

**EFFICACY OF DIGITAL MARKETING PLATFORMS ON PERFORMANCE
OF STAR-RATED HOTELS IN MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA: MODERATING
ROLE OF ICT INFRASTRUCTURE**

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AND TOURISM, OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY.**

SEPTEMBER, 2025

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved family; your support, love, and sacrifices fueled my journey. I uphold our motto: Better late than never.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADR	Average Daily Rate
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CTT	Commitment-Trust Theory
DMP	Digital Marketing Platforms
DW	Durbin-Watson
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
OTAs	Online Travel Agencies
RBV	Resource-Based View
RevPAR	Revenue Per Available Room
ROI	Return On Investment
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SMM	Social Media Marketing
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TRA	Tourism Regulatory Authority
TRI	Tourism Research Institute
UCD	User Centered Design
UI/ UX	User Interface/ User eXperience
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
VRIN	Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, and Non-substitutable

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Term	Operational Definition
Customer Engagement	The level of active interaction between hotels and customers via digital platforms, including query responses, feedback handling, and real-time promotions.
Customer Satisfaction	The degree to which customers perceive that their expectations have been met or exceeded, influenced by the hotel's digital service delivery.
Average Daily Rate (ADR)	While often financial, in this study it reflects employees' perception of room rate improvement attributed to digital marketing strategies.
Digital Marketing Platforms	Collective use of tools such as email, social media, websites, and OTAs for customer engagement, brand awareness, and service promotion in the hospitality context.
Efficacy	Refers to the extent to which digital marketing platforms influence desired non-financial performance outcomes.
Email Marketing	Use of targeted email campaigns (promotional, retention, newsletters) to build customer loyalty and increase repeat purchase behavior.
Hotel Performance	Assessed through non-financial metrics including; Customer purchase behavior, repeat purchases, ADR perception, and occupancy rates.
ICT Infrastructure	Availability, accessibility, cost-efficiency, and regulatory environment of IT systems that support the deployment of digital marketing tools in hotels.

ICT Moderation	The role of ICT infrastructure in influencing the strength and direction of the relationship between digital marketing platforms and hotel performance.
Occupancy Rate	The extent to which rooms are occupied relative to availability, reflecting customer interest and marketing effectiveness.
Online Travel Agencies (OTAs)	Third-party platforms that facilitate customer segmentation, trust-building, and online bookings, contributing to visibility and performance.
Perceived Brand Loyalty	The frequency and consistency of customers choosing the same hotel over time, driven by trust, satisfaction, and digital engagement.
Repeat Purchase Behavior	The tendency of guests to rebook with the same hotel, used as a key non-financial performance indicator in this study.
Social Media Marketing	Strategic use of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube to communicate, promote, and build hotel brand identity.
Website Optimization	Enhancing website functionality through SEO, user-friendly content, speed, and mobile responsiveness to drive bookings and improve guest experience.

