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ONLINE MARKETING ATTRIBUTES AND HOTEL GUESTS' LOYALTY: EVIDENCE FROM NIGERIA

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Abstract:

The study examined the relationship between online hotel marketing attributes (ease of use and security) and guest loyalty (guest satisfaction and repeat patronage) in the hospitality industry in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research generated primary data from a sample of 150 guests who patronised the hotels selected for the study using a well-structured questionnaire containing 14 items, with four demographic items. To validate the four hypothesised relationships, inferential statistics was conducted with the help of SPSS. The result of the inferential statistical analysis showed that the two online hotel marketing attributes individually had direct positive significant effect on guest satisfaction and repeat patronage. Academic and practitioners' implications are provided.

Keywords: Ease of Use. Security. Geust satisfaction. Repeat Patronage.

INTRODUCTION

The quest to achieve competitive advantage in the competitive hospitality industry has led to embracing the use of modern technologies to enhance the services they offer and to gain customer loyalty. In the process of doing this, hospitality organisations like the hotels are staying in the forefront of today's marketplace by improving services, efficiency, and profitability (Hong & Slevitch, 2018). The adoption of technology by hotels and other hospitality firms are in response to the growing demand of hotel guests for various technology-supported services. Technology adoption have been found to have great influence on the ability of hotels to enhance quality service delivery, support employees' work performance, improve efficiencies, maintain long term relationships with business associates and customers, gain competitive advantage, and increase profitability (Kamal, Abdullah, Nor, Ngelambong, & Bahari, 2018).

The foregoing explains why Kotler & Keller (2006), argue that technological application has increasingly led to customer retention, since customers have become increasingly driven by technology and are therefore demanding higher levels of services associated with technology. This implies that hotel managers should identify ways in which they can utilize new technologies to create services that contribute to increased value for their customers. One of the ways is the online transactions through which hotel customers interact with hospitality organisations. However, despite success recorded so far by organisations, challenges still exist (Ozturk, 2016).

Many scholars have carried out studies (Wang, Wu, Lin, & Wang, 2011;Yang, Lu, Chau, & Gupta, 2017;. Yen, 2010; Hong, & Slevitch, 2018; Kamal, et al, 2018; Ozturk, 2016;Trivedi, & Yadav(2018), Razaka,, Ahmadb, & Marimuthu, 2016) on the effect of online applications on consumer behavioural responses in many market contexts. However, to the best of our knowledge, no research seems to have been conducted in the Nigerian hospitality industry in Rivers State, Nigeria to investigate the effect of online applications or marketing on guest loyalty. This present study is meant to fill this gap by examining the relationship between online marketing attributes with guest loyalty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Operational Framework and Conceptual Review

