the customers are all described by physical evidence.

2.3.4 Digital marketing practices

Digital marketing, according to Ritz et al. (2019), is the process of promoting a product online or through digital media. The goal of digital marketing is to quickly attract potential customers. It is the use of internet enabled media platforms such as Facebook, websites, twitter, WhatsApp, in anticipating, identifying as well as satisfying customer needs and profitably. Based on the finding of Yasmin et al., (2015), digital marketing extends beyond internet marketing to encompass mobile phone marketing like MMS and SMS, social media marketing, display advertising and search engine marketing is several other forms of digital media. By addressing the intangible variable as

well as perishable qualities of tourism product and service, digital marketing is a revolutionary marketing force with the power to alter the travel and tourist industry. Customers can access information with more ease with the digital marketing's benefits. Since the tourism sector relies heavily on information, it is very important to support its growth and development by making information readily available. Information accessibility becomes easier anytime and at any place using Digital marketing Chaffey, 2002). Dobre (2005) states that companies in the travel and tourism sector are responsible for a variety of assignments, such as the development of different booking systems in travel agencies, hotel bookings, airline tickets, car rental services, tourist tours, and other tourism product components. Due to this e- marketing can be used to maintain or attract customers relationship through direct interaction between different parties, businesses can enhance the ability to engage directly with customers and build relevant customer databases through digital platforms of marketing.

2.3.5 Traditional marketing vs. digital marketing

Through using internet-enabled media platforms, digital marketers may successfully anticipate, identify, and satisfy customer expectations. With its ability to handle the intangibility and unpredictability of tourist product and service qualities, as well as the intangibility and perishability of information, digital marketing is a revolutionary marketing force that has the potential to regulate the tourism industry. Unlikely, traditional marketing is the oldest form of marketing and refers to any type of marketing that isn't online. This includes billboards, print, radio, direct mail, and phone advertising. Traditional marketing plays an important part in reaching local audiences but not the international ones. Moreover the difference between traditional and digital marketing is discussed below according to different scholars

Traditional Marketing	Digital Marketing
Print, television, direct mail, and telephone advertising are all examples of traditional marketing.	Email marketing, social networking, Online advertising, text messaging, affiliate marketing, search engine optimization, and pay per click are all examples of digital marketing.
Absence of interactions with the audience	Availability of interaction with the audience
Results are easy to measure	Results are largely simple to quantify.
Takes more time to go into the planning of advertising campaigns.	Short-term plans for advertising campaigns.

Cost- and time-intensive process.	Speedy and affordable method of promoting the goods or services
If the company is able to reach a sizable local audience, traditional marketing tactics can be hailed as successes.	The corporation can celebrate the success of its digital marketing initiatives if it can connect with a certain volume of local consumers.
One campaign consistently wins.	Campaigns can be altered and innovations included inside any campaign with ease
Limited consumer reach is a result of a small customer technology base	Broader range to accessible by the customer because of the use of various customers technology
Exposure 24/7 year is impossible	24/7 year-round exposure is possible
No capacity to go viral	Ability to go viral
Unidirectional communication (one-way communication).	Two ways conversation, communication is bidirectional as customers can also give suggestions about products and services
Responses are only possible during business hours	Reply or comment can ensue anytime
Designing, getting ready, and releasing a campaign takes extra time.	An online campaign may always be developed quickly, and changes can be made as it advances
It is challenging to assess a campaign's effectiveness.	Analytics make it simpler to assess the success of a campaign.
Its reach is constrained to a small, localized audience.	For addressing a global audience, it is the greatest and optimal choice.

Table 2 Traditional marketing vs. digital marketing

Source: Yasmin et al. (2015) and Sathya (2015)

2.3.6 A shift of marketing from traditional to digital Technology

Advancement and the growth of digital marketing go hand in hand. Ray Tomlinson sent the first email in 1971, and his invention created the framework that made it possible for users to transmit and receive information using various equipment's. In the 1980s, computers already had enough storage to handle enormous volumes of client data. Limited list brokers were being rejected by businesses in favor of online tactics like database marketing. This kind of databases allowed companies to track customers' information more effectively, thus transforming relationship between buyer and seller. However, the manual process was not so efficient (Vaibhava Desai

2019). Digital marketing efforts are becoming more common and effective as digital platforms are integrated into everyday life and marketing strategies and as individuals utilize digital gadgets rather than go to physical stores. The word "digital marketing" is now used the most frequently worldwide.

2.4 Dimensions of E- marketing

In today's world, nearly all marketing work involves a digital component. Having digital marketing strategy is crucial for any service delivery sectors as of tourism. The most noticeable e-marketing dimensions or forms in the extant literature are online advertising, website, search engine optimization, content marketing, Affiliate marketing, mobile phone advertising, social media and email marketing (Mobydeen, 2021).

2.4.1 Online advertising

Digital marketing includes internet advertising, which is arguably the most well-known method of online marketing. Online advertising is a form of online advertising that allows businesses to spread the word about their goods or services. Online advertising is the practice of running adverts on computer screens while utilizing the internet (Duguay 2012). A multitude of methods are used by internet advertising, also referred to as display advertising, to offer marketing messages online. It might suggest that technology advances, new approaches to the practice of internet advertising are created (Stokes, 2009). Online based advertising provides the content and ads that best matches to consumer interests. Publishers post information about their goods or services on their websites so that users can receive it for free. Online advertisers need to run more effective and pertinent adverts. The corporation effectively manages its budget and has complete control over time through online advertising. Advertising on the web involves placing offers and purchasing important ad units on external websites, such as display ads on blogs, forums, and other important websites.

2.4.2 Website

In order to attract visitors to websites, keep them there for a while, and encourage repeat visits, marketing professionals need to design visually appealing websites (Kotler et al., 2010). As the main carrier of marketing activities on the Internet, hotel Web site can influence the creation of a solid trust between service users and hoteliers, business performance and build the brand on the demanding tourist market (Kotler, 2012). Web analytics provide real-time insights into online customer behavior so continuously optimizing the digital marketing efforts can be possible. A

website gives people a clearer picture of the company's or firm's vision and more information about the product and services. This is where telling to customers about why they should use the business over the competitors and also the exact platform where showing skills through pictures, videos, testimonials, etc is possible. Each hotel's website must provide accurate information about the location of the hotel, details on its goods and services, and a secure booking system for those goods and services. Direct booking is the most economical approach because there are no commissions paid to middlemen. Websites are created with the intention of being visited by internet users, and after being visited, the chance to engage in conversation and develop connections increases (Hughes and Fill, 2009).

2.4.3 Search engine optimization (SEO)

The goal of SEO is to improve a website's "rank" on search engine results pages. Websites, blogs, and info graphics are some of the mediums that SEO benefits. The goal of search engine optimization (SEO) is to increase organic traffic to a website by boosting its visibility and rankings in search results. It will show up at the top of users' unpaid search results. If a website is optimized using SEO. Internet marketing that relies on communication between advertisers and search engine providers is known as "search engine marketing." To enhance the number of clicks on the marketers' links, the search engine firms offer a service that involves putting the search terms to the top of the list of terms. In contrast, the marketers receive paid as compensation (Blakeman, 2014). One of the most popular methods for connecting travellers with destination service providers is the search engine.

2.4.4 Social media marketing

Social networks are "free online services" that offer a range of options for connecting with people around the globe and showcasing oneself. They are a very recent development in the online world. A great approach to meet new people and network with people from around the world is through social network marketing. The potential for social marketing is limitless, and its power is enormous (Honda & Martin, 2002). Participation, openness, dialogue, community, and connectedness are some to characterize the nature of social media. The fundamental social media platforms are blogs, social networks, Wikipedia, Podcasts, forums, content communities like YouTube, bookmarking, and aggregation are further forms of social media. According to Sathya, R. (2015), businesses can utilize social media to advertise on numerous platforms, market to content consumers, market to content sharers, and market to content creators (like bloggers). Social media marketing paves a

way to interact with potential customers via social platforms. It is also important to promote the brand and content on social media channels to increase brand awareness, drive traffic, and generate leads for tourism business. Social Media will play an important part online marketing for any business since there's already a large audience waiting for content. Those social media marketing content may include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snap chat, Tiktoks and Google+.

2.4.5 Email marketing

Sending promotional emails to a targeted audience of potential clients or consumers is known as direct marketing. Email marketing is a method used by businesses to reach their audiences. Email is regularly used to direct clients to a company's website and to promote events, specials, and special content. Blog subscription newsletters, follow-up emails to website visitors who downloaded anything, customer welcome emails, holiday promotions to loyalty program members, and tips or similar series emails for customer nurturing are some of the emails that are sent as part of an email marketing campaign. By renting an email list and sending a single offer to their target demographic, marketers can use email marketing as a type of "push" marketing. Email addresses can be taken directly from clients (as in permission marketing), purchased or rented from email address vendors, or taken from the Internet. Email marketing initially had better response rates than direct mail or banner advertisements (Honda & Martin, 2002). The chance to allow any potential interested guests to arrive at the appropriate moment for the lowest cost is made possible by the use of email marketing, and the results of such efforts must be measurable in order to serve as a basis for decisions about future marketing operations (Kotler, P.; Koller, K.L 2008). Email marketing usage is actually the most appropriate for those who have a product or service to offer directly to a customer which is existing or future. According to Susan in the balance (2012), email marketing allows a company to update its email describers on a regular basis about a company. E-mail marketing is a crucial technique for direct marketing communication that enables prospective customers to learn more about the hotel offer and a number of exclusive privileges.

2.4.6 Mobile phone advertising

Barwise & Strong (2002) make it clear that mobile advertising is one of the most rapidly expanding forms of electronic marketing. However R Ling, T Julsrud, and B Yttri (2005) labeled several kinds of mobile advertising as short messages or multimedia messages. the optimal strategy is to place advertisements on mobile websites, within mobile phone applications, or in games.

As of the Pitch, Mukoma Daily Nation July 13th (2010) saying, mobile phone marketing refers to direct marketing to consumers via cell phones. According to Dushinski (2010), mobile technology enables marketers to engage mobile users by catering to their immediate and specialized demands in addition to allowing them to contact clients where they are. The distinctive value proposition of mobile phone marketing, businesses, and agents, further argued is to give people what they want, when they want it. According to Mobile Marketer (2010), businesses and marketers can leverage the mobile channel to boost consumer loyalty, brand recognition and brand affinity. Additionally, video technology is starting to make it possible for TV shows to be transmitted through mobile devices, opening up new prospects for advertising. Moreover Tsang et al. (2004) presented the benefits of mobile advertising as reaching the target consumer and having direct communication with them at the correct time and location for the least amount of money feasible because it is viewed as a cost-effective choice.

2.5. The role of ICT in tourism business development

However much attention has been paid to the possible use of ICTs in development strategies and of ICT in tourism, to sustainable tourism strategies and the concept of destination management, concrete methods to leverage ICTs to provide enterprises equal opportunity for achieving their sustainability goals within a destination context has received only little attention. (S.J.C. van Hooft, 2010). States that, the adoption of ICT remains with a challenge even though have an opportunity in the tourism business with particular reference to tour operators Machoke (2014).

Internet offers tourism business the potential to make information and booking facilities available to large numbers of tourists at relatively low cost and it also provides a tool for fast communication between tourism suppliers, intermediaries, as well as end -consumers. According to Iris (2012), technological innovations can be a source of competitive advantage for those travel agencies that take advantage of technological progress in their business strategy, while agencies that systematically ignore new technologies and their benefits necessarily lag behind competition.

According to Anand (2013) the integration of ICT in tourism would benefit both, service providers and customers bringing together other stakeholders as well, on a common platform. The selection of right information communications technology tool is crucial to match the customer requirements with service dimensions. The proliferation of technology throughout tourism distribution channels and professionals use the new tools in order to retrieve information, identify

suitable products and perform reservations. ICTs integration provides a powerful tool that brings advantage in promoting and strengthening tourism industry.

Development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has transformed the contemporary business environment. It has led to new information economy which is digital in nature. ICT is a broad terminology referring to multiple communication technologies which range from simple and complex namely Cell Phone applications (SMS), Digital Cameras, Internet, Wireless (WiFi and WiMAN), VOIP, GPS, GIS, Convergence (data, voice, media), Digital radio, These technologies are creating a new global market place, which is more competitive. With e-commerce and e-business the market has more opportunities and possibilities than ever before. The ability to reach a global audience, obtain instant market information and conduct electronic business transactions has increased economic efficiency and has opened markets for goods and services from the developing world (Alirezaet al., 2013). So, ICT revolutionizes the economy and changing the traditional marketing system in to digital marketing (which is the focus of this research).

2.6. Theories of digital marketing adoption

2.6.1. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is an information systems theory. Davis (1989) explains perceived usefulness as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system will benefit them in their job performance. In addition, perceived ease of use is the degree to which the use of the system would be free from effort. The advantage of this measure is its simplicity. The technology can have a multitude of capabilities; this is useful only if the users perceive that it is useful for their job. However, TAM is criticized as having limited explanatory ability. It is not possible to predict using TAM if potential adopters will adopt a system based on perceived usefulness and ease of use (Chuttur 2009). Chuttur argues that TAM lacks any practical value.

Furthermore, adopters of technology are influenced by many factors; some of these factors include their ability to use the technology, its affordability and its compatibility with their value and culture.

Any review of the literature and research on Information Communication Technology acceptance and usage will indicate that TAM is one of the most significant models in the study area. Thus,

have a sound theoretical contribution to the study of e-marketing adoption. Nevertheless, the model ignores the effectiveness of e-marketing mix component and the external pressure on the business of small tourism firms like tour operators. So, when accepting this model it should be expanded to include some other external factors that affect e-marketing mix effectiveness and should consider the e-marketing mix components. The other theory will be presented below;

2.6.2 Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory

According to Rogers 2003, an innovation is an idea, a practice, or an object perceived as new by an individual. Furthermore, one of the reasons for a higher rate of adoption of an innovation is positive perception, in terms of ease of use and usefulness of the innovation, towards the innovation by potential adopters. The innovation characteristics that determine the rate of diffusion of adoption are its relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trial ability, and observability. Compatibility refers to the degree to which an innovation fits into the existing value and experience of a potential adopter, and its compatibility with a particular social group (Rogers 2003); if an innovation is not compatible with the existing values of a potential adopter, then the innovation will not be adopted as rapidly as a compatible innovation, or it will completely fail to be adopted. Complexity refers to the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to use and understand (Rogers 2003). According to Rogers (2003), trial ability of innovation allows the user to test the innovation in the unique circumstances of the user's situation. Observability is the level of the result of an innovation or the innovation itself to be visible to a potential adopter (Rogers 2003). Re-invention occurs after the innovation is adopted and the adopter's use the innovation for a different purpose than what it was designed for (Rogers 2003, p. 17). These mentioned points are the most important in explaining in the rate of the adoption.