ABSTRACT

The growing reliance on digital marketing has transformed the hospitality industry, with online platforms becoming key tools for enhancing hotel performance. In the county of Mombasa Kenya, star-rated hotels face increasing competition in a market where tourism is a significant economic driver. Despite the widespread adoption of digital marketing strategies, there is limited understanding of their specific impact on hotel performance, particularly in the context of ICT infrastructure. While ICT infrastructure is often assumed to be a critical enabler of digital marketing effectiveness, its actual role in moderating this relationship remains unclear. This gap in the literature formed the basis of the study, which sought to explore the efficacy of digital marketing platforms in improving hotel performance, with a specific focus on the moderating role of ICT infrastructure. Guided by the Resource-Based View (RBV) and the Commitment-Trust Theory, this study explored how internal capabilities (e.g., digital marketing strategies) and relational trust (e.g., customer engagement) influence hotel performance. These theories are particularly relevant in explaining how hotels leverage digital marketing tools and ICT resources to gain competitive advantage and foster customer loyalty. Using an explanatory research design, the study investigated the impact of email marketing, social media marketing, online travel agencies (OTAs), and website optimization on the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa. Data were collected from 18 hotels, and statistical analyses were employed to assess the relationships between these digital marketing strategies and hotel performance, while also examining the moderating effect of ICT infrastructure. The findings revealed that email marketing and social media marketing significantly enhance hotel performance, with personalized campaigns improving customer retention and social media engagement boosting visibility and brand perception. OTAs were found to extend market reach, increase occupancy rates, and attract international bookings. Website optimization, with its emphasis on SEO, mobile-friendliness, and user-centered design, was also positively associated with improved performance, particularly in terms of direct bookings and customer satisfaction. Likewise, ICT infrastructure had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between digital marketing strategies and hotel performance. This suggests that ICT infrastructure not only facilitates digital marketing activities but also strengthens the impact of these strategies on performance outcomes. The findings highlight that the quality of digital marketing execution, coupled with the level of ICT infrastructure, plays a crucial role in driving key hotel performance metrics such as repeat purchase, guest purchase behavior, average daily rate, and occupancy rate. This study contributed to the growing body of literature on digital marketing in the hospitality industry by providing valuable insights into how hotel managers in the county of Mombasa can optimize their digital marketing strategies for improved performance. It also supports the prevailing assumption that ICT infrastructure is a key driver of success, emphasizing that effective strategy execution is the primary determinant of performance. The integration of RBV and Commitment-Trust Theory in this context adds depth to our understanding of how internal resources and customer relationships jointly drive hotel performance in the digital age.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

The global hospitality industry is experiencing rapid digital transformation, driven by the shift in consumer behavior toward online platforms for information, booking, and engagement. Digital marketing platforms, such as email, social media, websites, and online travel agencies (OTAs), have emerged as essential tools for improving visibility, facilitating personalized communication, and increasing conversion rates. According to Statista (2023), a growing majority of travelers now rely on digital platforms to research, compare, and reserve accommodations, reshaping hotel marketing strategies and competitive dynamics.

Each digital marketing platform plays a distinct role in influencing consumer behavior. Email marketing fosters loyalty through personalized campaigns (Yang et al., 2019; Suleiman et al., 2023), while social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter enable real-time interaction and community-building (Appel et al., 2020; Achieng, 2021; Wang & Kim, 2022). OTAs expand visibility but raise concerns over reduced brand control and commission fees (Zhang et al., 2022; Maina & Murigi, 2021). Website optimization, particularly through responsive design, user experience, and SEO integration, directly influences booking behavior by enhancing trust and usability (Pervez et al., 2018; Rahman et al., 2020; Gioko et al., 2021).

However, the effectiveness of these platforms is contingent on the quality of underlying Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure. ICT systems enhance hotel performance by supporting real-time analytics, guest personalization, and integrated communication tools (Kossaibati et al., 2023; Adeola & Evans, 2019). Yet, constraints such as limited broadband access, outdated property management systems, and poor system integration hinder the full potential of digital transformation in many Sub-Saharan African settings (Okeke et al., 2023).

In Kenya, the hotel industry has made considerable progress in adopting digital marketing, aided by expanding mobile phone use and internet penetration. Mombasa County, a flagship coastal destination, hosts 18 star-rated hotels and contributes significantly to the tourism economy. Despite this, performance challenges persist. The Tourism Research Institute (2024) reported a low bed-night occupancy rate of 8.2% in Mombasa in 2023, which was well below Nairobi (19.4%) and Nakuru (10.4%). This underperformance exists despite the city accounting for nearly 8% of international tourist arrivals, signaling a potential disconnect between tourist inflows and hotel performance outcomes.

One contributing factor is the uneven deployment of ICT infrastructure. According to sectoral reports, fewer than half of the star-rated hotels in coastal Kenya had fully functional ICT systems as of 2020, which affects their capacity to utilize digital marketing tools effectively (Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, 2024). In particular, limited use of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platforms, weak cybersecurity protocols, and poor website optimization practices restrict hotels from engaging customers effectively or converting digital traffic into bookings.