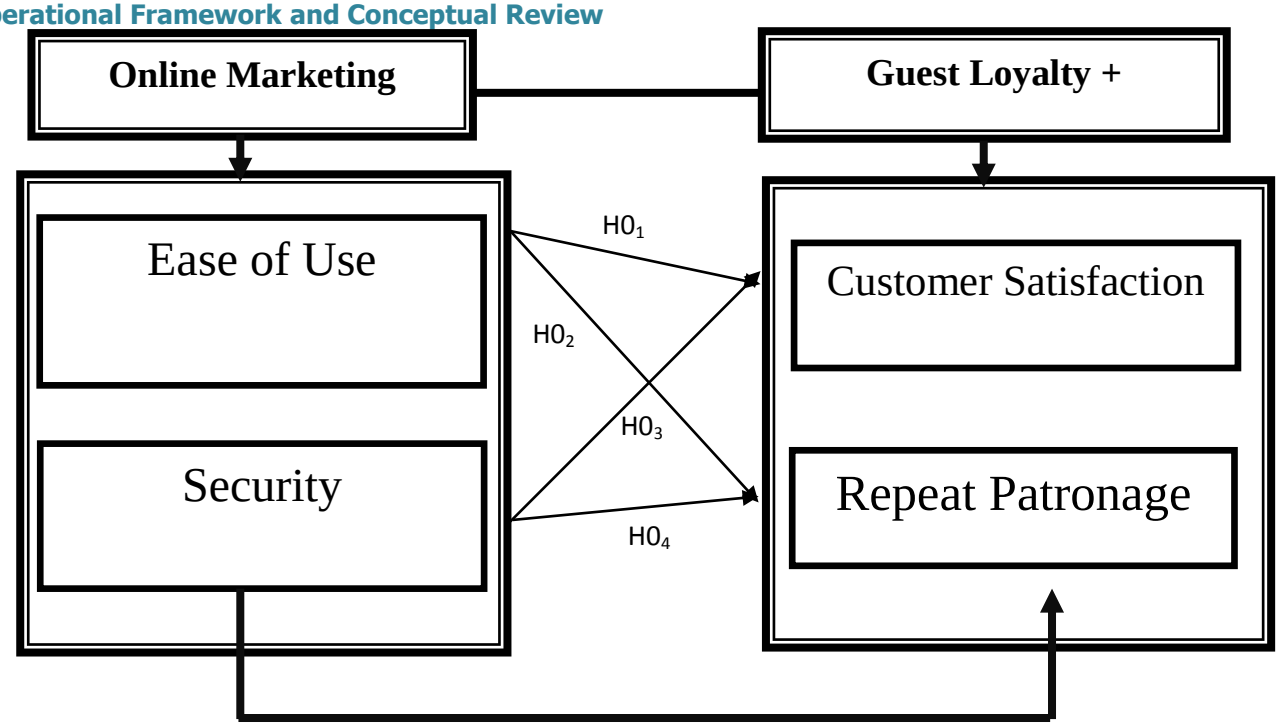

Figure 1 Operationalisation Framework

Figure 1 above shows the operationalization framework for the study. The independent variable is online marketing attributes of hotels represented by two dimensions, ease of payment and security of the website. On the other hand, the dependent variable is guest loyalty with two behavioral outcomes, guest satisfaction and repeat patronage as the measures. The link between the variables of interest shows that ease of payment by hotel guests and security of such transactions can enhance guest satisfaction and repeat patronage.

ONLINE MARKETING ATTRIBUTES

Hotel marketing attributes that influence guest behavioural intentions towards the hotel have been studied in various marketing contexts (Kandampully & Suhartanto 2000; Chu & Choi, 2000; Chan & Wong, 2006; McCleary, Weaver & Hutchinson, 1993; Dolnicar & Otter, 2003; Almeida, & Pelissari, 2018). However, in the light of rapid growth in technological advancement, hotel business/marketing managers are compelled to develop and manage their online infrastructures to meet the increasing demands of their guests online. To achieve competitive advantage in the hotel industry where competition for guests' patronage and retention is evidently dominant, managers are under pressure to outline the essential online factors that can influence their market (Trivedi & Yadav, 2018). For this current study, the dimensions of online marketing attributes studied are ease of use and security.

DIMENSIONS TO ONLINE MARKETING ATTRIBUTES

Ease of use:

Ease of use of technology infrastructure by customers of organisations defines the degree of convenience associated with service operations. Davis (as cited in Safitri, 2017, p.22), defined ease of use (perceived ease of use) as "the degree to which a person believes that the use of the technology is easy and requires no effort from the user". As noted by Woodside and Trappey (2001) several studies have examined convenience as a motive in the areas of electronic banking, online shopping and product choice in retailing environments. Chen, Chan, Hsu, & Yang (2011) argues that convenience is one of the most important factors influencing consumer behaviour in a marketing context. Safitri (2017, p.23) views the concept of ease of use as, "the clarity of the intended technology usage and ease of use of the system for the purpose in accordance with the wishes of the user". Put differently, ease of use describes a situation whereby the user who is the consumer or customer believes that the computer infrastructure can easily be understood or used (Wibowo, 2006).

Security:

Security of online transaction describes the ability safety of consumers' data used during electronic performances from unauthorised used. It is described as the most critical factor in influencing adoption of use by consumers during online transactions (Gefen, 2000; Ratnasingham, 1998). This explains why Cheung and Lee (2006) argues that security is the web. In an age where cybercrime holds sway, consumers' fear over hacking of their accounts by criminals is a great concern for service providers. In line with the foregoing, Park and Kim (2006) are of the view that the security of online transactions helps to guarantees plays the establishment of trust in order to reduce consumer concern about the misuse of personal details/data.