The diffusion of new technology is usually slow process which happens over time from Rogers(2003) definition of innovation decision process for adoption of e-marketing for small tourism firms and its effectiveness to business performance may be slow similar as the other adoption process(the focus of this study). The stages/process of adoption will present below;

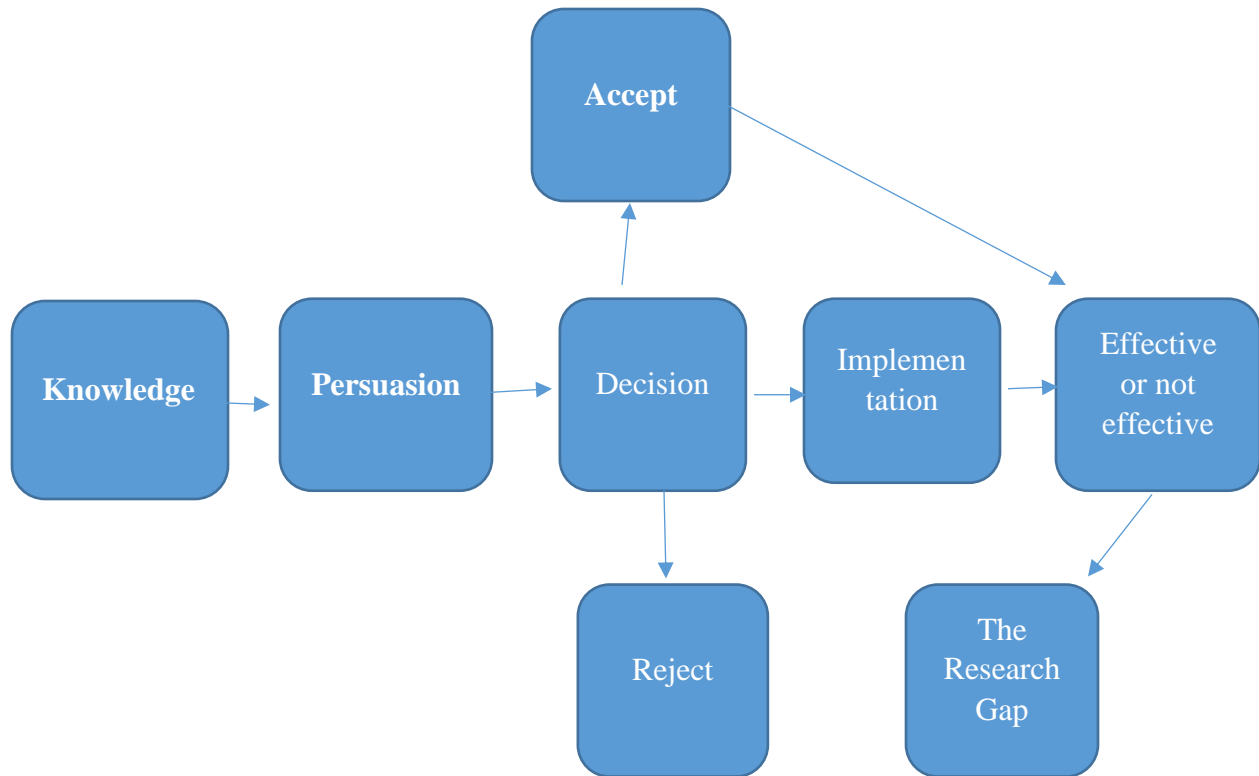


Figure -1- Rogers' five stages decision of innovation adoption processes (Roger's, 2003)

Innovation Decision Process

The innovation decision process, as shown in Figure 1 above, has five stages. The first is the knowledge stage, this is the stage where a potential adopter is aware of the innovation and has acquired some level of knowledge about it. The second stage is the persuasion stage; in this stage, the potential adopter is persuaded to adopt or reject the innovation. The third stage is the decision stage where the potential adopter decides to adopt or reject the innovation. The fourth stage, the implementation stage, is where the innovation is put to use. Thus, the focus of this study is measuring the effectiveness and performance of tour firms after implementing the technology. Even though, IDT becomes an important factor explaining the diffusion of new technologies like TAM both ignore the external and internal factors that influence for the effectiveness of e-marketing mix in small businesses (tourism business; the focus of the study) with the major elements of the market. To use this model for e-marketing challenges and effectiveness; the model needs another component/factor to expand. So, the researchers were finding out another model specifically developed for the e-marketing mix (E-marketing mix model) which was developed by Chen (2006) presented below on the conceptual framework and its impact on tour firm performance.

2.7 Electronic marketing theory

The electronic marketing theory (EMT) refers to the application of electronic technology to the components of the marketing mix (Dann, 2011). It is an extension of marketing theory that seeks to explain how marketing managers use decision models to make and assess decisions. The four factors that make up the marketing mix, or the four Ps of marketing, are goods, place, promotion, and location. According to the marketing theory, marketing managers base their judgments on factors such as: goods, place, promotion and location. Also Physical evidence, people, and process are added to the marketing mix aspects in services marketing, resulting in the 7 Ps of marketing (Kotler, 2003). Electronic Marketing Theory expands on marketing theory by claiming that the technological advancement and the marketing environment evolves managers to be able to use electronic technologies to make decisions related to the marketing Ps (Harridge-March, 2004). EMT is pertinent to the current study since it enables businesses to recognize the advantages of using electronic marketing mechanisms. Referring those theories, this research paper used to conceptualize Electronic marketing theory is used to conceptualize the digital marketing and promotion practices. (EMT) refers to the application of electronic technology to the components of the marketing mix (Dann & Dann, 2011). Because of this reason, adopting such theory is essential in E-tourism marketing practices. It is an extension of marketing theory that seeks to explain how marketing managers use judgments models to make and assess decisions. In addition in 1989, Davis developed the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), an information systems theory that explains how individuals come to embrace and use a technology. When new technology is introduced to humans, a number of factors influence how and when they will use it. Additionally TAM has been empirically demonstrated to have a good validity and is one of the most influential models.

2.8 Concept of Customer Engagement, Customer Retention, Customer Satisfaction

Customer engagement is a key driver of long-term relationships between businesses and their customers. According to Brodie et al. (2011), customer engagement is defined as a multidimensional concept that includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral interactions between a customer and a brand. Engaged customers actively interact with businesses through digital platforms, social media, and personalized communication, fostering stronger relationships (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Studies suggest that high engagement leads to increased customer trust, brand loyalty, and advocacy (Hollebeek, 2011).

Customer retention refers to the ability of a company to keep its customers over time. Reichheld and Sasser (1990) argue that increasing customer retention by just 5% can boost profitability by 25% to 95%, highlighting its financial importance. Retained customers are more likely to make repeat purchases and refer new customers, reducing acquisition costs (Rust & Zahorik, 1993). Companies that maintain consistent and personalized engagement strategies, such as loyalty programs and proactive customer support, tend to have higher retention rates (Verhoef, 2003).

Customer satisfaction is a measure of how well a company meets or exceeds customer expectations. According to Oliver (1980), satisfaction occurs when perceived performance matches or surpasses expectations. Studies by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) emphasize that service quality plays a major role in shaping customer satisfaction. Higher satisfaction levels are linked to greater retention and engagement, as satisfied customers tend to remain loyal and advocate for the brand (Fornell et al., 1996).

The Link between Engagement, Retention, and Satisfaction is customer engagement is a precursor to retention and satisfaction (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). Engaged customers have higher emotional attachment to brands, making them more loyal and less likely to switch to competitors (Bowden, 2009). Furthermore, companies that frequently interact with customers and provide personalized experiences tend to achieve higher satisfaction scores, which in turn improves retention (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016).

2.9 Opportunities of E-marketing

In tourism E-marketing, according to Vella & Kester (2008), has various benefits, including cost effectiveness, flexibility, the chance to penetrate international markets, and enhancing brand image. By minimizing potential costs associated with disseminating product information, e-marketing is a cost-effective approach. Moreover, e-marketing provides flexibility about product availability, prices lists, and promotions that can be adjusted on daily basis, to meet the dynamic markets. With digital marketing, advertisers can instantly see precise outcomes. Digital marketing will assist us in understanding the reach of our product or service, engaging with potential customers, having a global presence, and personalizing our marketing. E-marketing allows customers to see and search for any services regarding their preferences via digitalized technologies 24/7. The service is available at every day and any time. Therefore it is available and reachable at any time. Digital marketing also enhances the partnership of different stakeholder's

and customers. In order to collaborate and reach new markets and channels, hotels frequently look for partners with complementary skills. Thus digital marketing paves way or gives the opportunity of working together. The usage of digital marketing in hotel industry also has the opportunity to build the customers loyalty through times. Because an ongoing emotional relationship between the service giving hotel with their customers manifests itself by how willing a customer is to engage with and repeatedly purchase from the hotel versus other competitors regarding based up on the service they get from the hotel. Advances in digital marketing technology have its role in enhancing ICT infrastructures also for the increase of economic development. On the other hand, digital marketing is essential I cost efficiency ad it build strong brand image of the hotels, because once the image is on the mind of customers, then it may long last for a long period of time. Additionally, E-marketing has the opportunity to boost the sales performance of organizations.

2.10 Challenges of E- marketing in tourism

E-marketing is heavily reliant on various variations in Internet connection, accessibility, price, and other factors such as the availability of the Internet in underdeveloped nations (Wilson, 1987). According to ITU (2013), E-marketing in developing and developed countries is influenced by ICT readiness (infrastructure, access), use intensity and ICT skills. There are numerous aspects that influence or challenge the E-tourism marketing and promotional practices. These factors include the cost of purchasing hardware, software, and communication packages, the cost of user training, cost of ongoing maintenance and regular updating, marketing the internet service and domain registration, the development of procedures for dealing with internet presence, commissions for online purchases by intermediaries, advertising fees for representation in search engines, and the cost of hosting the site on a reliable server (Buhalis, 1999). Therefore, low access of internet usage specially seen in developing countries, low awareness created regarding the digital tourism, lack of managing the web site created also, budget allocation problem for setting enough budget for the promotional purposes are some of the constraints. Finding the right team is also among the challenges of digital tourism promotion. Promoting content, there might be the problem of the consistency of brands and lack of trust and the problem of big data management are some of the factors that affect the digital marketing adopting process. Using internet in modern travel agencies has certain challenges such as incomplete and unreliable web information, low customer perception of payment security, and direct communication with the travel agent may be needed for sale of certain products and services Batinić (2013). According to Bostanshirin (2014),

there are numerous obstacles for internet marketing practices, including issues with integrity, a lack of face-to-face interaction, security and privacy, and a lack of trust. There are also various obstacles to using e-marketing strategies, including consumer aversion to online buying, expensive internet connections, customer service challenges, network or system failures, sluggish website performance, legal restrictions, and privacy concerns (Siddique and Rehman, 2011).

2.11. Empirical review on e-marketing challenges & effectiveness to business

According to (Strauss et al., 2008, Stanton et al., 1994, and Korkmanet al., 2010) conducted their research on the role and contribution of E-marketing mix tools (E-product/service, E-price, E-place, E-promotion, E-privacy/personalization, E-precision, E-payment). Even though, the contribution of the E-marketing components studied by the above-mentioned researchers, the researcher argued to attest each of the E-marketing mix considered as a major variable to measure the effectiveness of E-marketing on the performance of tour firms on their market share, profit, employment and asset. Under, the major E-marketing application challenges mentioned below

E-marketing in developing countries is highly dependent on differences of Internet access, availability, affordability, and other measures as the ‘Internet haves‘ and ‘Internet has not‘(Wilson, 1987).

According to ITU (2013), E-marketing in developing and developed countries is influenced by ICT readiness (infrastructure, access), use intensity, and ICT skills. The E-commerce practice and challenges in the Ethiopian context are presented below;

According to Assefa and Wubalem, (2007), ICT can be an extremely powerful enabler in efforts to bring positive and sustainable socio-economic and political development to countries around the globe. Conducting old businesses in new ways and embracing new business opportunities has now become part of any economic transformation. Nonetheless, Ethiopia has the low in network readiness index and in Internet users/internet penetration in the continent. But, the government’s effort to improve the ICT infrastructure is encouraging.

According to Belaynew (2012) E-commerce in Ethiopia is still characterized by a low penetration and high cost of Internet services, lack of suitable legal and regulatory framework for E-commerce, and monopoly of government on the telecom sector are the main impediments to adopting E-business in the country. Some of these challenges are discussed below. The Ethiopian government

established an ICT policy (FDRE, 2016); nevertheless, the adoption of ICT and E-commerce in Ethiopia remains low in comparison with regional and global peers (FDRE, 2016).

According to Mulat and Tadesse (2002), the major challenges of ICT in the country are low per capita income, prevalence of disease, high population growth, poor ICT infrastructure, and fledgling regulation toward governance. All These constraints present challenges, but also opportunities for effective business transaction (which is the central study of this research).E-marketing mix tools are highly relying on telecom and E-banking services.

Hence, researchers (Lishan, 2009/10; & Wondwossen, 2005) conducted their studies on the challenges of telecommunications to the productivity of public and private enterprises and on the roles of the banking sector in E-marketing and E-commerce in Ethiopia respectively. The researchers forwarded the following challenges: Low level of internet penetration and poorly developed telecommunication infrastructure, Internet and online payments impede smooth development and improvements in E-commerce in Ethiopia. Lack of suitable legal and regulatory framework for E-commerce and E-payment. Political instabilities in neighboring countries: Political and economic instabilities. Compared to the developed countries, there are higher costs of entry into the E-commerce market in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government's current laws do not accommodate electronic contracts and signatures. However, the influence of these challenges is not examined on the effectiveness of e-marketing mix elements (which is the focus of this research). This is why, the researcher focused to examine the extent and implications of these challenges on the effectiveness of E-marketing tools (E-promotion, E-price, E-product/service, E-privacy, E-precision, E-payment, E-interface, and pull and push factors) toward the performance of tour firms to current market position in the web is an essential issue. Although many E-marketing companies collect cost and usage data about their Web sites, few of them understand in any detail how well such information measures their sites' performance or how success in attracting, converting and retaining customers compares with that of competing sites and on their business performance and tourism development.

2.12. Conceptual framework of the study

According to Alan S. Kaufman and Nadeen L. Kaufman, (2005), a Conceptual Framework is a basic structure that consists of certain abstract blocks which represent the observational, the experiential, and the analytical/ synthetically aspects of a process or system being conceived. From

the previous different contexts that are the theoretical and empirical literature, there are different factors evident to the technological challenges and their influence on the effectiveness of e-marketing in small tourism firm performance. However, these models and theories ignored the role of e-marketing in the performance of small tourism businesses. Studies conducted in the area of e-marketing are highly dependent on the e-marketing mix.

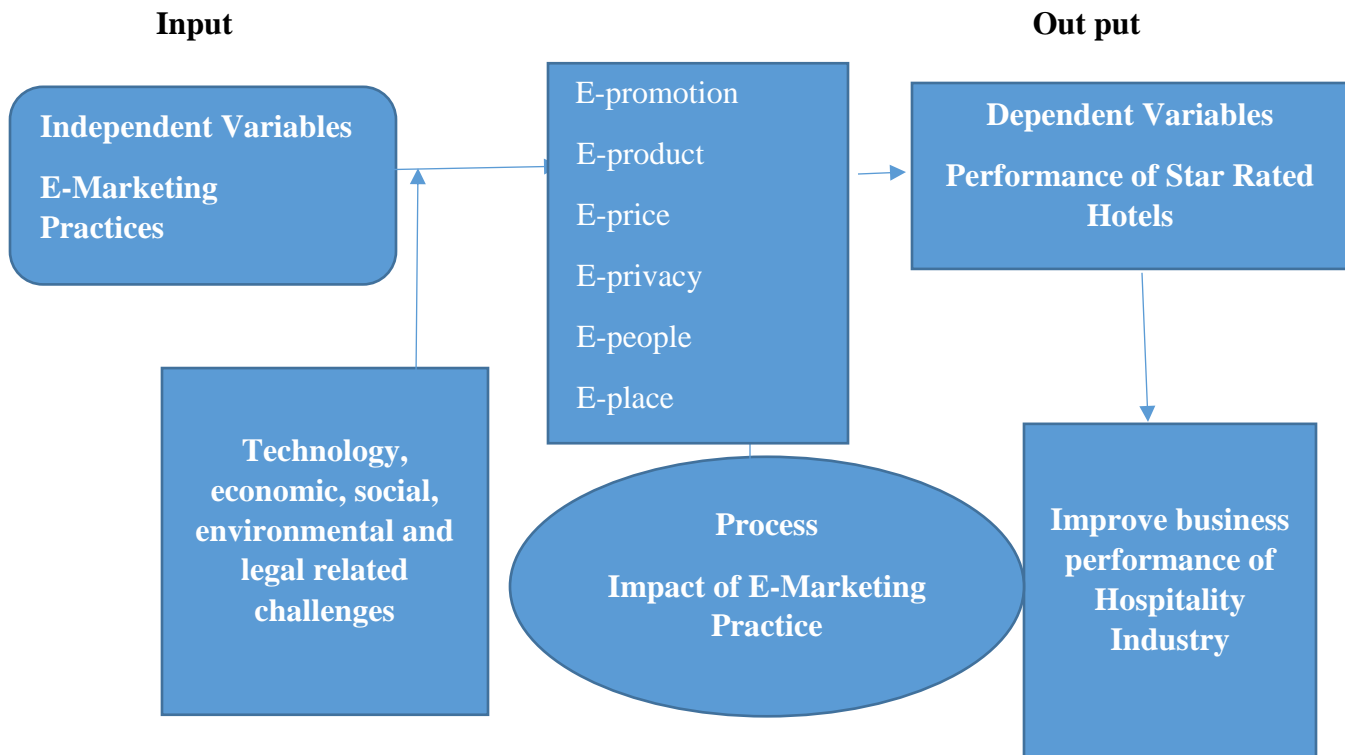


Figure 2: conceptual frame work of the study

Developed by: The Researcher 2024

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Description of the study area

This intended study focuses on star-rated hotels located in Mekelle City, Tigray. To provide context, this section offers a brief overview of the region, particularly its business environment as it relates to the hotel industry. Tigray is one of the regional states of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, situated at the northern tip of the country. The Afar region borders it to the east, the Amhara region to the south, Sudan to the west, and Eritrea to the north. Geographically, Tigray lies between 12°-15° North latitude and 36°30'-40°30' East longitude.

Tigray, often called the cradle of Ethiopia's civilization, is a captivating tourist destination that combines a rich history, natural beauty, pleasant climate, serene environment, and unmatched hospitality. It is home to the biblical "Ark of the Covenant," said to be housed in the ancient St. Mary of Zion Church, a symbol of the mighty Kingdom of Axum (2nd century BC - 700 AD), and the World Heritage Site of the Axum obelisk and its surrounding UNESCO registered in 1972. The region also holds the earliest Muslim settlement in Africa and boasts ancient monuments, tombs, ruins, and inscriptions that testify to its glorious past. Noteworthy sites include the Temple of Yeha, with its significant historical, archaeological, and architectural value, and Adwa, a symbol of resistance that preserved Ethiopia's independence.