While existing literature acknowledges the enabling role of ICT in digital marketing, few empirical studies, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, have explored its moderating effect on the relationship between digital platform usage and hotel performance. Most studies focus on direct effects or treat ICT as a background enabler, ignoring its potential to condition or strengthen the effectiveness of digital strategies (Adeola & Evans, 2019; Okeke et al., 2023). This leaves a critical research gap in understanding how robust ICT infrastructure may enhance, or constrain, the impact of specific digital platforms on non-financial performance metrics such as repeat purchases, customer satisfaction, and online engagement.

The Kenyan government has prioritized digital transformation in tourism through policy instruments such as the National Tourism Blueprint 2030, the New Tourism Strategy (2021–2025), and Vision 2030. These frameworks call for enhanced digital marketing, innovation, and ICT-driven growth across the hospitality sector. Further, digital marketing aligns with Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), by promoting inclusive economic development and responsible business practices.

Given this context, understanding the combined impact of digital marketing platforms and ICT infrastructure on hotel performance is not only timely but essential. For star-rated hotels in Mombasa, integrating platform-specific strategies with well-developed ICT systems may hold the key to recovery, competitiveness, and long-term resilience in a digitally evolving marketplace.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Star-rated hotels in Mombasa County continue to face significant performance challenges, including low direct bookings, declining occupancy rates, inconsistent customer retention, and a heavy reliance on online travel agencies (OTAs), which charged high commissions and reduced profitability (Gichunge, 2017; Chen et al., 2021). These issues are especially concerning in a region where tourism forms the backbone of the local economy, yet many hotels struggle to remain competitive in an increasingly digital and customer-centric market environment.

Although digital marketing platforms, such as email marketing, social media, OTAs, and website optimization, have been widely recognized for their potential to enhance brand visibility, boost bookings, and improve guest engagement (Chi, 2021; Sotiriadis & Shen, 2022), their effectiveness remains underexplored within the specific context of Mombasa's star-rated hotels. Most existing studies in Kenya focus on general hotel operations or broad hospitality marketing strategies, without evaluating how specific digital marketing tools influence key performance indicators such as occupancy rates, average daily rate (ADR), and revenue per available room (RevPAR) (Thuo, 2018; Korir, 2020).

In addition, a theoretical gap exist in the literature. Few studies have addressed how digital marketing platforms operate in conjunction with the moderating effect of ICT infrastructure, particularly within developing country contexts. Theoretical models available are often generalized and do not adequately account for infrastructure constraints or digital adoption trends unique to tourism-dependent coastal regions like Mombasa (Khan et al., 2022). This lack of contextualized theoretical grounding limited the coherence and relevance of efforts aimed at optimizing digital marketing strategies.

The absence of empirical research specifically examining the impact of digital marketing platforms on the performance of star-rated hotels in Mombasa highlighted the need for focused investigation. This study addressed that gap by developing and applying a comprehensive conceptual framework that incorporate relevant theories from digital marketing, hospitality, and tourism. The findings generated evidence-based insights to support competitive positioning, revenue growth, and long-term sustainability in the hospitality sector of Mombasa County.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how digital marketing platforms, specifically email marketing, social media marketing, online travel agencies, and website optimization, affect the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, and to assess the moderating role of ICT infrastructure in this relationship.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- i. To evaluate the impact of email marketing on the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya.
- ii. To assess the influence of social media marketing on the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya.
- iii. To determine the impact of online travel agencies on the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya.
- iv. To examine the effect of website optimization on the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya.

- v. To investigate the moderating effect of ICT infrastructure on the relationship between digital marketing platforms and the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

- i. H₀₁: Email marketing has no significant effect on the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya.
- ii. H₀₂: Social media marketing has no significant effect on the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya.
- iii. H₀₃: Online travel agencies have no significant effect on the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya.
- iv. H₀₄: Website optimization has no significant effect on the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya.
- v. H₀₅: ICT infrastructure has no moderating influence on the relationship between digital marketing platforms and the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study holds theoretical, practical, and policy relevance within the context of digital transformation in the hospitality industry, particularly among star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the scholarly discourse by extending the application of the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Commitment-Trust Theory to digital marketing in the hospitality sector. It conceptualizes digital platforms,

including email marketing, social media, online travel agencies (OTAs), and website optimization, as strategic, intangible resources that can drive hotel performance when effectively leveraged.