Guest loyalty

Oliver (1999, p.34) defined customer loyalty as "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour". Oliver's definition is very comprehensive with emphasis on both attitudinal and behavioural components of brand loyalty. Loyal customers tend to repurchase from the same source (Kuika & Laukkanen, 2012). As argued by Rizwan, Javed, Aslan, Khan and Bibi (2014) when customers are loyal to a particular brand, they become committed to buying from the organisation even when other organisations offer more incentives and possibly better product/service performance.

Geust satisfaction:

Customer satisfaction is very important aspect of business/marketing strategy because of its influence on customer retention. This makes it a very important construct for practitioners and academia. In marketing literature, the concept is described as a critical post-consumption construct (Khazaei, Manjiri, Samiey, & Najafi, 2014). Kotler (2000) describes the construct as a feeling of pleasure or disappointment by customers resulting from comparing the product's perceived performance in relation to their prior expectations. On their part, Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996) argues that customer satisfaction strikes a balance between expectations of customers and what they experience with the products and services during consumption. The authors further argued that marketing organisations work towards lifting customers' experience to a high level that exceeds their expectations to enhance the satisfaction of their customers.

From the foregoing, customer satisfaction is influenced by features and perception of quality that is very specific to product or service. Other factors capable of influencing customer satisfaction include customer's attributions, emotional responses and their perception of equity (Zeithal & Bitner. 2003). Achievement of customer satisfaction provide companies with benefits like customer loyalty, which accounts for customer retention increases customers' positive word of mouth communication. Organisations cannot grow without satisfying greater percentage of their customer who will be willing to come back for repeat patronage (Tao 2014).

Repeat patronage:

Repeat purchase intention describes the probability that consumers purchase the same product or receive the same service from the same organisation repeatedly. Ebrahim, et al (2013, p.1244) defined repurchase intention as "consumers' decision about repeating the action of purchasing the brand", while Young, Clark, and McIntyre (2007, p.92) defined the concept as "the likelihood that a current customer of a restaurant expects to return in the future for a dining experience". For a hotel and its online transactions, the concept represents continuous purchasing behaviour in terms of using the website of a hotel for online transactions. For online transactions, Chou and Hsu (2016) describes website quality as a key factor motivating consumers in the shopping process, while Kim and Peterson (2017) add that website quality guarantees accuracy, completeness, currency, and format. Repurchase intention is very important for marketing organisations because of continues patronage (Pharm & Train, 2014) which accounts for firm profitability.

Empirical Review and hypotheses development

Relationship between ease of use and customer satisfaction

In online service industry, customer Satisfaction and behavioural Intentions of customers is very crucial to the success of the firms. Customer satisfaction in this context could be enhanced by superior service quality. Mehta, Lalwani, and Han, (2000) argues that perceived service quality helps organisations to be well positioned for the achievement of excellent business performance. In online transactions several factors such as ease of use could account for service quality. Hong, and Slevitch, (2018) investigated how self-service kiosk (SSK) attributes like speed of delivery, ease of use, and monetary promotion affect customer satisfaction and willingness to use an SSK in the future in a hotel setting. Statistical results revealed that, ease of use and speed of delivery had a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. However, the result showed no significant relationship between monetary promotion and customer satisfaction. Other results showed that customer satisfaction was positively associated with the willingness to use SSKs in the future.