Mekelle, the capital city of Tigray, is well-connected by both air and land, making it an accessible destination for tourists. The city is served by the Mekelle Airport, which provides both domestic and limited international flights, primarily from Addis Ababa. In addition to air travel, Mekelle is connected by a network of highways to other major cities in Ethiopia, facilitating access via buses and private vehicles. The accessibility of Mekelle and the surrounding tourist destinations plays a crucial role in the hotel industry, as tourists' choice of accommodation often depends on the convenience and ease of travel to and from hotels. The connectivity between Mekelle and key attractions such as Axum and Gheralta influences not only the types of tourists visiting the region but also the availability of transportation options provided by hotels, such as shuttle services or guided tours, which cater to tourists' needs. The hotel industry in Tigray provides significant benefits to the local community. Employment is one of the primary contributions, with hotels offering jobs particularly for youth and women. In addition to direct employment, hotels also foster

cultural exchange between local communities and tourists. By hosting guests from diverse backgrounds, hotels contribute to mutual understanding and the preservation of local traditions. Moreover, many hotels source products and services locally, thus supporting small businesses, farmers and promoting the regional economy.

The region's rich religious and cultural festivals, such as Meskel, Hidar Zion, Ashura, and Ashenda, further enhance its appeal. These attributes make Tigray a magnet for both domestic and international investors, particularly in the hospitality and tourism sectors. The government has shown strong commitment to developing these industries by encouraging investment in star-rated hotels and related services, offering incentives like duty-free importation of tourist amenities, and facilitating bank loans. For this study, however, the focus is on star-rated hotels within the region.

Location of the Study Area

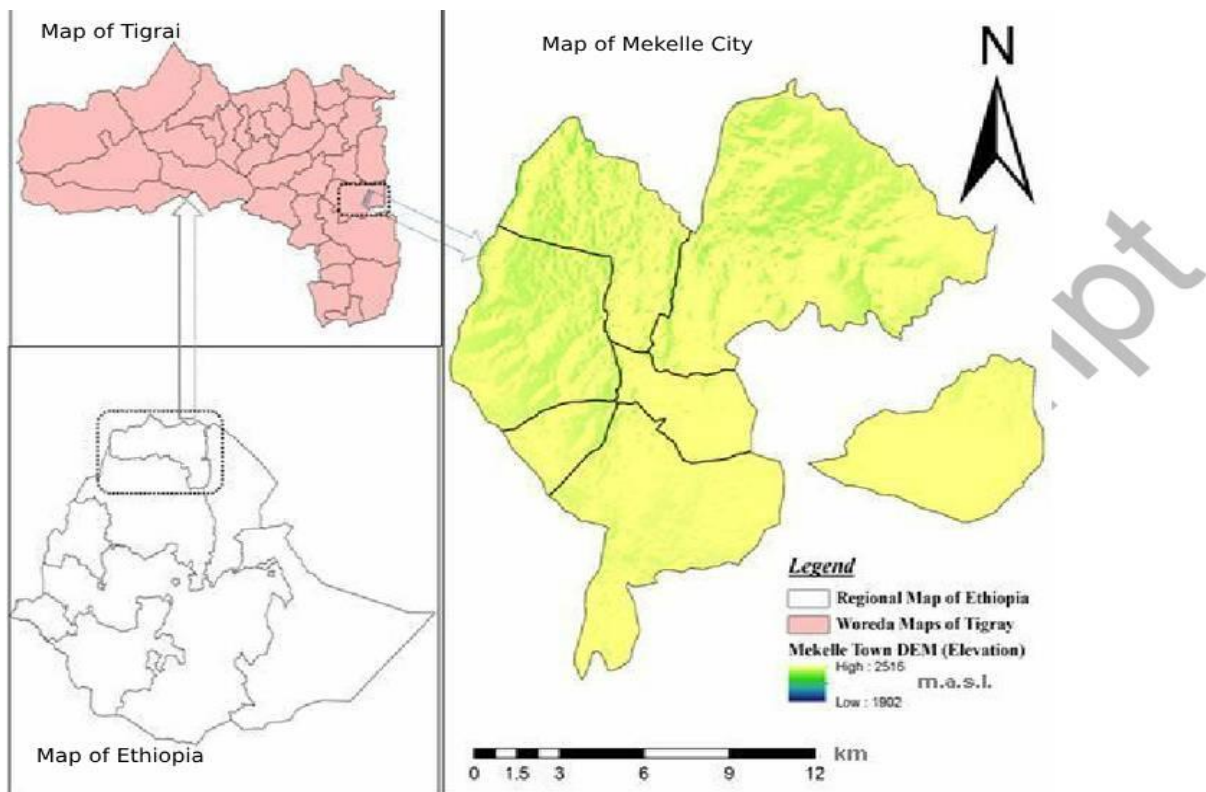


Figure 3 Map of study area
Researchers survey 2024

3.3 Research design

This study adopts a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to assess the impact of e-marketing on the performance of star-rated hotels in Tigray. According to Cooper and Schindler (2000),

descriptive research focuses on identifying the who, what, where, when, and how much of a phenomenon. This structured design includes investigative questions and aligns with formal research methodologies. A mixed-methods approach is employed, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of e-marketing practices. The qualitative component is exploratory, aiming to understand the contextual factors affecting e-marketing adoption in hotels, especially in an area where limited prior research exists. The quantitative component involves statistical analysis to measure the extent of e-marketing usage and its impact on hotel performance. The combination of both approaches strengthens the study by ensuring a holistic analysis that captures both measurable trends and deeper insights into challenges and opportunities.

To enhance reliability and depth, both primary and secondary data sources were used. Primary data were collected through surveys with both open-ended and close-ended questions distributed to hotel managers, marketing managers, reception managers, and receptionists. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including hotel executives and government experts, to gain qualitative insights. Furthermore, a direct assessment of hotels' online presence (websites and social media) was used to evaluate their digital marketing strategies. Secondary data were obtained from published rating criteria to provide a broader context for the findings.

A census sampling technique was applied, targeting 38 participants from star-rated hotels in Tigray to ensure that all relevant stakeholders involved in e-marketing adoption are represented. The cross-sectional design allows for data collection at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of current e-marketing practices and their effectiveness. To analyze the collected data, quantitative data was processed using SPSS v.30, employing descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression models to examine trends and relationships between e-marketing adoption and hotel performance. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed using content analysis, identifying key themes and patterns related to e-marketing barriers, opportunities, and strategies.

This descriptive cross-sectional survey design was appropriate as it provides a structured and systematic analysis of e-marketing's role in hotel performance. By incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study ensures a well-rounded understanding of the research problem. Additionally, the cross-sectional approach captures real-time insights by analyzing data collected from various stakeholders at a specific point in time. Ultimately, this research design was

effectively evaluate the current state of e-marketing in Tigray's hotel industry, identify key challenges, and propose recommendations for enhanced adoption.

3.4 Target population, Sampling Technique, Sample size

3.4.1 Target population

The population of the study refers to the specific population from which the samples are drawn. Thus, data were collected from star-rated Hotels in Mekelle city, The relevant primary data for the study have been collected from marketing departments/marketing managers and front office managers/Receptionists of each star-rated hotel, Culture and Tourism Bureau and Mekelle Culture and Tourism office experts of senior marketing and promotion experts, Accreditation and regulation directorate experts, and ICT and web admin experts.

Star-rated hotels were selected because they are formally established businesses with structured management, larger capital investment, and higher service expectations, making them more likely to adopt and implement e-marketing strategies. Their operations require active customer engagement, online visibility, and competitive positioning, which aligns with the study's objective of assessing e-marketing effectiveness in the hospitality sector. Additionally, these hotels are more likely to have dedicated marketing departments, making them ideal for evaluating digital marketing adoption and challenges.

Experts from the Tigray Culture and Tourism Bureau and Mekelle City Culture and Tourism Office were included because they play a regulatory and supervisory role in the tourism and hospitality industry. They are responsible for certifying, monitoring, and guiding hotels, ensuring compliance with industry standards, and promoting tourism development. Their insights provide a broader perspective on e-marketing adoption, industry challenges, and the policies affecting digital marketing practices in hotels. Additionally, ICT and web administration experts offer technical insights into the barriers and opportunities related to online marketing in the region.

3.4.2 Sampling Technique

According to Cvent (2019) and others, suggest employing the census approach to collect enough respondents for the survey results to have a high level of statistical confidence for a population of less than 1000 individuals. As a result, the researcher employed a census 39 sampling technique, as the city's total number of star-rated hotels is just 8, 8 marketing managers, 7 General Managers, and 8 front office /receptionists. That is, because this number is manageable, all the 23 general

managers, marketing managers & receptionists in each hotel were considered for this study. For robust factor analysis, the Purposive sampling technique were used in this study 16 Tigray Culture and Tourism Bureau and Experts from Mekelle city Culture and Tourism office, and both the study areas and Tourism senior managers and marketing and promotion, Accreditation and regulation directorate since the sample respondents who use. An influential position involving certifying, directing controlling, and supervising the firms' overall activities. ICT and web admin Experts and are aware of the reasons behind the E-marketing. Finally, a total of 39 complete responses from all purposive sample respondents expected were obtained.

3.4.3 Sample size

Tigray is home to 21 star-rated hotels, ranging from one to four stars. For this study, the focus is on Mekelle city. Mekelle was selected because it is the capital of Tigray and serves as a diplomatic and administrative hub, additionally, a large number of star-rated hotels are concentrated in Mekelle city, reflecting their importance as a key city in Tigray.

In Mekelle City, the distribution of star-rated hotels includes 2 hotels with four stars, 3 hotels with three stars, 1 hotel with two stars, and 2 hotels with one star total of 8 star-rated hotels (TCTB 2018).

3.6 Reliability and validity of data collection instruments

3.6.1 Reliability

Numerous items in all constructs were used for the internal consistency reliability of examining e-marketing tourism practices, its opportunity, and challenges was assessed with Cronbach's alpha. The method that is most frequently used to evaluate the scale's dependability is Cronbach's alpha. The reliability test also has been carried out using a Cronbach reliability test in which a value of 0.7 and above coefficient alpha is considered as a cut-off point (Field, 2009; Hair et al., 2010). Therefore, items with Cronbach alpha value of 0.7 and above have been considered.

Variables Number of	items or statements	Reliability Coefficient or Cronbach alpha
Online marketing/Advertisement	4	0.845
Search engine optimization	5	0.763
Social media	3	0.856
Email marketing	5	0.846

Mobile marketing	4	0.876
Website marketing	6	0.768
Customer Engagement and Satisfaction	5	0.834
E-Marketing Practices and Standards	5	0.787
Challenges of E-marketing adoption	6	0.782

Table 3 Reliability of instruments
Source: Researchers survey 2024

3.6.2 Validity

Heale & Twycross (2015) define validity as the degree to which the sample of test items accurately reflects the test's subject matter. The content validity used in this study is a device of how much information was gathered using tools like questionnaires and observations. Different strategies have been developed to maintain the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments. Firstly, respondents were well acquainted with the purpose of the study by presenting its importance. Secondly, variables incorporated in the model were selected in line with the existing theories and empirical findings. Thirdly, the questionnaire was reviewed in a content and technical way, thereby the instrument was revised accordingly. To ensure validity, the instrument has been reviewed by experts in the field and pilot tests were conducted among selected star-rated hotels.

3.7. Data collection tools and procedures

Secondary data are ‘‘data which already exist and which were collected for some other (primary) purpose but which can be used a second time in the current project’’ [Veal 1997].

The researcher used both primary and secondary data sources. From the primary source of data instrument, a structured form of open-ended and close-ended questionnaire were used in the study to collect crucial information from star-rated hotels, culture, and tourism bureau managers and experts. Moreover, to address all research objectives and research questions, from the secondary source of data instrument, an exhaustive desk review of policies or as well as Hotel’s websites and social media were retrieved.

A survey questionnaire, the primary data-gathering tool for this study, was prepared in English. This choice was made to assess marketing in star-rated hotels, as their guests are often international and domestic as well, most digital platforms operate in English, and the targeted respondents are expected to be educated individuals. Different measurement scales were used such as multiple-choice, Likert scale and open-ended questions was also posed to provide further explanations for triangulating the responses. A 5-points Likert scale has been used in this study due to the reason

that it maintains a high response rate and minimizes confusion among respondents, particularly compared with 7, 9, and 10 points-Likert scales according to (Dawes, 2008).

3.8. Data analysis and presentation

Using questionnaire quantitative data were collected. The Response was cleaned, coded, and entered into an SPSS v 30 statistical analysis. Descriptive (such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) were employed. Thematic analysis was used to analyze and report the open-ended questions as well as personal observation and hotels website and social media besides reviewing the criteria for rating the hotels during the data collection.

It consisted of well-formulated questions and fixed-response alternatives that are directly related to the research objectives. The questionnaire was designed in both closed and open-ended question formats. The questionnaires were divided into 4 sections. The first section of the questionnaire was designed to collect information regarding the respondent's socio-demographic characteristics, including gender, age, educational background and work experience. The second section was focused on current e-marketing strategies of star-rated hotels. The third section was presented to collect data regarding customer engagement and satisfaction in star-rated hotels. The fourth section was focused on assessing the challenges of E-marketing practices in those star-rated hotels in Mekelle. Finally, recommendations for enhancing e-marketing practices in star-rated hotels in Tigray.

3.9. Ethical consideration

Ethics in business research refers to the set of behavioral principles and norms beginning with the research from the first phase of the study (Sekaran, 2003). The ethical code of conduct should reflect the behavior of everyone participating in the research project; researcher, participants, or moderator (Sekaran, 2003). Before the data collection, permissions from the concerned organizations and institutions are asked. During the distribution of the questionnaire, respondents were informed about the purpose and the benefit of the study along with their full right to refuse or completely reject participation. The respondents were told their responses would be kept confidential and their identity would not be exposed as the study is used only for academic purposes. In addition, the researcher will respect the work of previous investigations or studies and cited appropriately those works that have been taken as a basis to avoid Plagiarism. Furthermore, the researcher tried to accomplish the research work based on the stated schedule and budget allocation.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA PRESENTATION, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the data analysis and discussion of the study's findings, focusing on the effectiveness and implementation of e-marketing practices in star-rated hotels in Mekelle city, Tigray. The study aimed to evaluate how digital marketing strategies influence customer attraction, retention, and overall hotel performance. To achieve this, data were collected through a structured questionnaire and processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v.30). The analysis primarily employed descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation values, to summarize the responses. To ensure data quality, all questionnaires were reviewed for completeness before analysis. Using a census approach, 38 out of 39 distributed questionnaires were successfully returned and included in the study, while one incomplete response was discarded. The collected data underwent coding and editing for accuracy. In addition to the quantitative analysis, qualitative data gathered through direct assessment of online presence of the hotels digital platforms also the criteria for rating hotels were integrated into the discussion to provide deeper insights into the findings.

By analyzing these findings, this chapter aims to bridge the gap between theoretical expectations and practical implementation of e-marketing in the hotel industry. The results will help identify existing challenges, highlight best practices, and provide actionable recommendations for enhancing digital marketing strategies within the hospitality sector.

4.1 Profiles of Respondents

The research participants, who are general managers, marketing managers, front office/receptionists of each star-rated hotel, and governmental experts, are described in general terms in the questionnaire's first section. The table that follows provides a summary and description of the respondent's responses to the following questions. These variables include the age of the respondents, sex, their educational background and experience in the hotel and for government experts in tourism marketing and hotel accreditation, also their responsibility in the hotel and in a government office. The second section was the questionnaires for employment of hotel focused on E-marketing practices in star-rated hotels in Mekelle. The third section was Customer Engagement and Satisfaction the fourth section was Challenges in Implementing E-Marketing finally recommendations for enhancing e-marketing practice. Following six section was questionnaires

for governmental experts of hotel accreditation, marketing and promotion experts, and ICT are the E-Marketing Practices and Standards, Challenges in E-Marketing Implementation, Impact on Customer Engagement and Satisfaction, Future of E-Marketing in Mekelle Recommendation to enhance e-marketing practice For that reason, the variables about the respondent’s socio-demographic status were summarized and described in the subsequent table, and graphs.