In line with RBV, these platforms are positioned as valuable assets that contribute to competitive advantage, particularly when supported by strong ICT infrastructure (Barney, 2020). The Commitment-Trust Theory further enriches the framework by emphasizing the importance of relationship-building and ethical engagement, particularly within OTA transactions, where trust and commitment are critical to customer loyalty. This dual-theory approach invites future researchers to explore the performance outcomes of digital marketing strategies through both technological and relational lenses.

On a practical level, the study provides hotel managers and digital marketing professionals with empirical insights into the specific digital platforms that significantly influence hotel performance outcomes, such as occupancy rate, repeat purchase, customer purchase behavior, average daily rate and customer retention. By identifying the most effective platforms and highlighting the moderating role of ICT infrastructure, the study equips practitioners with evidence-based guidance for investment in digital tools and strategic marketing decisions. For hotels in Mombasa, where the market is competitive and tourism is a vital economic pillar, these insights can be pivotal in reducing reliance on high-commission third-party platforms and improving direct bookings and operational efficiency.

From a policy standpoint, the study supports tourism policymakers and public sector agencies in designing and refining strategies that promote digital adoption in the hospitality

sector. The findings align with key national frameworks such as the Kenya Tourism Board Strategic Plan (2018–2023) and the New Tourism Strategy (2021–2025), both of which advocate for enhanced digital integration to boost resilience and sectoral growth.

Moreover, the study contributes to the goals outlined in Kenya’s Vision 2030, which emphasizes innovation and technology in the tourism sector, and resonates with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth, and Goal 12 on responsible consumption and production. By demonstrating how digital marketing platforms can enhance service delivery and sustainability, the study provides valuable guidance for public-private collaboration and policy innovation.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focused on star-rated hotels within Mombasa County, investigating how key digital marketing platforms, namely email marketing, social media marketing, online travel agencies (OTAs), and website optimization, affect hotel performance. It further examined the moderating role of ICT infrastructure in influencing the effectiveness of these platforms.

The study was conducted between October 2022 and November 2023, targeting marketing departments and personnel involved in digital marketing efforts. The geographical scope was limited to Mombasa due to its significance as a coastal tourism hub with a high concentration of star-rated hotels.

The thematic scope was confined to the relationship between digital marketing and performance indicators such as repeat purchase, customer purchase behavior, daily average

rate, and occupancy rate. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, website reviews, and hotel performance dashboards.

To maintain focus, the study excluded non-star-rated hotels, hotels outside Mombasa County, and digital tools beyond the four specified platforms. Other potential moderators, such as digital literacy or organizational size, were also not considered, as the study focused solely on ICT infrastructure. Furthermore, it adopted an explanatory research design to explore existing relationships rather than establish causality.

These parameters were deliberately set to ensure contextual relevance, manageability, and alignment with available resources, while generating actionable insights for hotel digital strategy and contributing to hospitality marketing literature in emerging economies.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study was subject to several limitations inherent to its explanatory research design and contextual focus.

First, the study was geographically confined to star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya. While this focus provided depth and contextual relevance, it limits the generalizability of the findings to non-star-rated hotels or those in different counties or regions. Future studies should consider comparative analyses across multiple counties or hotel categories for broader insights.

Second, the study employed a cross-sectional design, collecting data within a single time frame (October 2022 to November 2023). While this allowed for analysis of existing relationships between digital marketing practices and hotel performance, it limits the

ability to infer causality or assess the long-term effects of digital marketing efforts. A longitudinal design could strengthen causal inference and reveal changes over time.

Third, the correlational nature of the design does not permit control over extraneous variables. Although moderation analysis was conducted to assess the influence of ICT infrastructure, other unmeasured variables, such as staff training, management style, or economic conditions, may also influence performance outcomes. Future research could incorporate control variables or use structural equation modeling (SEM) for a more comprehensive analysis.

Fourth, while efforts were made to ensure a representative sample, limitations related to sample size may have affected the statistical power of some analyses. Power analysis is recommended in future studies to ensure adequate sampling for detecting moderation effects.