Kamal, et al (2018) examined the effect of selected hotel booking websites' features on online users' e-satisfaction and e-loyalty. The study also examined the relationship between online users' e-satisfaction and e-loyalty. The study which used the questionnaire as the tool for primary data collection used two dimensions of hotel booking website (utilitarian and hedonic features). The statistical results showed that utilitarian and hedonic features had significant effect on users' e-satisfaction and e-loyalty. Further analysis revealed that e-satisfaction influenced e-loyalty positively. From the foregoing, we hypothesise that,

H1: Ease of use has positive and significant relationship with guest satisfaction

Relationship between ease of payment and repeat patronage

In the hospitality industry of the United States of America, Ozturk (2016) examined consumers' acceptance of radio frequency identification (RFID) cashless payment systems and testing in the process, an extended version of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Two additional constructs to the original TAM, namely, (self-efficacy and perceived risk) were added to the model. With a self-administered online questionnaire, primary data were collected from 305 respondents. Statistical results showed that self-efficacy was significantly related to perceived ease of use. Another result showed that perceived risk had significant and negative influence on perceived usefulness and

perceived ease of use. Study results further showed that both perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness were significantly associated with intention to use.

The test result of the study conducted by Kamal, et al (2018), showed that the positive influence of e-satisfaction on e-loyalty indicated that satisfied online hotel booking users will more likely revisit and patronise the hotel again especially if they are able to attain selected utilitarian and hedonic features. Thus, we hypothesise that,

H2: Ease of use has positive and significant relationship with repeat patronage.

Relationship between security and customer satisfaction

Goode and Harris (2007) developed and tested a model of the antecedents (perceived online reputation, banner advertising, perceived online security, perceived reliability, appearance and site design, and website presentational consistency) of behavioural intentions of online shoppers of books and CDs. The moderation variables were switching costs and inducements. The descriptive study used personally administered structured questionnaire to generate primary data regarding consumer's interpretations and evaluations of retailers' specific website. The total number of 296 completed questionnaires were finally analysed. The statistical results showed that perceived online reputation, perceived online security, perceived reliability, and appearance and site design, had positive correlation with behavioural intentions of customers who shopped online

In Serbia, Vasić, Kilibarda and Kaurin, (2019) developed and tested a research model to determine the effect of certain online purchase determinants on customer satisfaction. Online marketing had six variables: A conceptual model consisting of security, information availability, shipping, quality, pricing, time, against customer satisfaction with a total of 26 items. The statistical results showed that in an online shopping the following determinants: security, information availability, shipping, quality, pricing and time had positive relationship with customer satisfaction.

In a university community, Safitri, (2017) investigated the influence of Security and Ease of Use on customer satisfaction with 100 respondents from the Faculty of Economics and Business, Mercu Buana University. The statistical result showed that both ease of use and security had a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction. From the foregoing, we hypothesise that.

H3: Security has positive and significant relationship with customer satisfaction.

Relationship between Security and repeat patronage

In Malaysia, in the context of online retailers, Razaka, Ahmadb, and Marimuthu (2016) examined the relationship between service qualities; information quality and security quality on repurchase intention. The quantitative research sampled 400 Malaysian consumers who experienced purchasing through travel agencies as the respondents through an email questionnaire administration. Using Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) as the statistical tool, the findings showed that, information quality, service quality, system quality, and security quality had positive effect on repurchase intention in the context of retail travel trade.

In India, Trivedi and Yadav (2018) investigated the relationship between security, privacy concerns, trust and ease of use (EOU) and online repurchase intention with e-satisfaction mediating the relationship. The study utilised a self-administered survey method with a sample of students aged between 20 and 35 years at universities in northern India. The result from the testing of hypotheses showed that security, privacy concerns, trust and ease of use (EOU) had a positive significant relationship with repurchase intention. Further statistical analysis showed that e-satisfaction mediated the effect between security and repurchase intention and also between trust and repurchase intention.

Awad and Soliman (2017) studied the effect of Egyptian hotels' websites marketing on customer e-loyalty and customer e-satisfaction in terms of intention to revisit, perceptions and expectations. The dimensions for hotel facilities and services, were service quality, website information quality system safety, and system convenience. A reasonable number of hotel guests were dissatisfied with the hotels' website as a result of many issues such as content, navigation among other variables.

Kim, Kim and Park (2017) examined the effect of perceived value, trust toward a third party online booking site, and trust toward hotels on intention to book online. The study sampled 307 experienced consumers on making a reservation using third-party online booking sites. The study findings revealed that perceived value, which was influenced by both price and quality, was positively related to individuals' intention to book. Trust on third-party online booking sites and trust toward hotels(affected by online review), had positive effect on individuals' intention to book.