Age of respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-28	11	28.2	28.9	28.9
	29-39	17	43.6	44.7	73.7
	40-49	9	23.1	23.7	97.4
	above 50	1	2.6	2.6	100.0
	Total	38	97.4	100.0	
Gender of respondents					
Valid	Male	32	82.1	82.1	84.6
	Female	6	15.4	15.4	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	

Table4 age and gender of respondents

Source: Researchers survey 2024

As shown in Table 5, of the 38 respondents 82.1% (32) were male and the remaining 15.4% (6) were female With this finding the number of females in the main departments or positions is 15.4% compared to the number of males this means in hotel and tourism industries specially with the position females are not engaged so it needs more female engagement. There were four categories for the age of respondents. The first category was the age from 18-28 years; those of respondents who belong to this age category are 28.2 in number 11. 43.6% (17) of respondents were between the ages of 29-39. According to the data, the ages of 40 and 49 are 23.19% or 9. The other 1 respondent was above 50 years old. Also, more of the respondents were between the ages of 29-39 accounting for 43.6%. This implies that the hotel industry needs to hire a much younger population.

Educational background of the respondent

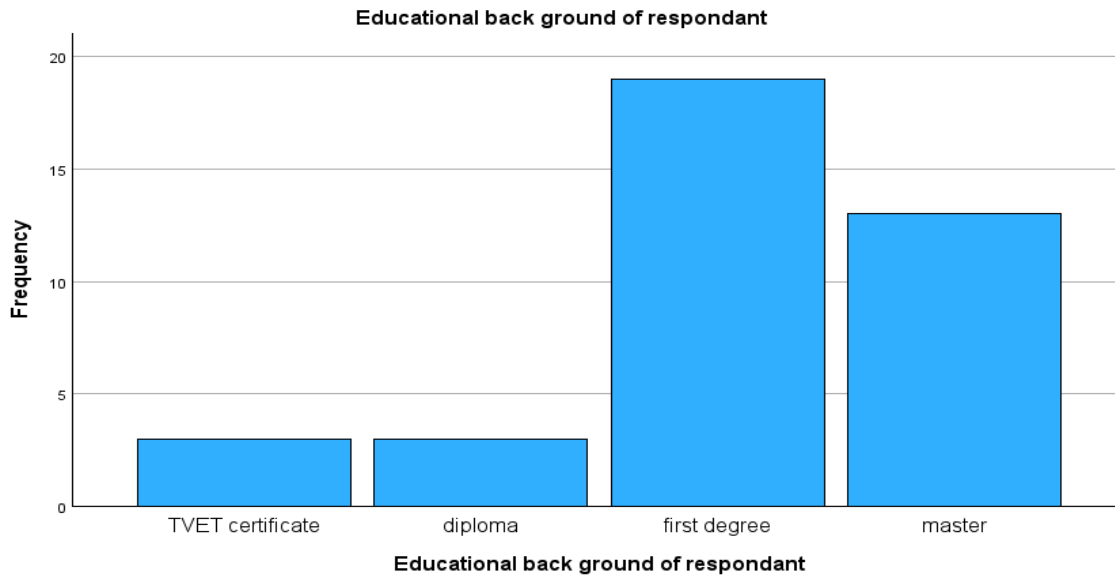


Figure 4 educational back ground of respondents

Source: Researchers survey 2024

The education level of respondents, as shown in the graph, indicates that 7.9% hold a TVET certificate, while 15.8% have a College Diploma. A significant portion, 65.8%, have a First Degree, and 33.3% possess a Master’s Degree. This data suggests that most respondents are well-educated, with many holding at least a First Degree. This highlights a positive trend in the educational background of those in the industry. However, there is room for improvement in the qualifications of those with TVET certificates and College Diplomas, as the hospitality industry would benefit from a more highly educated workforce.

Respondent experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	below 5 year	14	35.9	36.8	36.8
	between 5 and 10	4	10.3	10.5	47.4
	between 11 and 15	12	30.8	31.6	78.9
	more than 16 year	8	20.5	21.1	100.0
	Total	38	97.4	100.0	

Table 5 experience of respondents

Source: Researchers survey 2024

According to the survey, from the overall respondents, those with their work experience below 5 years are 12 in number and 35.9%. The respondents who have experienced between 5-10 years in the hotel industry accounted for 4 (10.3%). The other respondents who accounted for 12 (30.8%) are experienced between 11-15 years. The rest 8 (20.5%) of the target population experienced above 16 years in the industry.

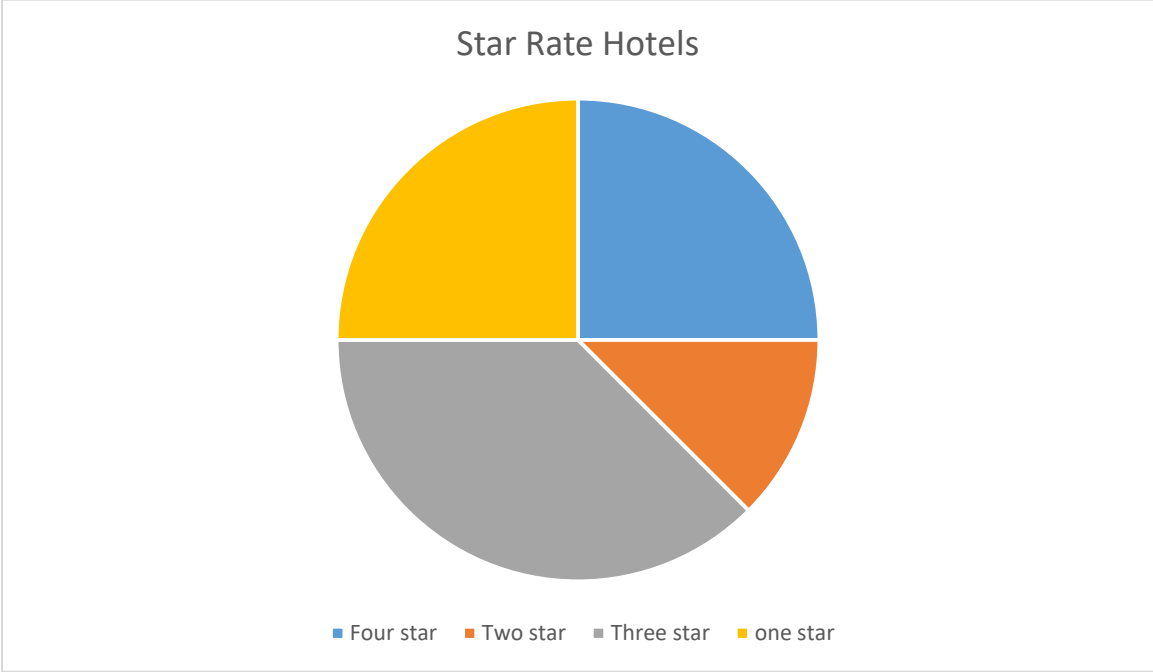


Figure5 Hotels rate of star

Source: Researchers survey 2024

The survey included 7 General Managers, 8 Marketing Managers, and 8 Receptionists, providing a broad perspective from management and frontline staff. The hotels varied in star ratings, with 3 three-star, 2 four-star, 2 one-star, and 1 two-star hotels represented. This mix focuses on mid-range accommodations, with some higher-end and budget options. The diversity in roles and star ratings offers a well-rounded view of the hotel industry’s operations and customer engagement strategies.

Responsibility /role of respondents

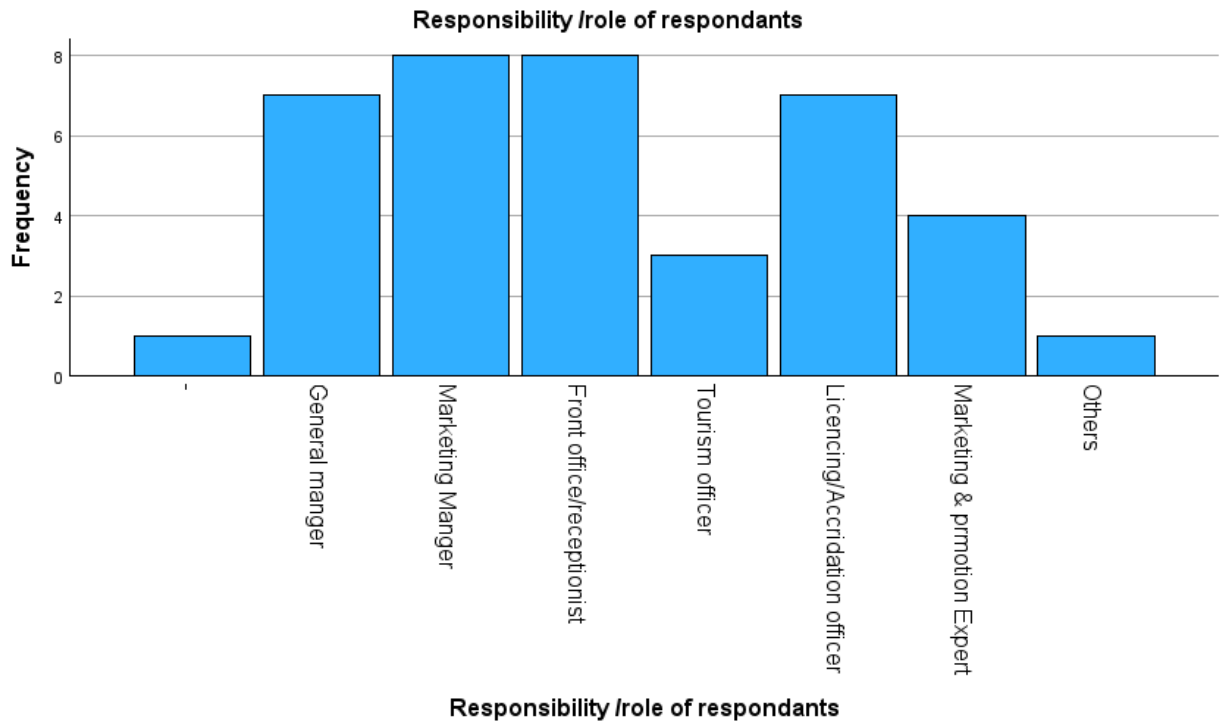


Figure6 Responsibility of respondents

Source: Researchers survey 2024

According to the survey, among the respondents, those holding the position of General Manager are 7 in number, making up 17.9% of the total. Respondents who are Marketing Managers account for 8 (20.5%). The Front Office/Receptionist category also represents 8 respondents, equivalent to 20.5%. There are 3 respondents (7.7%) who serve as Tourism Officers. Another group, the Licencing/Accreditation Officers, includes 7 respondents, comprising 17.9% of the total. Additionally, Marketing & Promotion Experts make up 4 respondents or 10.3%. Finally, there is 1 respondent (2.6%) categorized under "Others," encompassing roles outside the specified categories.

4.2 Descriptive statistics for e-marketing practices

The standard deviation, as defined by Karl Pearson in 1993, measures the variation or spread of a set of values. It serves as a summary statistic, reflecting how much each observation deviates from the mean. The mean itself represents the central value within a set of numbers. According to Zach Bobbitt (2022), the grand mean is the average calculated from the means of multiple subsamples. A five-point Likert scale were employed to assess the use of e-marketing practices in star-rated

hotels in Tigrai. To determine the level of practice, the researcher calculated the mean and standard deviation for each survey question and dimension. The reporting of findings follows the criteria set by Ghazi (2016), where a score from 1.00 to 1.80 indicates Strongly Disagree, 1.81 to 2.60 means Disagree, 2.61 to 3.40 is Neutral, 3.41 to 4.20 indicates Agree, and 4.21 to 5.00 represents Strongly Agree.

To improve clarity, the quantitative findings were present by each survey question, showing the mean and standard deviation, as well as by dimensions of e-marketing practices (e.g., social media marketing, email marketing, website management). Qualitative insights were categorized into emerging themes such as barriers to implementation, perceptions of effectiveness, and recommendations for improvement, with supporting direct quotes to contextualize the data. A direct assessment of the hotels' websites and social media platforms was also conducted, evaluating factors such as load time, ease of navigation, clarity, visual appeal, and responsiveness, along with the criteria for rating the hotels.

4.3 Results of descriptive statistics analysis (Mean & STD)

The results of the descriptive statistics analysis (mean and standard deviation) provide valuable insights into the role of digital marketing platforms in promoting the growth and development of the tourism industry. According to Chaffey (2002), digital marketing enhances information accessibility, making it available anytime and anywhere. Various e-marketing practices, such as website marketing, email marketing, mobile application marketing, online marketing, search engine optimization, and social media marketing, are implemented in star-rated hotels. These practices play a key role in the digital transformation of the tourism sector.

To ensure consistency and credibility, triangulation was employed by combining both qualitative and quantitative data. This approach strengthens the validity of the findings, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how e-marketing practices influence the growth and development of tourism in the region.

4.3.1 Hotels currently use E-marketing



Figure 7 current use of e-marketing

Source: Researchers survey 2024

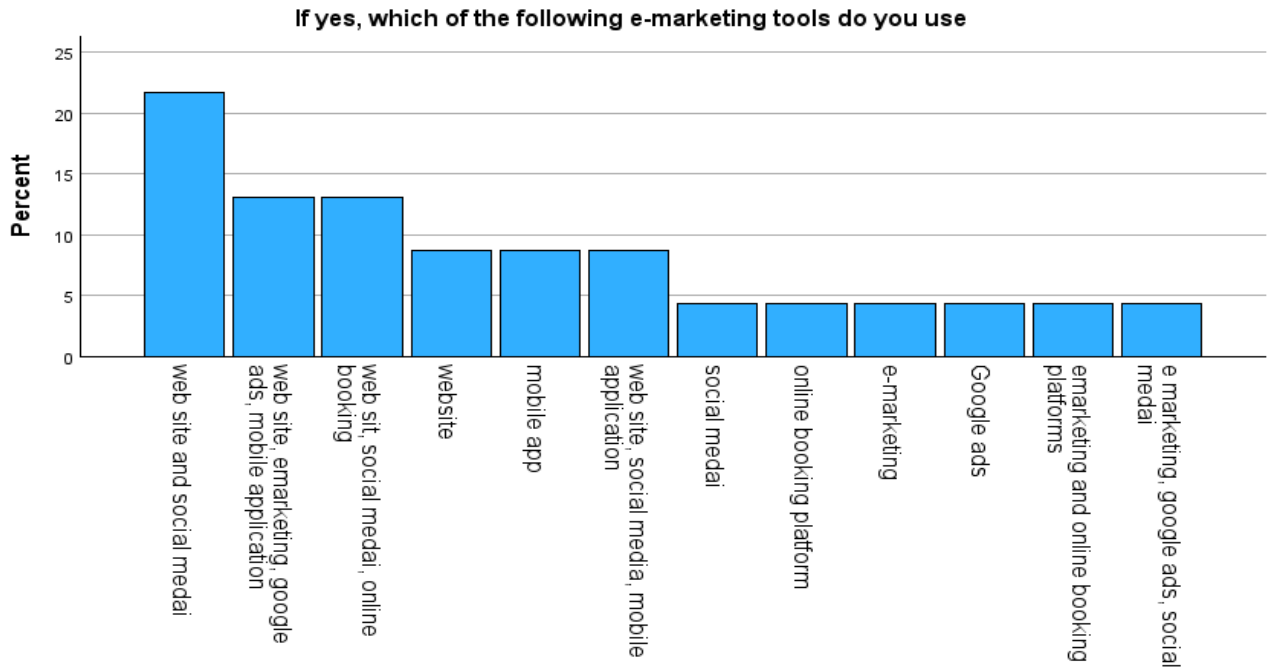


Figure 8 use of e-marketing tools

Source: Researchers survey 2024

According to the survey, respondents utilize a variety of e-marketing tools, indicating diverse digital marketing strategies within the industry. The most commonly used combination is website and social media, with 21.7% of respondents relying on this blend to maintain an online presence and engage customers through digital platforms. Additionally, 13% of respondents use a broader range of tools, including website, Email marketing, Google Ads, and Mobile Applications,

suggesting a comprehensive, multi-channel approach. Another 13% of respondents focus on using websites, social media, and Online Booking, highlighting a targeted effort to attract and convert customers directly through digital platforms.

There is a segment of the population that relies on single tools, with 8.7% using only a website and another 8.7% focusing solely on a Mobile Application, indicating a specific emphasis on either a web-based or mobile strategy. Other combinations, such as websites, social media, and Mobile Applications, also account for 8.7% of responses, showing a preference for integrated digital approaches. A smaller group, 4.3%, relies exclusively on social media for marketing, while another 4.3% focuses solely on Online Booking Platforms for direct customer conversion.

The survey also identified some respondents employing general e-marketing strategies or concentrating on specific channels like Google Ads, accounting for another 4.3% each. This diversity in responses underscores a trend towards integrated e-marketing, with a clear preference for using multiple tools to enhance reach and effectiveness.

To implement these findings, hotels should adopt a multi-channel approach, integrating various digital tools to engage customers and improve visibility. Emphasis should be placed on mobile engagement, investing in online booking systems, and leveraging SEO and Google Ads for higher reach. Social media should be used for content creation and targeted advertising to increase brand visibility. Governments can support digital adoption by offering grants or training, promoting digital literacy among hotel managers. For hotel managers, diversifying marketing strategies based on customer preferences and measuring the ROI of different tools is key to staying competitive and driving growth. These recommendations can help strengthen the digital transformation of the hospitality sector.