Lastly, the study relied in part on self-reported data, which may be subject to recall bias or social desirability bias. To mitigate this, the researcher triangulated findings with websites reviews and performance dashboards, but the possibility of bias remains. Future research could incorporate system-based performance data (e.g., automated booking systems or digital analytics dashboards) for improved validity.

Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights into the strategic role of digital marketing platforms and ICT infrastructure in enhancing hotel performance, and provides a foundation for future theory-driven and data-intensive investigations.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

This study was guided by several key assumptions necessary for ensuring the validity of its design and findings.

First, it was assumed that participants would respond truthfully and accurately to all items in the questionnaire. Their sincerity was essential to obtaining reliable and valid data reflecting their perspectives on the use and effectiveness of digital marketing platforms in their respective hotels.

Second, the study assumed that the respondents possessed sufficient awareness and experience regarding their hotel's digital marketing strategies, tools, and ICT infrastructure. This understanding was necessary for them to provide meaningful responses on the relationship between these platforms and hotel performance outcomes.

Third, it was assumed that the secondary data sources used in the study, such as website reviews and performance dashboards, were accurate, up to date, and reflective of actual hotel performance metrics.

Fourth, the study assumed that the measured variables (email marketing, social media, OTAs, website optimization, ICT infrastructure, and performance) were conceptually and empirically distinct, and that the statistical techniques employed (descriptive statistics, correlation, and moderation analysis) were appropriate for analyzing the data.

These assumptions formed the basis for drawing meaningful conclusions and generating practical recommendations for enhancing digital marketing adoption and hotel performance in the county of Mombasa.

1.9 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

1.9.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by two key theoretical perspectives: the Resource-Based View (RBV) and the Commitment-Trust Theory. These theories provide a structured lens for examining the strategic role of digital marketing platforms and the relational dynamics that contribute to the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya.

1.9.1.1 Resource-Based View (RBV)

Originally proposed by Barney (1991), the Resource-Based View argues that firms gain and sustain competitive advantage by effectively utilizing valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources. In the context of the hospitality industry, digital marketing platforms such as email marketing, social media marketing, online travel agencies (OTAs), and website optimization can be conceptualized as strategic intangible resources. When effectively deployed, these tools enhance customer outreach, brand visibility, and booking efficiency, contributing to superior hotel performance.

For instance, email marketing enables personalized communication and repeat business, while social media platforms allow for real-time engagement and brand positioning. OTAs extend market reach despite commission drawbacks, and optimized websites improve conversion and user experience. However, the effectiveness of these digital resources depends on a hotel's capacity to manage and deploy them strategically (Miles & Snow, 2007; Porter, 2001, 2011).

Crucially, the RBV in this study integrates ICT infrastructure as a moderating factor. A robust ICT environment amplifies the effectiveness of digital tools through integration,

analytics, and automation, while poor infrastructure may constrain their performance impact (Khan et al., 2022).

While the Resource-Based View (RBV) emphasizes internal capabilities as sources of competitive advantage, it has been critiqued for underestimating the influence of external, customer-driven, and relational dynamics (Peteraf et al., 2013; Acedo et al., 2021). This study addressed that limitation by integrating relationship-centered theories, such as the Commitment-Trust Theory, to provide a more holistic understanding of how internal resources interact with customer and market-based factors in digital marketing effectiveness.

1.9.1.2 Commitment-Trust Theory

Developed by Morgan and Hunt (1994), the Commitment-Trust Theory posits that trust and commitment are foundational to successful long-term customer relationships. In the hotel context, digital marketing tools play a key role in nurturing these relational elements. Email campaigns maintain ongoing dialogue, social media fosters brand intimacy, OTAs create accessible booking experiences, and websites build confidence through transparency and professionalism.

Hotels with stronger ICT infrastructure are better positioned to leverage these tools, track customer behavior, and personalize interactions, thereby enhancing customer trust and loyalty (Praničević & Mandić, 2020). Conversely, weak technological capacity can undermine these efforts and reduce the effectiveness of relationship-building strategies.