It is obvious from the empirical evidence that perceived security of hotel websites and third party booking sites will influence hotel guests' intention to repurchase hotel products and services using online facilities. Thus, we hypothesise that,

H4: Security has positive and significant relationship with repeat patronage.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: To achieve the purpose of this research effort, a descriptive survey research design was adopted. The survey method is the appropriate design because the research required collection of data that deal with attitude, preference, behaviour and perception of hotel guests with a focus on the factors that determine guest loyalty in online transactions

Sample and Sampling Technique:

The population of the study was made up of hotel guests who lodged at the selected hotels at the period of executing this research in the selected hotels. The esteemed hotel guests who engage in online transactions were chosen as the unit of analysis of this research because they are in a position to give accurate information on how online services of the hotels could influence their behavioural tendencies. The convenient sampling technique was adopted in questionnaire administration with the assistance of the hotel staff working at the front desk. The hotel staff helped in administering and retrieval of the questionnaires at the convenience of the respondents.

The sample size was determined using Freund and Williams's formula at 0.05 level of significance. The formula offered by Freund and Williams was adopted as the most appropriate for this study because the population is large and unknown. A total sample size of 150 guests was determined with a retrieval rate of 120, while 117 questionnaires were useful for statistical analysis.

Demographic Profile of Respondents:

The analysis of the respondents' profile showed the following: (71) respondents (60.7%) were male while (46) respondents (39.3%) female. This implies that male respondents were of the majority. The information on age brackets of the respondents showed that 9 respondents (7.7%), were less than 20 years, 43 respondents (36.8%) were within 20–29 years, 44 respondents (37.6%) were within 30–39 years while 21 respondents (17.9%) were greater than 40 years. This information shows that majority of the respondents were within the ages of 30 – 39 years. Information on the respondents' level of education revealed the following: M.Sc/MBA/MA (38) (32.5%), B.Sc/HND (56) (47.9%), Ph.D (10) (8.5%), FSLC (1) (0.9) SSCE (12) (10.2%). The number of years of continuous patronage by respondents were: 37 respondents (31.6%) (<2yrs), 74 respondents (63.2%) (2 – 4 years), 5 respondents (4.3%) (5 – 8 years), 1 respondent (0.9%) more than 9 years (>9yrs). . Majority of the respondents sampled had patronised the hotels between 2 and 4 years.

Measurement Instrument and Questionnaire design

A well-structured questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection. All the measurement items were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale anchored by: Strongly Disagree [SD](1). Disagree [D](2), Agree [A](3), Agree fairly strongly(4) and Strongly Agree [SA](5) to express the degree of agreement with the items or otherwise. All the items were adapted from extant literature. Items of ease of use were adapted from the study of Pikkarainen, Pikkarainen, Karjaluoto, and Pahnila (2004) while security, guest satisfaction and repeat patronage items modeled after Topaloğlu, (2012).

RESEARCH RESULTS

Reliability Analysis:

The essence of reliability analysis is to ascertain whether the variable measures what it intended in the study. The table below shows the result of reliability analysis on all the four variables used in the study through the use of Cronbach's Alpha with a value of .979. The information in Table 1 indicates that the Cronbah's Alpha on all variables were greater than 0.7 which makes the instrument reliable.

Table 1 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.979	14

The value indicate that the data collection instrument is internally consistent and could therefore be used for statistical analysis.

Inferential Statistics

Test of Hypotheses

The variables were correlated to ascertain the degree of relationship existing between them.

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

DECISION RULE

If PV < 0.05 =Reject Ho
PV >0.05 = Accept Ho

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS 1

HO_1: There is no significant relationship between ease of use and guest satisfaction

HA_1: There is significant relationship between ease of use and guest satisfaction bar

Relationship between ease of use and guest satisfaction.

Table 2 Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between ease of payment and guest satisfaction

Correlations

		Ease of Use	Guest Satisfaction
Ease of Use	Pearson Correlation	1	.894**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	117	117
Guest Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.894**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	117	117

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 above shows the result of the Pearson Correlation analysis which indicates that there is a strong and positive correlation between ease of use and guest satisfaction in selected hotels in Port Harcourt Rivers State, Nigeria with r=.894. The p value =.000 which is less than 0.05, meaning that the correlation is significant. Consequently, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis which states that;

HA_1: There is significant relationship between ease of use and guest satisfaction.