To enhance e-marketing effectiveness, hotels should invest in regular website updates, SEO optimization, and paid social media advertising to boost engagement. Implementing automated email marketing, leveraging Google Ads, and improving response times on booking platforms can also enhance customer interactions. Additionally, training staff in digital marketing and analytics will help maximize these strategies.

At the policy level, the Tourism Bureau should support hotels by offering digital marketing training, improving internet infrastructure, and encouraging investment in modern e-marketing tools. Providing financial incentives and guidelines for digital adoption can further strengthen the industry's online presence, benefiting both businesses and the broader tourism sector.

4.3.2 How often update hotel update online platforms

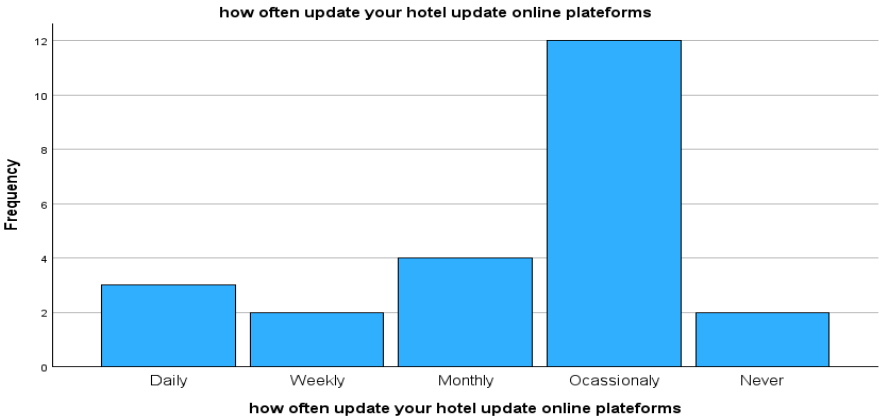


Figure 9 Hotels update online platforms
Source: Researchers survey 2024

The survey results show the frequency with which hotels update their online platforms, indicating varying levels of digital engagement. A majority of respondents, accounting for 52.2%, update their online platforms occasionally, suggesting that updates are not a regular practice for many. A smaller portion, 17.4%, update their platforms every month, demonstrating a more structured but infrequent schedule.

Daily updates are performed by 13% of the respondents, indicating a high level of online activity and commitment to maintaining a current digital presence. Weekly updates are carried out by 8.7% of respondents, suggesting a moderate frequency for keeping content fresh. Finally, another 8.7% of respondents reported that they never update their online platforms, indicating no active engagement with digital channels.

These results highlight a trend where the majority of hotels may not prioritize frequent online updates, which could affect their visibility and interaction with potential customers. Those who engage daily or weekly appear to be making a conscious effort to stay relevant and engaged with their audience. Hotels should by prioritizing regular updates, leveraging automation tools, and focusing on quality content, hotels can enhance their online visibility, customer interaction, and overall competitiveness in the market.

4.3.3 Type of content mostly focus on e-marketing strategies

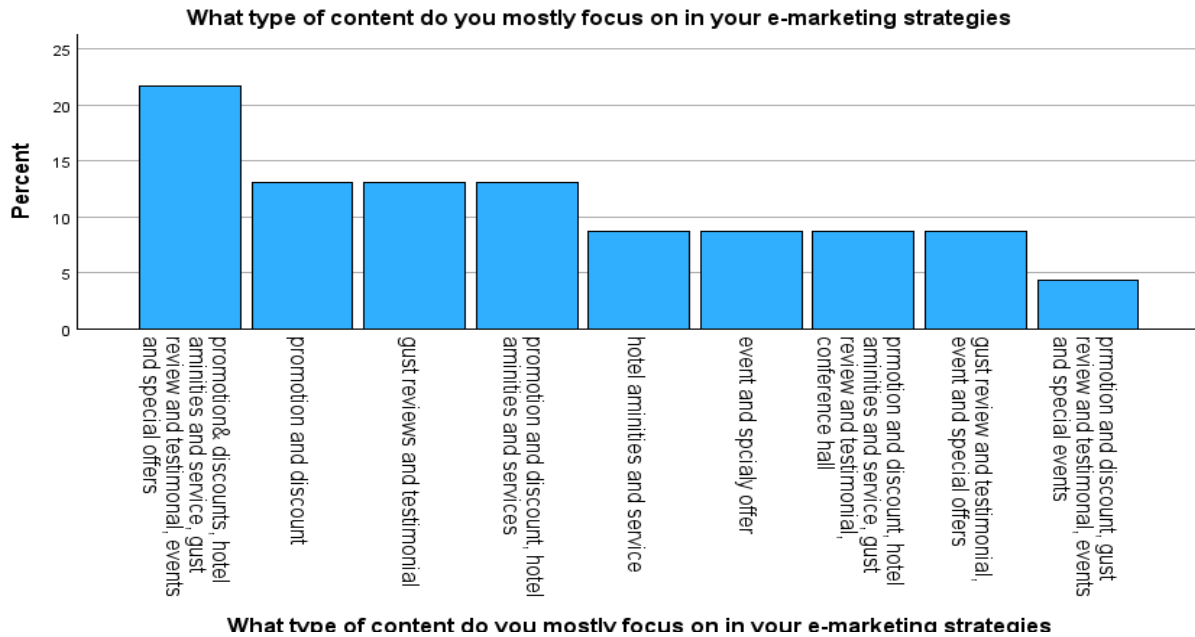


Figure 10 hotels mostly focus on e-marketing strategies
Source: Researchers survey 2024

The survey highlights the key content areas hotels prioritize in e-marketing to attract and engage customers. The most common approach combines promotions, amenities, guest reviews, and special offers, reflecting a comprehensive strategy.

Promotions and discounts alone are a major focus, emphasizing cost savings to attract guests. Guest reviews and testimonials also play a crucial role in building trust. Some hotels combine promotions with amenities to highlight both affordability and quality, while others focus solely on amenities or event-driven marketing. A smaller group integrates multiple elements, including conference offerings, targeting business travelers. Overall, the findings show that hotels use diverse content strategies. Hotels should balance promotions, guest reviews, amenities, and special events in their e-marketing. Regular updates, engaging content, and interactive communication will enhance customer attraction and trust while catering to diverse audiences.

4.3.4 Contribution of web site

Items/constructs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The use of a website promotes the brand image of my hotel service operating firm	23	4.09	1.443

The use of digital technology increased the practice of marketing using electronic tools in our hotel	23	4.00	1.414
The use of the website creates awareness on the reservation and other services in our hotel	23	4.26	1.176
The use of a website in my hotel has a positive impact on the promotion	23	4.04	1.331
The use of digital technology increased the practice of marketing using electronic tools in our hotel	23	4.26	1.137
Website marketing positively affects the performance of our hotel	23	4.17	1.302
Grand mean		4.136	

Table 6: Website Marketing (Mean & Std.)

Source: Researchers survey2024

The survey results indicate a generally positive perception of digital marketing tools, particularly websites, in the hotel sector. Respondents recognize the significant role of websites in brand promotion, customer awareness, and overall business performance. With a mean score of 4.09, websites are viewed as essential for shaping brand image, although opinions vary (SD = 1.443). Similarly, digital technology has strengthened the use of e-marketing tools, as reflected in mean scores of 4.00 and 4.26, highlighting a strong endorsement of online marketing strategies.

Websites are particularly valued for raising awareness about reservations and services, achieving the highest mean score of 4.26 (SD = 1.176). Additionally, their role in promotional efforts (mean = 4.04, SD = 1.331) and impact on overall hotel performance (mean = 4.17, SD = 1.302) emphasize their importance in modern hotel marketing strategies. The grand mean of 4.136 suggests widespread acceptance of digital marketing tools.

However, despite this positive outlook, some challenges remain. The variation in responses indicates differences in digital adoption levels, with some hotels not fully utilizing key features such as SEO, mobile optimization, and integrated booking systems. Additionally, while digital marketing is recognized as effective, limited expertise, irregular content updates, and underutilization of paid advertising options (such as Google Ads and social media promotions) may restrict its full potential. This suggests that while e-marketing strategies are widely accepted,

their implementation varies, leaving room for improvement in optimizing digital tools for maximum business impact.

Hotels should enhance digital marketing by updating websites, optimizing SEO, and investing in targeted ads. Leveraging guest reviews, automating email campaigns, and training staff in e-marketing can improve engagement. Balancing online booking platforms with direct incentives will boost customer conversion and business growth.

4.3.5 Contribution of social media

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
In our hotel, we use Facebook, Instagram, telegram, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc. to promote our products and services	23	3.83	1.337
We employ informative articles via social media platforms	23	3.26	1.356
Social media promotion increased our hotel marketing performance	23	4.04	1.022
Grand mean		3.71	

Table 7 social media marketing (Mean &Std.)
Source: Researchers survey2024

The survey results suggest that social media is generally viewed as an effective marketing tool for hotels, particularly in enhancing overall marketing performance. However, the lower score for the use of informative articles on social media (3.26) indicates underutilization of this content strategy. The mixed perceptions, shown by a higher standard deviation, suggest that while some hotels may find informative articles helpful, others may not be maximizing their potential. This indicates a missed opportunity to engage and inform audiences through valuable content.

Hotels should increase their focus on creating informative content, such as travel tips or local guides, and integrate these into their social media strategies. Additionally, to improve consistency across platforms, hotels should standardize social media practices and tailor content for each platform's unique audience. Leveraging social media analytics will help refine content strategies, ensuring that hotels create engaging posts that drive conversions. Lastly, experimenting with new

content formats, like live videos or customer-generated content, can increase engagement, making social media an even more powerful tool in hotel marketing.

4.3.6 Online marketing

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Online advertising increases customer retention in our hotel	23	3.78	1.565
Newsletters delivered to loyal customers are more crucial	23	4.04	1.224
Online promotion and advertisement improve our hotel brand image	23	4.22	1.085
Online advertisement lowers the cost of promotion instead of brochures & leaflets	23	4.13	1.058
Grand Mean		4.0425	

Table 8 online marketing (Mean & Std.)

Source: Researchers survey 2024

The survey results indicate that while online advertising is generally seen as an effective tool in hotel marketing, its full potential is not being fully realized. The mean score of 3.78 for "Online advertising increases customer retention" suggests moderate agreement, but the higher standard deviation (1.565) indicates some uncertainty or underutilization of online advertising for this purpose. Similarly, although respondents strongly agree that newsletters are essential for customer loyalty (mean score of 4.04), there is room for improvement in how online advertising strategies, like newsletters, are utilized.

Despite the positive perception of online advertising, particularly in reducing promotional costs (mean score of 4.13), the variability in responses suggests that some hotels may not be fully exploiting its capabilities. This underutilization can be addressed by creating a more structured approach to online advertising, specifically targeting customer retention. For example, hotels could invest in more personalized email marketing campaigns and optimize their online ads based on customer behavior. Additionally, increasing the frequency and variety of online content, such as promotions and newsletters, could further enhance customer engagement and loyalty.

To maximize the benefits of online advertising, hotels should also focus on training marketing teams to leverage data analytics, allowing them to better understand customer preferences and tailor content accordingly. By adopting a more comprehensive and data-driven online advertising strategy, hotels can improve customer retention, lower promotional costs, and fully tap into the cost-effective benefits of digital marketing.

4.3.7 Search Engine Optimization /SEO

Item	N	Mean	Std. deviation
We consider search engine optimization as a priority bond to communicate with our customers by online advertisement	23	3.13	.869
Search engine optimization practices are cheaper in cost compared with the rest of other marketing dimension	23	3.96	1.065
Search engine optimization Promotional techniques increase the competitiveness of our hotel	23	3.04	.976
The higher ranking on search engine optimization, the bigger probability that more customers will come to our hotel	23	3.13	.869
Search engine optimization improved our hotel's image recognition	23	4.04	.976
Grand mean		3.46	

Table 9 marketing SEO (Mean &Std.)

Source Researchers survey 2024

The survey results reveal that while SEO is recognized positively in the hotel industry, its implementation is not fully optimized. Hotels generally agree that SEO improves brand image recognition, with a high mean score of 4.04. However, the mean scores for SEO's impact on customer attraction (3.13) and competitiveness (3.04) are relatively low, suggesting that its role in driving bookings and enhancing market position is not fully acknowledged. The cost-effectiveness of SEO is generally agreed upon (mean of 3.96), though responses varied, indicating some uncertainty about its affordability. With a grand mean of 4.06, SEO is seen as a valuable tool, but its potential in customer acquisition and competitiveness is underutilized. hotels should focus on educating staff about SEO's broader benefits, develop clear SEO strategies for both visibility and

customer acquisition, and measure the return on investment to ensure its effectiveness. Prioritizing local SEO could also help attract more customers and improve market competitiveness.

4.4 Customer Engagement and Satisfaction

4.4.1 Effectiveness of your e-marketing strategies in attracting new customers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Effective	14	58.3	60.9	60.9
	Very effective	6	25.0	26.1	87.0
	Neutral	2	8.3	8.7	95.7
	Ineffective	1	4.2	4.3	100.0
	Total	23	95.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.2		
Total		24	100.0		

Table 10 effectiveness on customer engagement & satisfaction (%)

Source: Researchers survey 2024

The findings reveal that a significant portion of hotels in Mekelle city struggle with the effectiveness of their e-marketing strategies. A majority of respondents perceive their digital marketing efforts as ineffective, highlighting key challenges such as poor content management, lack of expertise, and limited optimization of digital platforms. Conversely, a smaller proportion of respondents reported very effective or effective strategies, indicating that some hotels are successfully leveraging digital tools to attract and engage customers.

The findings suggest that investing in digital marketing training, improving content strategies, and optimizing online booking platforms could significantly enhance customer engagement. Hotels that integrate SEO, social media engagement, and personalized marketing strategies are more likely to improve their online presence and attract a broader audience.

Additionally, this research highlights the need for policy interventions or criteria for rating updating to support e-marketing adoption in the tourism sector. Government and industry stakeholders could collaborate to provide training programs, digital infrastructure improvements for hotels to enhance their digital marketing capabilities.

4.4.2 E-marketing has contributed to improving customer satisfaction

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Do you believe that e-marketing has contributed to improving customer satisfaction	23	1.78	.902
Grand mean		1.78	

Table 11 contribution to improvement customer satisfaction (Mean & Std.)

Source: Researchers survey 2024

The survey result of 1.78 suggests that e-marketing is not perceived as contributing much to customer satisfaction. This low score indicates that the current e-marketing efforts may not be effectively meeting customer expectations or improving their experience. To address this, hotels should refine their e-marketing strategies, focus on personalization, and better engage with customers to improve satisfaction.

4.4.3 Receive customer feedback through your online platforms (website, social media, booking platforms,

		Frequen cy	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Frequently	11	45.8	47.8	47.8
	Occasionally	6	25.0	26.1	73.9
	Rarely	6	25.0	26.1	100.0
	Total	23	95.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.2		
Total		24	100.0		

Table 12 customer feedback through on line (%)

Source: Researchers survey 2024

The survey shows that nearly 47.8% of respondents receive customer feedback frequently, while 26.1% receive it occasionally, and another 26.1% rarely get feedback. This indicates that while those hotels expected to engage with customers through online channels, others miss out on regular customer input.

The findings on customer engagement, retention and satisfaction indicate that while hotels recognize the importance of customer engagement and digital marketing, their actual implementation is lacking. Limited digital platform adoption, inconsistent customer feedback engagement, and the low perceived impact of e-marketing on satisfaction suggest underutilization of digital tools. This gap weakens customer retention and satisfaction, as engaged customers are more likely to remain loyal. Hotels should actively collect and respond to customer feedback, optimize digital platforms to enhance online visibility, and improve e-marketing strategies with personalized content and targeted promotions. Strengthening digital engagement not only improves customer relationships but also drives long-term business success.

4.5 Challenges in Implementing E-marketing

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Problem of Reliable server/security issue High Cost of training and maintenance	23	2.87	1.180
Problem of Finding the right team/lack of expertise	23	2.74	1.176
Problem of brand consistency	23	2.57	1.121
Insufficient customer engagement	23	2.48	.994
Lack of ease of access (low internet access)	23	2.48	1.123
Lack of budget allocation for e-marketing operations	23	2.48	1.039
Grand mean	2.60		

Table 13 challenges in implementation e-marketing (Mean & Std.)

Source: Researchers survey 2024

The main challenges in implementing effective e-marketing strategies in hotels include the inability to align marketing efforts with business goals, inadequate analysis of global trends and target markets, lack of understanding of the competitive landscape, insufficient marketing budgets, and shortage of expertise. Additionally, high training and maintenance costs, security concerns, and unreliable servers further hinder optimization efforts. Among these, security concerns and training costs were the most significant (mean = 2.87), followed by lack of expertise (mean = 2.74) and brand consistency issues (mean = 2.57). Insufficient customer engagement, low internet access, and limited budget allocation also pose challenges (mean = 2.48).