While Commitment-Trust Theory provides valuable insights into relationship marketing by emphasizing trust and commitment as central to long-term customer relationships, it

tends to focus primarily on customer-side dynamics and assumes relatively stable, cooperative environments. In today's highly competitive, rapidly digitizing sectors such as hospitality, other strategic variables, such as pricing flexibility, technological agility, and platform responsiveness, play increasingly significant roles in determining firm performance (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021). As such, the theory may require adaptation or supplementation when applied in volatile or innovation-driven contexts like digital hospitality marketing.

Together, these two theories provided a complementary framework for understanding how the effective use of digital marketing platforms, moderated by ICT infrastructure, can improve hotel performance in a digitally evolving hospitality environment.

1.9.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Commitment-Trust Theory, both of which informed the relationships between digital marketing platforms, ICT infrastructure, and hotel performance. The framework illustrated how specific digital marketing strategies, including email marketing, social media marketing, online travel agencies (OTAs), and website optimization, influence the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya.

These four components served as the study's independent variables, while hotel performance was the dependent variable, measured through indicators such as occupancy rate, repeat purchase, customer purchase behavior, and daily average rate. The moderating variable, ICT infrastructure, was hypothesized to influence the strength or direction of the relationships between the digital marketing platforms and hotel performance.

Drawing on RBV, digital marketing platforms are conceptualized as strategic, intangible resources that, when leveraged effectively, can yield competitive advantages. The Commitment-Trust Theory supports the notion that these platforms also contribute to building customer relationships, trust, and loyalty, all of which affect performance outcomes.

The framework thus proposed both direct relationships (between each digital marketing platform and hotel performance) and moderated relationships, in which ICT infrastructure enhances or constrains the effectiveness of these platforms. For example, the impact of website optimization on customer bookings may be stronger in hotels with robust ICT systems that enable real-time updates, secure transactions, and analytics integration. This conceptual structure guided the formulation of research objectives, hypotheses, and analytical methods, and served as the foundation for interpreting empirical findings.