Test of Hypothesis 2

HO_2: There is no significant relationship between ease of use and guest repeat patronage

HA_2: There is significant relationship between ease of use and guest repeat patronage

Relationship between ease of use and guest repeat patronage

Table 3 Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between ease of use and guest repeat patronage.

Correlations

		Ease of Use	Guest Repeat Purchase
Ease of Use	Pearson Correlation	1	.715**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	117	117
Guest Repeat Purchase	Pearson Correlation	.715**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	117	117

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 above shows the result of the Pearson Correlation analysis which indicates that there is a very strong and positive correlation between ease of use and guest repeat patronage in Port Harcourt, Rivers State of Nigeria with r=. 715. The p value =.000 which is less than 0.05, meaning that the correlation is significant. Consequently, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis which states that.

HA_2: There is significant relationship between ease of use and guest repeat patronage.

Test of Hypothesis 3

HO_3: There is no significant relationship between security and guest satisfaction.

HA_3: There is significant relationship between security and guest satisfaction.

Relationship between security and guest satisfaction.

Table 4 Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between security and guest satisfaction.

Correlations

		Security	Guest Satisfaction
Security	Pearson Correlation	1	.788**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	117	117
Guest Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.788**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	117	117

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4. above shows the result of the Pearson Correlation analysis which indicates that there is a very strong and positive correlation between security and guest satisfaction in Port Harcourt, Rivers State of Nigeria with r=.788. The p value =.000 which is less than 0.05, meaning that the correlation is significant. Consequently, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis which states that.

HA3: There is significant relationship between security and guest satisfaction.

Test of Hypothesis 4

HO_4: There is no significant relationship between security and guest repeat patronage

HA_4: There is significant relationship between security and guest repeat patronage

Relationship between security and guest repeat patronage

Table 5 Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between security and guest repeat patronage

Correlations

		Security	Guest Repeat Purchase
Security	Pearson Correlation	1	.880**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	117	117
Guest Repeat Purchase	Pearson Correlation	.880**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	117	117

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 above shows the result of the Pearson Correlation analysis which indicates that there is a very strong and positive correlation between security and guest repeat patronage
in Port Harcourt, Rivers State of Nigeria with r=.880. The p value =.000 which is less than 0.05, meaning that the correlation is significant. Consequently, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis which states that;

HA_4: There is significant relationship between security and guest repeat patronage

Discussion of Findings

The objective of this research effort was to determine the effect of online payment platform on guest loyalty in selected hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. In this survey, only two dimensions of online customer (ease of use and security) were measured against two measures(guest satisfaction and guest repeat patronage) of guest. The discussion of the findings is presented below in line with the hypothesized relationships.

Relationship between ease of use and guest satisfaction

From Pearson Correlation Analysis, ease of use is significantly correlated with guest satisfaction (r=0.708; *p*=.000). Thus, the alternative hypothesis (HA_1) is accepted as there is a significant positive relationship between ease of payment and customer satisfaction. The results of this study is consistent with the findings of Hong and Slevitch, (2018) and Kamal, et al (2018). Hong and Slevitch, (2018) found that ease of use and speed of delivery had a positive association with customer satisfaction in the context of hotel setting. On the other hand, the finding of the current study is inconsistent with Kim and Qu (2014), who reported that perceived ease of use did not have an impact on customer satisfaction.

The implication here is that hotel managers are to ensure that their online platforms work optimally. This is to enhance unhindered access to such facilities 24/7.Therefore, both hotel managers and manufacturers must cooperate to deal with service failures; for example, manufacturers can train frontline employees to solve simple software errors. Then, the hotel can deploy these employees in every shift to help customers who experience problems with self-check-in.