Although these issues are not perceived as severe, but still impact the effectiveness of e-marketing strategies. To address them, hotels should invest in staff training, improve budget allocation, enhance internet accessibility, and adopt affordable security solutions. Additionally, developing clear e-marketing strategies, leveraging cost-effective digital tools and undertaking marketing analysis, can help hotels overcome these barriers and maximize the benefits of online marketing.

4.6 Recommendations for Enhancing E-marketing Practice

4.6.1 Considering more in e-marketing in future

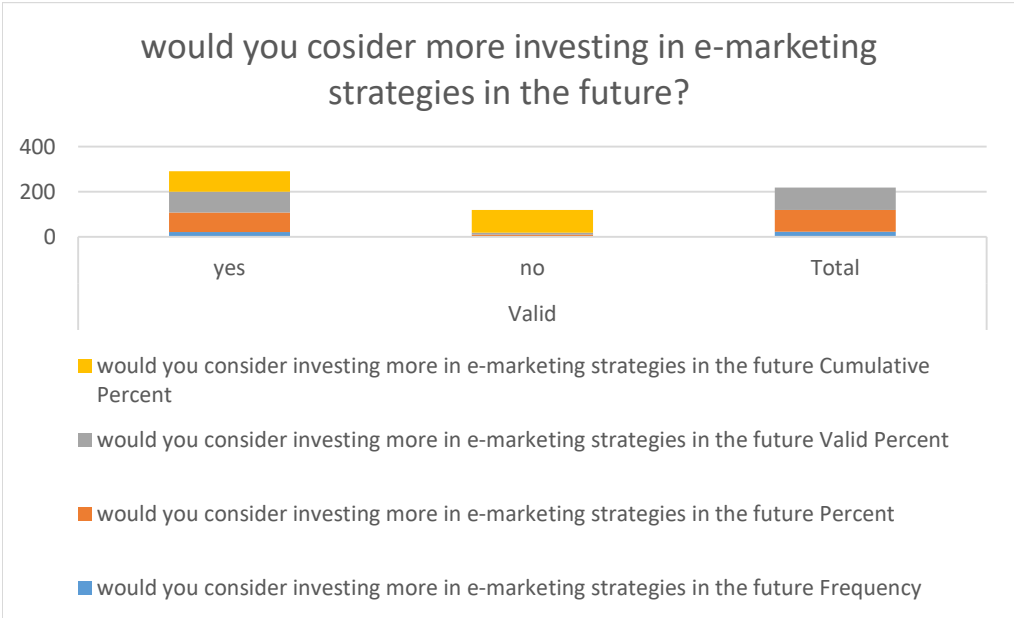


Figure 11 hotels investing in e-marketing strategies in the future

Source: Researchers survey 2024

The data shows a strong preference for increased investment in e-marketing. Out of 24 respondents, 21 (91.3% of those who answered) are in favor, while only 2 (8.7%) are not. One response was missing, but it does not significantly impact the trend. The majority’s inclination suggests that expanding e-marketing strategies aligns well with stakeholder interests.

4.6.2 Need to improve e-marketing efforts

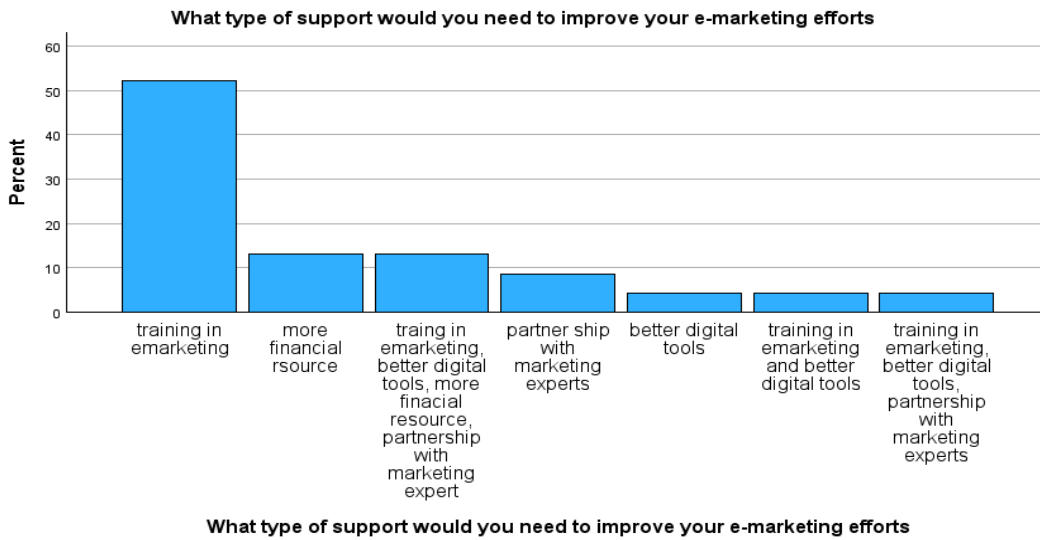


Figure 12 needs to improve e-marketing plat forms

Source: Researchers survey 2024

The bar chart reveals that the primary support needed to improve e-marketing efforts is training in e-marketing, with over 50% of respondents highlighting this as their top priority. This suggests a significant skills gap, indicating that most see education and knowledge development as crucial for enhancing digital marketing performance. Other needs, such as more financial resources, better digital tools, partnerships with marketing experts, and a combination of these supports, are mentioned far less frequently. Approximately 10-15% of respondents seek financial backing or partnerships with experts, while others emphasize the importance of better digital tools or a comprehensive approach combining several support types. Hotels need on conduct regular market research, invest in targeted training, training staff in areas like data analysis, digital marketing, Establish clear marketing objectives.

4.7 Results of Questionnaires for Government Experts

4.7.1 E-marketing Practice and Standards

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
E-marketing in Mekelle remains competitive	15	1.33	.48795
Grand mean	1.33		

Table 14 e-marketing practice and standards (Mean & Std.)

Source: Researchers survey 2024

While star rated hotels expected to meet international standards the survey from government experts who is rating the hotels results, it appears that e-marketing in Mekelle city is not fully competitive, despite some recognition of its importance. The respondents generally agree on its value, as shown by the mean score of 1.3333, suggesting they view e-marketing positively. However, the low standard deviation of 0.48795 indicates that opinions on this are consistent across respondents.

4.7.2 Utilizing e-marketing strategies



Figure 13 utilizing e-marketing strategies

Source: Researchers survey 2024

The data indicates mixed perceptions of the effectiveness of e-marketing strategies. Out of 15 respondents, the largest group, 40%, rated the strategies as "Fair," suggesting moderate satisfaction. A notable 26.7% considered them "Poor," indicating significant room for improvement, while 20% described the strategies as "Good," reflecting some positive feedback. However, 13.3% rated them as "Very Poor," highlighting dissatisfaction among a smaller portion of the sample. Overall, with 66.7% of respondents rating e-marketing as "Fair" or "Poor," it's clear that while some aspects are working, there is considerable scope for enhancing e-marketing efforts to meet expectations.

4.7.3 E-marketing platform most effective for star-rate hotels

Items	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Hotel website, social media, Google Ads, SEO	4	26.7	26.7	26.7
Hotel web site, social media, online booking platforms, SEO	4	26.7	26.7	53.3
Hotel website	3	20.0	20.0	73.3
Online booking platforms	3	20.0	20.0	93.3
hotel website, email marketing	1	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 15 e-marketing plat forms most effective for hotels (%)

Source: Researchers own survey 2024

The findings from the study suggest that the most effective e-marketing platform for star-rated hotels is a combination of hotel websites, social media, SEO, and online booking platforms. This strategy reflects the principles of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), where the perceived usefulness of these platforms such as increased visibility, customer engagement, and direct bookings encourages their adoption. The Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI) also supports this choice, as the relative advantage of using multiple platforms to reach a wider audience and improve bookings makes this combination attractive for star-rated hotels.

For instance, the hotel's website serves as a central hub for bookings and customer interaction, while social media enhances customer engagement and brand presence. SEO and Google Ads contribute to improved visibility and search engine discoverability, driving more traffic to the hotel's website. Online booking platforms like Booking.com allow hotels to reach even more potential guests, though at the cost of higher commissions. The use of email marketing alongside the hotel website, although less common, serves to maintain relationships with existing customers, underlining the importance of retention in e-marketing strategies. Besides to the marketing mix (7Ps), which includes Product, Price/Payment, Place, and Promotion, Precision, the combination of a hotel's website, social media, SEO, and online booking platforms supports all aspects of the

marketing mix. The hotel website represents the product, as it is the central platform where customers can learn about the hotel's offerings and make bookings. It also plays a role in price/payment, as it allows hotels to offer competitive pricing and direct booking and making payments advantages, minimizing third-party commission fees with targeting the right audience or customer. Social media, SEO, and Google Ads support promotion by increasing visibility and engagement, helping hotels reach a broader audience. Online booking platforms like Booking.com also serve as a place for customers to make reservations, extending the hotel's reach beyond its own website.

Overall, the most effective strategy combines these elements, which are seen as compatible and beneficial within the context of the hotel's goals, and aligns with both TAM and DOI in maximizing exposure and bookings.

4.7.4 Hotels comply with global digital marketing trends and standards

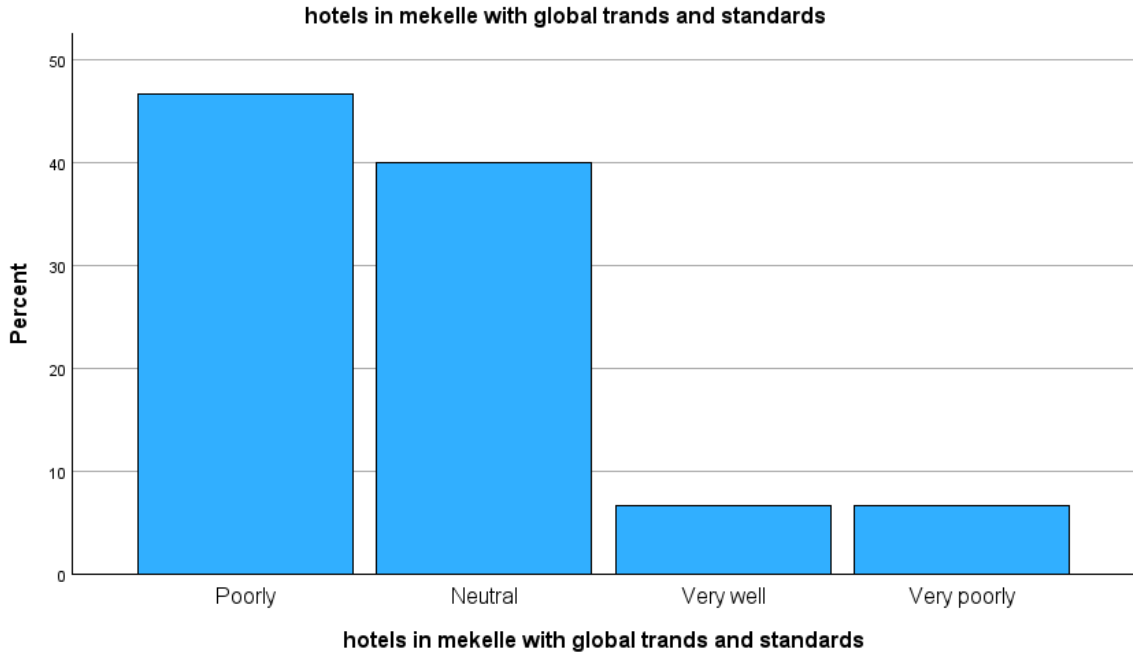


Figure 14 hotels with global trend

Source: Researchers own survey 2024

The data reveals that hotels in Mekelle city generally fall short of global standards. Nearly 47% of respondents view the hotels as underperforming compared to international expectations, while 40% remain neutral, suggesting uncertainty or a moderate view of their performance. A small group (6.7%) feels the hotels exceed global standards, while another 6.7% think they perform very poorly. Overall, the findings indicate that while some satisfaction exists, the majority of

respondents perceive the hotels as not fully aligning with global trends, with concerns about quality and service. To improve hotels in Mekelle city could focus on enhancing service quality and aligning their facilities with international standards to better meet guest expectations

4.8 Challenges in E-marketing Implementation

4.8.1 The main challenges in implementing effective e-marketing practice

Items	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid lack of expertise in digital marketing, poor infrastructure or technology, inconsistent online presence	6	40.0	40.0	40.0
Lack of expertise in digital marketing	3	20.0	20.0	60.0
lack of expertise in the digital market, inconsistent online presence, low customer engagement	3	20.0	20.0	80.0
Poor infrastructure or technology	1	6.7	6.7	86.7
Limited access to marketing agencies or experts	1	6.7	6.7	93.3
lack of knowledge about hotel	1	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 16 the main challenges in implementing e-marketing practice (%)

Source: Researchers survey 2024

4.8.2 The support availability to star rate hotels from Government

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Supportive	6	40.0	40.0	40.0
Neutral	3	20.0	20.0	60.0
Very supportive	2	13.3	13.3	73.3
Unsupportive	2	13.3	13.3	86.7
Very supportive	1	6.7	6.7	93.3
9.00	1	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 17 the support availability from government (%)

Source: Researchers survey 2024

The data shows that 40% of respondents find the support for star-rated hotels in Mekelle "Supportive," while 13.3% consider it "Very Supportive" and 13.3% feel it is "Unsupportive." One outlier response scored the support with 9.00, which may be an anomaly. Overall, while most respondents view the support as adequate, there is room for improvement, particularly for those who feel it is lacking. Enhancing and standardizing support could better address the needs of all stakeholders and ensure more consistent assistance.

4.8.3 Current Rating Accreditation Process

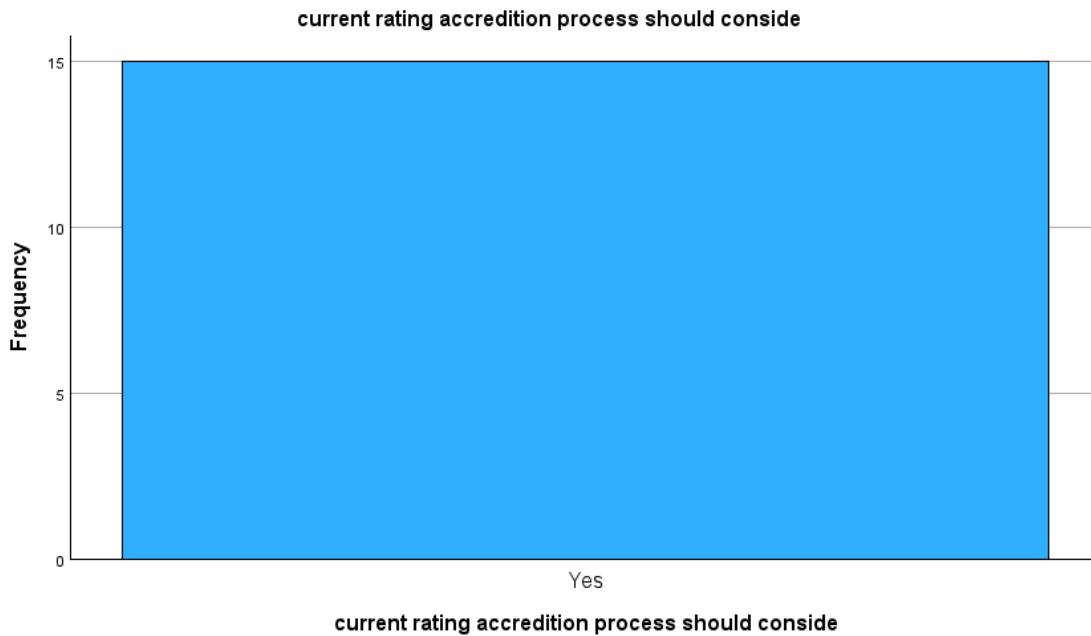


Figure 15 rating accreditation process should consider

Source: Researchers survey 2024

The data shows that 100% of respondents answered "Yes", indicating unanimous agreement on a particular question or statement. This suggests that all participants share the same opinion or experience regarding the subject in question. The uniformity of responses highlights strong consensus on the issue being addressed.

4.9 Impact on Customer Engagement and Satisfaction

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Marketing practice influences customer engagement	15	1.46	.51640
How responsive are hotel in Mekelle city	15	.86	.63994

Government licensing bodies enforce standard for online	15	1.46	.51640
Grand mean	1.26		

Table 18 Impact on Customer Engagement and Satisfaction (Mean & Std.)
Source: Researchers survey 2024

The analysis shows that marketing practices have a strong positive influence on customer engagement in Mekelle hotels, with a mean of 1.46, indicating general agreement on its effectiveness. However, hotel responsiveness is notably low, with a mean of 0.86, suggesting that many hotels are not meeting customer expectations in terms of timely service. The grand mean of 1.16 reflects strong engagement but a significant gap in customer satisfaction due to poor responsiveness, more over the data shows a mean score of 1.47 for government licensing bodies enforcing standards for online operations, suggesting that respondents feel enforcement is somewhat low. The standard deviation of 0.52 indicates moderate variability, with differing opinions on the strength of enforcement. Hotels should improve response times and government bodies intervene to enhance customer service and satisfaction, ensuring more timely and personalized engagement with guests.

4.9.1 The role government should play in supporting

Items	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Provide training and workshops, create a framework for monitoring marketing performance, partner with digital marketing agencies	10	66.7	66.7	66.7
Providing training and workshops on digital marketing	4	26.7	26.7	93.3
Create a framework for monitoring e-marketing performance	1	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 19 role of government in support (%)

Source Researchers survey 2024

The data reveals the preferred strategies for improving marketing practices, with 66.7% of respondents favoring a combination of providing training and workshops, creating a framework for monitoring marketing performance, and partnering with digital marketing agencies. This suggests that a comprehensive approach is seen as the most effective. 26.7% of respondents focus on providing training and workshops on digital marketing, indicating a significant interest in enhancing knowledge and skills in this area. A smaller group, 6.7%, prefers to create a framework for monitoring e-marketing performance, which highlights the importance of performance tracking for some. Overall, the majority supports a multi-faceted approach to improving marketing strategies.

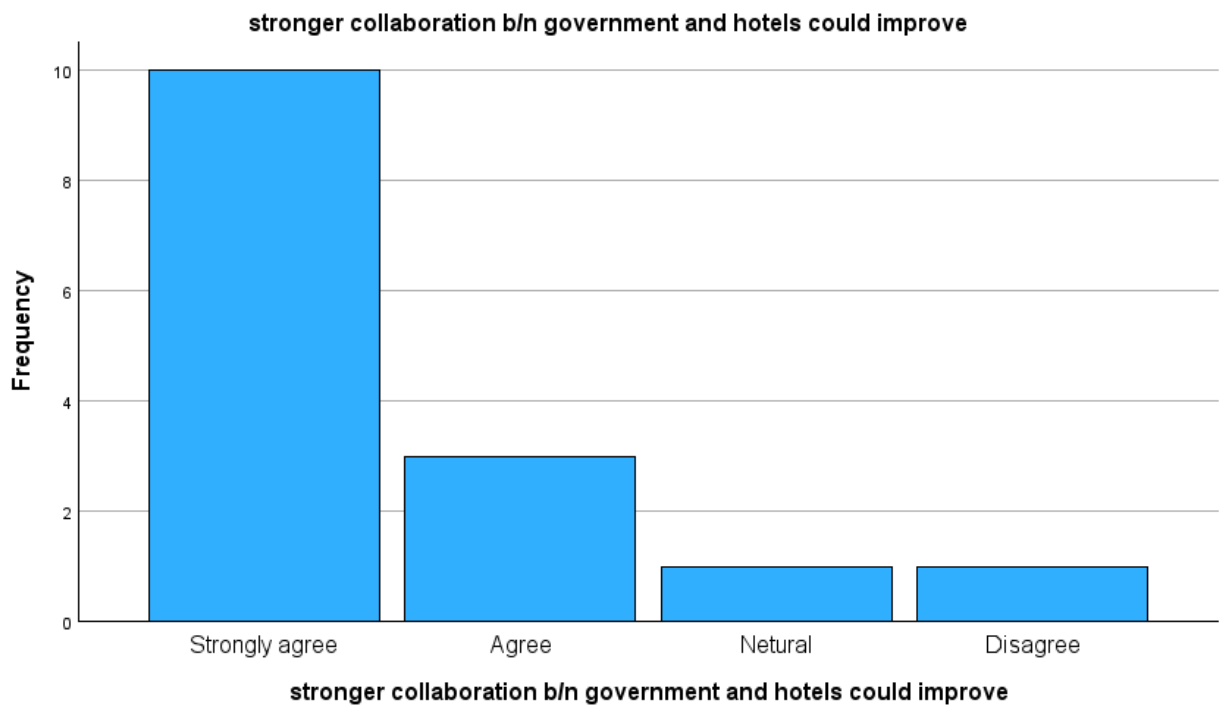


Figure 16 collaboration b/n government and hotels

Source: Researchers survey 2024

4.9.4 Opportunities of E-marketing

Open-ended questions were examined using thematic analysis, a method used to analyze qualitative data in text form. Thematic analysis involves six key steps: familiarizing oneself with the data, creating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing the themes, defining them, and finally, writing them up. This approach aids in minimizing confirmation bias during analysis.

Additionally, the researcher explores the data to discover recurring themes, topics, concepts, and patterns that frequently emerge (Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke 2006).

Star-rated hotels in Mekelle, Tigray, have a wide range of e-marketing opportunities that can enhance their visibility and customer engagement. By leveraging online platforms such as websites, social media, and search engine optimization (SEO), hotels can broaden their audience reach and build stronger brand awareness. E-marketing is more cost-effective compared to traditional marketing, allowing targeted advertising through platforms like Google Ads and Facebook Ads. This targeted approach enables hotels to interact directly with potential customers, fostering loyalty and trust through personalized promotions, quick responses, and tailored offers based on customer data.

Online booking platforms provide another advantage by streamlining the reservation process, attracting both local and international guests, and increasing occupancy rates. Social media is particularly useful for showcasing hotel amenities, running targeted ads, and sharing engaging content that draws in potential guests. Additionally, collaborations with travel influencers and bloggers can significantly enhance a hotel's reputation, introducing it to new markets. Content marketing, including blog posts, virtual tours, and high-quality visuals, positions hotels as local experts, highlighting their unique features and nearby attractions.

4.9.5 Improvements could made to enhance the effectiveness of e-marketing practice

To enhance the effectiveness of e-marketing practices, several improvements can be implemented. Developing a strong presence on social media platforms is crucial, as it allows businesses to engage with a wider audience and maintain consistent interaction with their customers. Creating user-friendly websites ensures a seamless browsing experience, making it easier for users to navigate and access information. Leveraging email marketing can also help establish direct and personalized communication with customers, fostering stronger relationships. Professional staff training is essential to equip employees with advanced skills in digital marketing strategies, while engaging external expertise can provide fresh perspectives and specialized insights. Expanding the marketing team ensures sufficient workforce to handle growing demands, while ensuring high-speed internet access facilitates smooth execution of online campaigns. Routine follow-ups are important for evaluating the performance of e-marketing efforts and making necessary

adjustments. The inability to align marketing efforts with business goals is a major obstacle, as it prevents hotels from creating cohesive and goal-oriented marketing strategies. Additionally, inadequate analysis of global trends and target markets restricts the ability to adapt to customer needs and preferences, undermining the relevance of marketing campaigns. The lack of understanding of the competitive landscape also hinders hotels from recognizing their market position, thus limiting opportunities for differentiation and growth. Insufficient marketing budgets and shortages of expertise further impede the effectiveness of e-marketing efforts. Without adequate financial resources and skilled professionals, hotels struggle to implement the necessary strategies and tools for successful digital marketing. Furthermore, the high cost of training and maintenance acts as a barrier, preventing organizations from keeping up with the rapidly evolving digital landscape. Finally, establishing a dedicated e-marketing department can streamline these efforts, ensuring focused and consistent implementation of digital marketing strategies. These steps collectively aim to improve customer engagement, optimize digital outreach, and achieve better overall results.

4.9.6 Review of Hotels Web sites and social media

The effectiveness of e-marketing practices among hotels in Mekelle city, varies significantly, with most showing underutilization of digital platforms. Planet Hotel demonstrates moderate effectiveness, with an active online presence through a functional website and a Facebook page, as well as responsiveness to TripAdvisor reviews. However, the hotel still relies on a limited range of e-marketing tools, missing opportunities to diversify with email marketing or Google Ads. In contrast, Axum Hotel has a basic website but lacks active social media and engagement on TripAdvisor, resulting in low effectiveness. Desta Hotel and Noble Yihdego Hotel show very limited online activity, with Desta relying solely on third-party booking platforms and Noble Yihdega having no visible online presence. Similarly, Zemarias Hotel, Ze Yordanos Hotel, and Atse Yohannes Hotel have minimal engagement, often limited to a TripAdvisor listing without updates or guest interaction.

4.9.7 Review of hotels Grading requirements and Classification

The **Ethiopian Standard ES 3808-1:2014**, titled "Hotels – Grading Requirements and Classification," outlines the criteria for rating hotels in Ethiopia. While the standard encompasses various aspects such as building exterior, bedroom quality, public areas, dining facilities, and safety measures, it does not explicitly mandate the use of e-marketing for star-rated hotels. The

focus is primarily on physical infrastructure, service quality, and operational standards. However, in today's digital age, adopting e-marketing strategies can significantly enhance a hotel's visibility, customer engagement, and overall competitiveness. While not a mandatory criterion in the current standard, integrating e-marketing practices is highly recommended for hotels aiming to improve their market presence and attract a broader clientele.

4.10 Discussions

Organizations today increasingly rely on digital marketing to enhance their operations, and the hospitality industry is no exception. E-marketing is widely used to optimize hotel operations, especially in enhancing online presence and customer engagement. As defined by Kannan and Hongshuang (2016), digital marketing is "an adaptive, technology-enabled process by which firms collaborate with clients and partners to jointly create, communicate, deliver, and sustain value for all stakeholders." This highlights the critical role of digital technology in driving customer attraction, brand loyalty, and business growth.

However, the findings of this study reveal that star-rated hotels in Mekelle, Tigray, underutilize e-marketing practices, which limits their ability to enhance online visibility and engage with customers effectively. Despite the increasing importance of digital marketing globally, many hotels in Mekelle still struggle to implement comprehensive digital strategies. While some hotels use basic tools such as websites and social media, others integrate additional digital tools like email marketing, Google Ads, and mobile applications. However, updates to these platforms are often inconsistent, suggesting a lack of structured e-marketing strategies. This inconsistency in the use of digital platforms undermines their effectiveness, as it negatively impacts customer interaction and brand visibility.

The underutilization of e-marketing in Mekelle aligns with findings from other studies in Ethiopia (Seifu Desalegn, 2018; Ababo Mengistu, 2023), which indicate that many hotels in the region face challenges in digital transformation due to limited resources, inadequate training, and insufficient technical expertise. These barriers hinder the full adoption of more advanced and integrated e-marketing strategies. This issue is consistent with broader challenges observed in other parts of Africa, such as South Africa and Tanzania, where digital marketing is recognized as essential for maintaining a competitive advantage in the tourism sector. For instance, research by Mkwizu (2019) in Tanzania highlights that digital media usage in the hospitality industry is growing, offering new opportunities to showcase tourism products and enhance customer accessibility.

However, the study also points out that many hotels fail to fully leverage these opportunities, resulting in missed potential.

Further research in the global context has shown that e-marketing strategies, when applied effectively, can lead to significant improvements in customer engagement, brand recognition, and overall performance. Benckendorff et al. (2014) emphasize that integrating mobile devices, websites, and augmented reality into e-tourism marketing is becoming a key trend that benefits both suppliers and customers. Similarly, Chaffey et al. (2006) point out that effective use of SEO, mobile advertising, and social media marketing are crucial components in enhancing a hotel's competitive positioning. However, in Mekelle, the inconsistent use of these tools suggests that the potential for digital marketing to transform hotel performance remains untapped. Additionally, while this study includes perspectives from hotel managers, receptionists, marketing and government experts involved in hotel rating, it broadens the understanding of the challenges and opportunities in e-marketing adoption. Many of these stakeholders acknowledge the need for increased investment in staff training and the development of structured digital marketing strategies. This is consistent with the findings of Chaffey et al. (2006), which argue that organizations must integrate multiple e-marketing channels to optimize online visibility and improve customer engagement.

The underutilization of e-marketing strategies in Mekelle's star-rated hotels reflects a gap that, if addressed, could significantly enhance their competitive position in the market. This research underscores the need for improved resource allocation, specialized training, and strategic development to ensure that hotels in Mekelle can fully leverage the potential of digital marketing. By adopting more consistent, structured, and advanced digital marketing practices, hotels in Mekelle can improve their online presence, attract more customers, and achieve greater success in the competitive hospitality landscape.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the research findings, drawing conclusions based on the study's objective, which focused on is to assess the effectiveness and implementation of e-marketing practices in star-rated hotels in Mekelle city Recommendations are offered, informed by the analysis from the previous chapter. Identified gaps are highlighted, along with suggestions for future research directions.

5.1 Findings E-Marketing Practices in Star-Rated Hotels

The purpose of this study, focusing on star rated hotels in Mekelle city, assessing E-marketing practices in star rated hotels, their effectiveness and implementation of e-marketing practices in star-rated hotels the study aims to evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of e-marketing practices in star-rated hotels in Mekelle, Tigray was the main general objective of this research.

The general objective of this research is to assess.

So as stated above the general objective of the study was assessing the E-marketing practices, of star rated hotels in Tigray, Mekelle city. The specific objectives were; To evaluate the current e-marketing tools and strategies used by star-rated hotels in Mekelle city, To assess the impact of e-marketing practices on customer engagement, retention and satisfaction in star-rated hotels in Mekelle city, To identify the challenges and limitations faced by star-rated hotels in Mekelle city in implementing e-marketing strategies and To propose recommendations for enhancing e-marketing practices in star-rated hotels in Mekelle city. The researcher used questionnaires at a 97.4 % return rate as instruments for data collection Statistical tables and figures based on respondents and descriptive analyses were used to explain the data collected, also direct assessment of hotels digital presence and reviewing the criteria for rating the hotels were utilized. The following major findings were reached from the study.

Hotels in Mekelle use various e-marketing tools, with websites and social media (21.7%) being the most common, followed by multi-channel approaches (13%) incorporating websites, email marketing, Google Ads, and mobile apps. Another 13% rely on websites, social media, and online booking platforms. While most hotels engage in e-marketing, limited resources, inconsistent content management, and low digital expertise reduce effectiveness.

Websites (21.7%–13%) serve as the primary digital presence but often lack updates and SEO optimization.

Social Media (21.7%) is used for promotions and engagement, though paid advertising remains underutilized.

Email Marketing (13%) aids customer retention but suffers from limited automation.

Google Ads & SEO (13%) help visibility, but many hotels lack expertise in keyword optimization and analytics.

Mobile Apps (8.7%) enable direct booking but have low adoption due to customer preferences.

Online Booking Platforms (13%), like used like TripAdvisor.

Impact on Customer Satisfaction & Engagement Social media marketing (21.7% usage) helps with brand awareness, but low engagement rates and slow response times reduce customer interaction. Online booking platforms (13% usage) improve convenience but create dependency on third-party sites with high commission fees. Mobile applications (8.7% usage) offer direct booking, but limited adoption reduces effectiveness. As result many hotels struggle with slow response times, lack of personalized marketing, and weak SEO strategies, making it harder for customers to find and interact with them. Additionally, poor website usability and outdated content frustrate users, lowering their satisfaction more over the main challenges and limitations in utilization of E-marketing are Inability to align marketing with business goals lack of understanding of the business's core objectives result in e-marketing efforts that do not align with broader business goals (e.g., focusing on short-term rather than building long-term customer relationships or brand value or focusing promotion for event based promotions), Inadequate analysis of the global trend, target market, including customer preferences and behavior, leads to ineffective marketing strategies, lack of understanding competitive market fail to effectively communicate their unique selling propositions (USPs), Lack of marketing strategic direction, lack of allocation marketing budget, lack of expertise issue high cost of training and maintenance are also among the challenges have been seen.

The findings from government experts corroborate these results, emphasizing the importance of strengthening digital infrastructure to enhance e-marketing efforts. They indicated that while hotels are making strides in adopting e-marketing strategies, there is still a gap in providing adequate training for hotel staff, particularly in the areas of digital content creation and data

analytics. Government experts also pointed out that resource constraints, limited access to advanced technologies, and inadequate marketing budgets are significant challenges that hinder the full implementation of e-marketing strategies in the region. Furthermore, they emphasized that the tourism sector in Tigray would benefit from more comprehensive government policies and investments that support e-marketing training and infrastructure development.

5.2 Conclusion

The study assessed the e-marketing practices of star-rated hotels in Mekelle, Tigray, focusing on the tools and strategies employed, their impact on customer engagement and satisfaction, the challenges faced, and potential areas for improvement. The research successfully addressed its objectives and research questions by employing various analysis techniques.

To address the first objective, the study analyzed prior research and theoretical frameworks to identify key elements of digital marketing practices. It found that hotels in Mekelle city utilize a variety of e-marketing tools, with websites and social media being the most common combination. Other approaches include multi-channel strategies incorporating websites, email marketing, Google Ads, and mobile applications, as well as the integration of websites, social media, and online booking platforms. However, inconsistencies in updating digital platforms were identified as a significant limitation.