Relationship between ease of use and guest repeat patronage

From Pearson Correlation Analysis, ease of payment is significantly correlated with guests' repeat patronage. (r=0.787; *p*=.000). Thus, the alternative hypothesis (HA_2) is accepted as there is a significant positive relationship between ease of payment and guest repeat patronage in the context of hotel online services in Port Harcourt. This finding is consistent with Ozturk (2016).

For hotel guests, self-service technologies enable them to engage more directly in processes of service creation and delivery in order to have better service experience. In addition, cost savings, reduced service times and better control of service delivery will help customers become more enjoyable with customized services such as online payment. The implication is that hotel guests that enjoy this online service at first attempt will like to use same method again to do his transactions with the hotel brand. This invariably will result in repeat patronage.

Relationship between security and guest satisfaction

From Pearson Correlation Analysis, security is significantly correlated with guest satisfaction (r=0.880; *p*=.000). Thus, the hypothesis (HA_2) is accepted as there is a significant positive relationship between security and

guest satisfaction in selected hotels in Port Harcourt. This finding is consistent with Vasić, et al (2019) and Safitri, (2017).

It should be emphasized that an indispensable constituent influencing online purchasing pleasure is security. Every consumer of online services want to be sure of protection or safety of his/her personal data filled online. This implies that owners of online sites must be able to provide safe online sites that are well secured from scammers.

Relationship between security and guest repeat patronage

From Pearson Correlation Analysis, security is significantly correlated with guests' repeat patronage (r=0.972; *p*=.000). Thus, the hypothesis (**HA_4**) is accepted as there is a significant positive relationship between food quality and customers' revisit intention in bars. This finding is consistent with the findings of Razaka, et al (2016) who found in Malaysia that , system quality, information quality, service quality and security quality had positive effect on repurchase intention in the context of retail travel trade and the findings of Trivedi and Yadav (2018).

The ability of consumers to shield private data in their online transactions is the key to continuous use of online platforms. Consumers consider about the privacy, responsibility and isolation of online sites, with the implication that service providers should care about users' authentication and data security and transactions so as to enhance customers' satisfaction and by extension repeat patronage.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated the effect of online marketing attributes on guest loyalty in selected hotels in Port Harcourt. This research effort achieved its objectives to by determining the influence of two online marketing attributes (ease of use and security) on two variables of guest brand loyalty (guest satisfaction and guest repeat patronage). The outcome of the inferential statistics using Pearson Correlation Analysis showed that the two dimensions of the online marketing attributes had positive significant effect on guest satisfaction and repeat patronage in the context of hotels operating in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

STUDY IMPLICATIONS

This current study examines the effect of online marketing attributes of hotels as predictors of brand loyalty in the context of hotels operating in an oil city in a developing country, Nigeria. As expected, the study findings provide very fruitful and useful implications for the academia and practitioners.

On the academic side, this current study makes very critical and significant contribution to the hotel online marketing attributes literature by systematically examining the effect of hotel online marketing attributes on brand loyalty. The foregoing provides tentative support to the proposition that ease of use and security of transactions and personal information should be recognised and treated as significant antecedents of brand loyalty in hospitality marketing.

On the practitioners' side, the significant effect of ease of use and security on brand loyalty is highlighted. Certainly, hotel owners/marketers are the ultimate beneficiaries from the implications of these findings. For instance, given the robust relationship between ease of use and security and guest satisfaction and repeat patronage, hotel owners/managers ought to pay attention to online marketing infrastructure and its management to enhance the confidence of hotel guests in online transactions. For example, by going into technical management contract with reputable organizations, hotels could provide state of the art online infrastructure capable of providing reliable online services. In the same vein, the hotel owners/managers are expected to provide guidelines to intending guests on the service process required to have seamless online transactions. Also, the hotel owners/managers should ensure that they provide a well secure and user friendly platforms. This will enhance customer satisfaction and retention. Dedicated online staff should be trained on how to respond to service failures.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Despite its high level of significance, this current study is still limited in some areas. First, Nigerians only were sampled in Port Harcourt. Therefore, the generalizability of the study findings could be improved upon if further study could sample other nationals in Nigeria. Further research effort should also be directed towards investigating the effect of ease of payment and security of personal data on guest loyalty in luxury hotels in Port Harcourt.

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