The second objective focused on customer engagement, retention, and satisfaction. While e-marketing tools were found to help attract and retain customers, their effectiveness was hindered by issues such as outdated content, poor SEO optimization, limited automation, and underutilized paid advertising. These shortcomings negatively impacted customer satisfaction and overall engagement.

The third objective assessed the challenges faced by hotels in implementing effective e-marketing strategies. Key challenges included the inability to align marketing efforts with business goals, inadequate analysis of global trends and target markets, a lack of understanding of the competitive landscape, insufficient allocation of marketing budgets, and a shortage of expertise. Additionally, the high cost of training and maintenance further constrained their ability to optimize e-marketing practices. The last objective was to deliver recommendations:

5.3 Recommendation

The researcher recommends the following recommendations for both hoteliers and governments to improve e-marketing practices in Mekelle, Tigray star-rated hotels based on the conclusions to improve the E-marketing practices and to solve the problems or challenges that the industry facing also to look forward to using good opportunities. According to the findings of this research some recommendations are stated below;

- Hotels should understand the competitive landscape by setting benchmarking against industry competitors to identify areas of improvement and developing unique selling propositions (USPs) to differentiate from competitors.
- Hotels should align marketing efforts with goals to develop a strategic e-marketing plan that aligns with the overall business objectives and setting clear and measurable goals for digital marketing initiatives.
- Hotels should analyzing global trends and target markets with conducting market research to stay updated on global hospitality trends and identifying customer preferences and adapting marketing strategies accordingly.
- Hotels must set regular analyzing key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess the effectiveness of e-marketing efforts.
- Hotels should expand the marketing team by recruiting additional marketing professionals to handle growing digital marketing demands and establishing dedicated roles for social media management, content creation, and data analysis
- Social media management training on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, which are widely used in Ethiopia for hotel promotions.
- SEO optimization training to improve search engine rankings by using Google My Business, local keywords (e.g., "best hotels in Mekelle"), and backlink strategies.
- Website development training on user-friendly design, fast-loading pages, and mobile responsiveness.
- Regularly update websites and social media pages by
 - Posting weekly content about hotel offers, events, and local attractions.
 - Using high-quality images and short videos to enhance engagement on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.

- Adding a live chat feature on hotel websites to assist potential guests in real time.
- Adopt a multi-channel e-marketing strategy by integrating
 - Email marketing campaigns offering personalized promotions and discounts.
 - WhatsApp Business for direct communication, booking confirmations, and customer support.
 - Paid digital advertising on Facebook and Google Ads to target domestic and international travelers.
- Create content that is tailored to customer needs, such as personalized promotions, reviews, and event updates. This will help in improving customer satisfaction and engagement.
- Develop loyalty programs or special offers to retain customers, rewarding repeat bookings through discounts, upgrades, or exclusive access to services e.g
 - Use email marketing automation tools (Mailchimp, HubSpot) to send personalized offers based on booking history and customer preferences.
 - Develop loyalty programs where repeat customers earn discounts, room upgrades, or exclusive experiences (e.g., "Stay 3 nights, get the 4th free").
 - Send personalized SMS reminders and promotions using platforms like Twilio to encourage direct bookings and minimize cancellations.
- Encourage customers to provide feedback through online platforms and respond promptly to improve satisfaction and foster trust.
- Invest in SEO to improve the hotel's online visibility, ensuring that the hotel appears in relevant search results and reaches a broader audience.
- Ensure reliable internet infrastructure and access to technology in tourism areas to enable hotels to leverage e-marketing practices effectively.

- Develop a clear framework or guidelines for the tourism and hospitality sector on best practices for e-marketing, including privacy standards, social media engagement, and digital advertising
- Facilitate partnerships between hotels and local tech companies to develop customized e-marketing solutions, including mobile apps and digital booking systems.
- Encourage collaboration between the government, tourism boards, and private sector stakeholders to promote digital marketing initiatives and raise awareness of the importance of e-marketing in the hospitality industry.
- Invest in research programs to assess digital trends in tourism and guide hotels in adopting the most effective e-marketing strategies based on global best practices.
- Establish regulations to ensure transparency and fairness in online reviews and feedback, which will improve the credibility of e-marketing practices and boost customer confidence.
- Tourism authorities, hotel associations, and digital marketing experts, should collaborate to update the standard to reflect modern marketing practices.

For Future Researchers

This study provides valuable insights into e-marketing practices among star-rated hotels in Mekelle city, but further research is needed. Future studies should expand geographically to the overall Tigray region, offering a broader understanding of e-marketing practices across the region. Additionally, incorporating a wider range of stakeholders, such as tourists and digital marketing experts, will deepen insights into customer engagement and strategy effectiveness. Researchers are encouraged to build on these findings to enhance e-marketing in Tigray's hospitality industry.

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APPENDIX I



Mekelle University

Institute of Palo Heritage Conservation

M.A Program of Hospitality Management

Questionnaires Filled by **General Managers, marketing managers, Receptionists**

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is designed to collect the necessary information to research the Topic
“Assessment of E-Marketing Practice, In Star Rated Hotels in Tigrai: a case of Mekelle City”
for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Hospitality Management (MA) at Mekelle University.

Please answer each question by making a tick mark (✓) to the option that you choose inside the given box or write your answer in the blank space provided. Your genuine responses are quite vital for the success of this study. Finally, I would like to confirm that all the information you provide in this questionnaire will be strictly confidential and will exclusively be used for this research purpose. Your participation in the study is fully voluntary-based, and hence you can withdraw at any stage of the data collection process. Thank you very much in advance for your willingness to spare your precious time to participate in this survey.

Yours sincerely, Million Assfaw, MA Student at MU Address:

Cellphone: +251920253944, e-mail:- millionassfaw@gmail.com

NB. No need to write your name.

Part- I. General Information of the Respondent's socio-demographic status

Instruction: Please choose the correct information about yourself for Questions 1 to 4 among response categories by putting \surd a mark in the box provided or a circle in your preference choice

1. Age (in years)

- a) 18-28 yeas
- b) 29-39 years
- c) 40-49 years
- d) Above 50 years

2. Sex

- 1, Male
- 2, Female

3. Educational background

- a) TVET Certificate
- b) Diploma
- c) First Degree
- d) Masters
- e) PhD

4. Your experience in hotel:

- a) Below 5 years
- b) Between 5 and 10 years
- c) Between 11 and 15
- d) More than 16 years

Part- II Questions on E-Marketing Practices in star rated hotels in Mekelle

5. Your hotel rate of star

- 1. One- Star rated
- 2. Two-star rated
- 3. Three-star rated
- 4. Four -stars rated
- 5. Five-star rated

6. What is your role in the hotel?

- a) Owner
- b) General Manager
- C) Marketing Manager
- d) Front Office/receptionists
- e) Other (please specify): _____

7. Does your hotel currently use any e-marketing tools or platforms?

YES No

o If yes, which of the following e-marketing tools do you use?

- Web site social media(Face book, Instagram
- Online booking platforms (e.g., Expedia, Booking.com)
- E-marketing
- Google ads
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Mobile applications
- Other (please specify): _____

8. How often does your hotel update its online platforms (e.g., website, social media)?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Occasionally
- Never

9. What type of content do you mostly focus on in your e-marketing strategies?

- Promotions and discounts
- Hotel amenities and services
- Guest reviews and testimonial
- Events and special offers
- Other (please specify): _____

10. To what extent do you agree that the use of Email Marketing contribute to promote your hotel business? Please rate the following statements with the following ratings:

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= moderately agree 4= Agree 5=strongly agree

Items/ Constructs	Rating scale				
	1	2	3	4	5
The use of website promotes the brand image of my hotel service operating firm					
The use of website increases the purchase intention of tourists/customers from my hotel business					

The use of website creates awareness on the reservation and other services in our hotel					
The use of website in my hotel has a positive impact on promotion					
The use of digital technology increased the practice of marketing using electronic tools in our hotel					
Website marketing positively affects the performance of our hotel					

11. To what extent do you agree that the use of social media marketing contribute to promote your hotel business? Please rate the following statements with the following ratings:

1= strongly disagree 2=Disagree 3= moderately agree 4= Agree 5=strongly agree

Items/ Constructs	Rating scale				
	1	2	3	4	5
In our hotel, we use Facebook, Instagram, telegram, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc. to promote our products and services					
We employ informative articles via social media platforms					
Social media promotion increased our hotel marketing performance					

12. How important do you think online marketing/Advertising is promoting your star-rated hotel? Please rate each of the statements in the table below on a scale of one to five by putting a tick mark under your best choice

1= strongly disagree 2=Disagree 3= moderately agree 4= Agree 5=strongly agree

Items/ Constructs	Rating scale				
	1	2	3	4	5
Online advertising increases customer retention in our hotel					
Newsletters delivered to loyal customers are more crucial					
Online promotion and advertisement improve our hotel brand image					

Frequently

Rarely

Occasionally

Never

Part IV: Challenges in Implementing E-Marketing

How do you rate the challenges does your hotel face in implementing e-marketing strategies?

Scale: 1= strongly disagree 2=Disagree 3= moderately agree 4= Agree 5=strongly agree

Items/ Constructs	Rating scale				
	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of ease of access (low internet access)					
Lack of budget allocation for e-marketing operations					
Problem of brand consistency					
Problem of Finding the right team/lack of expertise					
Problem of Reliable server/security issue High Cost of training and maintenance					
Insufficient customer engagement					

Part V Recommendations for Enhancing E-Marketing Practices

17. In your opinion, what improvements could be made to enhance the effectiveness of your hotel's e-marketing practices? (Please specify)

18. In your opinion, what opportunities are available for the adoption of e-marketingpractices by star-rated hotels in Mekelle?

19. Would you consider investing more in e-marketing strategies in the future?

Yes

NO

20. What type of support would you need to improve your e-marketing efforts?

Training in e-marketing More financial resources
Better digital tools Partnership with marketing experts/agencies

If other please specify

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire. Your responses will contribute greatly to the research on improving e-marketing practices in star-rated hotels in Mekelle.



Mekelle University

Institute of Palo Heritage Conservation

M.A Program of Hospitality Management

This questionnaire targets the knowledge and experience of **governmental experts** and focuses on their perspective of e-marketing practices, challenges, support, and future trends.

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is designed to collect the necessary information to research the Topic

“Assessment of E-Marketing Practice, In Star Rated Hotels in Tigray: a case of Mekelle City” for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Hospitality Management (MA) at Mekelle University.

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Yours sincerely, Million Assfaw, MA Student at MU

Address: - Cellphone: +251920253944, e-mail:- millionassfaw@gmail.com

NB. No need to write your name.

Part I: General Information of the Respondent's socio-demographic status

Instruction: Please choose the correct information about yourself for Questions 1 to 4 among response categories by putting ✓ a mark in the box provided or a circle in your preference choice

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a) 18-28 yeas

c) 40-49 years

b) 29-39 years

d) Above 50 years

2. Sex

1, Male

2, Female

3. Educational background

a) TVET Certificate

c) First Degree

b) Diploma

d) Masters

e) PhD

4. How many years have you been working in the tourism and hospitality sector?

a) Below 5 years

c) Between 11 and 15

b) Between 5 and 10 years

d) More than 16 years

5. What is your position within the government office?

Tourism officer

Licensing/accreditation officer

Marketing and promotion officer

Policy advisor

Other (please specify): _____

Part II: E-Marketing Practices and Standards

6. How important do you believe e-marketing is for star-rated hotels in Mekelle to remain competitive?

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not important

7. In your opinion, how well are star-rated hotels in Mekelle utilizing e-marketing strategies?

- Excellent Good Fair poor very poor

8. Which e-marketing platforms do you think are most effective for star-rated hotels to use?

- Hotel websites
- Social media (Facebook, Instagram)
- Online booking platforms (e.g., Expedia, Booking.com)
- Search engine optimization (SEO)
- Google Ads
- Email marketing
- Mobile apps
- Other (please specify): _____

9. How well do you think star-rated hotels in Mekelle comply with global digital marketing trends and standards?

- Very well Neutral
- Poorly Very poorly

Part III: Challenges in E-Marketing Implementation

10. What are the main challenges star-rated hotels face in implementing effective e-marketing practices in Mekelle?

- Lack of expertise in digital marketing
- Limited budget or resources
- Poor infrastructure or technology
- Inconsistent online presence
- Low customer engagement
- Limited access to marketing agencies or experts

Other (please specify): _____

11. How would you describe the support available to star-rated hotels from your office in terms of e-marketing strategy development and implementation?

- Very supportive
- Supportive
- Neutral
- Unsupportive
- Very unsupportive

12. Do you believe the current star rating accreditation process should consider the effectiveness of e-marketing practices?

- Yes
- No

Part IV: Impact on Customer Engagement and Satisfaction

13. How do you think e-marketing practices influence customer engagement and satisfaction in star-rated hotels in Mekelle?

- Significantly improve customer engagement
- Moderately improve customer engagement
- No impact on customer engagement

Negative impact on customer engagement

14. From your experience, how responsive are hotels in Mekelle to customer feedback received through online platforms?

Very responsive

Moderately responsive

Slightly responsive

Not responsive at all

15. Should government licensing bodies enforce a standard for online customer engagement in star-rated hotels?

Yes

No

Part V: Recommendations for Enhancing E-Marketing in Star-Rated Hotels

16. What role do you think the government should play in supporting hotels with their e-marketing strategies?

Provide training and workshops on digital marketing

Create a framework for monitoring e-marketing performance

Partner with digital marketing agencies to assist hotels

Offer financial incentives or grants for digital marketing initiatives

Other (please specify): _____

17. What recommendations would you make to improve the e-marketing practices of star-rated hotels in Mekelle?

18. Do you believe that stronger collaboration between government offices and star-rated hotels could improve the overall quality of e-marketing In Mekelle?

Strongly agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neutral

Part VI: Future of E-Marketing in Mekelle

1. In your opinion, what future trends in e-marketing should star-rated hotels in Mekelle adopt to stay competitive?

2. How can the government further support the digital transformation of the hospitality industry in Mekelle?

3. In your opinion, what opportunities are available for the adoption of e-marketing practices by star-rated hotels in Mekelle?

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire. Your expert insights are invaluable to the research on improving e-marketing practices in star-rated hotels in Mekelle.

This questionnaire targets the knowledge and experience of governmental experts and focuses on their perspective on e-marketing practices, challenges, support, and future trends.

APPENDIX II
List of Star-rated hotels

No	Name of hotel	Star rated	No of rooms	Num ber of bed	Telephone number	E-mail
1	Planet Hotel	4 star	80	104	(+251)935987272 (+251) 34 440 5660	reservation@planethotelethiopia.com
2	Noble House Yhidega Luxury Boutique Hotel	4 star	42	42	(+251) 342405883/ 0342205882	info@nobelhouseyhdegahotel.com
3	Desta International Hotel	3 star	33	37	(+251) 342 4001 96/97/31/41 (+251) 914300287	reservation@desta.com.et
4	Axum Hotel	3 star	28	28		axum.n@ethionet
5	Zemariyas Hotel	3 star	36	40	(+251) 914 702952 +251914611703	
6	Atsy Yohaness Hotel	2 star	64	70	(+251) 33-440- 6760	atsejon@ethionet
7	Axum Hotel	1 star	184	203	(+251) 34-440- 5155	Axum.n@ethionet
8	Zeyordanos Hotel	1 star	19	21	+251 344 403722 +251 344 403722	yordre@yahoo.com



Desta Hotel



Noble House yihdega Hotel



Zemariyas Hotel



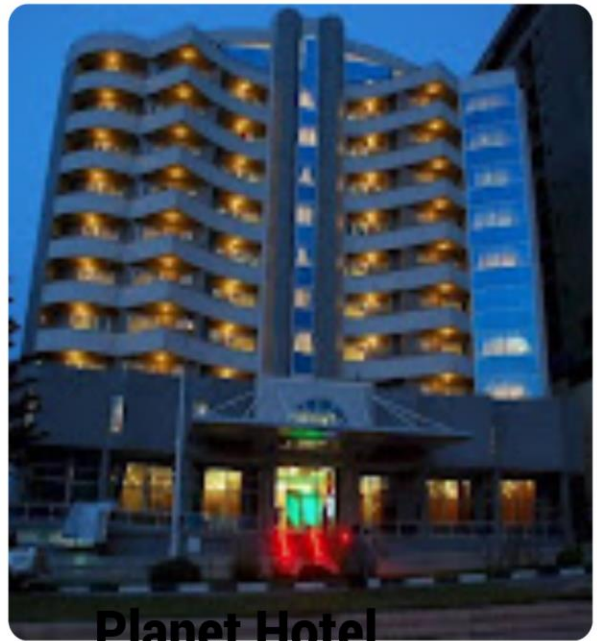
Axum Hotel



Hatsey yohannes Hotel



Ze yordanos Hotel



Planet Hotel