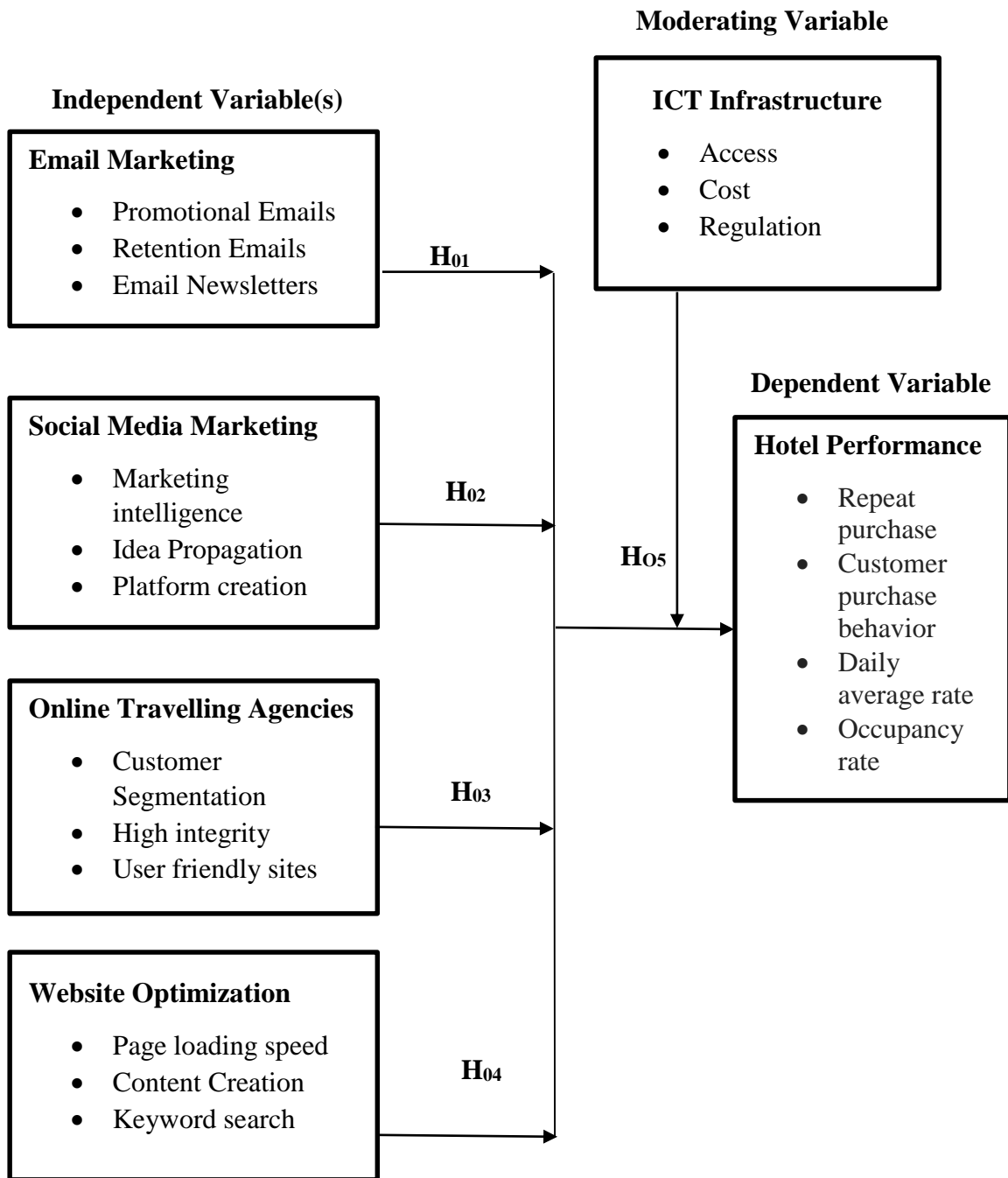


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2023)

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on the efficacy of digital marketing platforms in enhancing the performance of star-rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya, considering the moderating role of ICT infrastructure. It covers key concepts, examines findings from past studies, and identifies research gaps that this study sought to address.

2.2 Conceptual Literature

2.2.1 Hotel Performance

Hotel performance refers to a hotel's ability to achieve both financial and non-financial outcomes, including revenue growth, customer satisfaction, brand reputation, and operational efficiency. Traditional industry metrics such as average daily rate (ADR), occupancy rate, and revenue per available room (RevPAR) remain standard benchmarks for financial performance (STR Global, 2024). However, emerging perspectives in hospitality and tourism research increasingly advocate for the inclusion of behavioral and experiential indicators such as repeat purchase behavior, customer engagement, and brand loyalty, which offer a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of performance (Morgan et al., 2023; Mohammad, 2022).

Globally, scholars emphasize that hotel performance is no longer solely a function of financial health but is intricately linked to digital engagement and customer experiences (Olson et al., 2021; Van Esch & Stewart Black, 2021). In competitive global and regional markets, a hotel's ability to attract and retain customers is increasingly dependent on its

digital visibility, online service responsiveness, and ability to manage digital touchpoints that shape customer perception (Shankar et al., 2022). This paradigm shift reflects a broader evolution in marketing and performance management that integrates both tangible outcomes and intangible customer-centric variables.

This expanded view is particularly relevant in high-competition tourism destinations like Mombasa, where customer experience and relational outcomes play a crucial role in long-term viability. The performance of hotels in such settings depends not only on occupancy and revenue metrics but also on brand engagement and emotional connections fostered through digital platforms (Deb et al., 2024; Gona, 2024). While conventional performance assessments often focus on short-term financial returns, they may neglect critical dimensions influenced by digital marketing, including customer trust, loyalty, and relationship quality (Masrianto et al., 2022; Suprayitno, 2024).

Historically, performance measurement in the hospitality sector has been heavily weighted toward financial outcomes such as profitability and revenue. According to Wadongo et al. (2010), hospitality managers in Kenya tend to prioritize financial indicators, frequently overlooking non-financial metrics such as service quality, customer satisfaction, and online reputation. This narrow approach can hinder long-term strategic planning and obscure opportunities for sustainable growth, particularly in an environment where customer voice and digital reviews strongly influence purchase behavior (Rachmad, 2024; Theodorakopoulos & Theodoropoulou, 2024).

Non-financial performance indicators are directly linked to customer perceptions and behaviors, factors that are increasingly essential in maintaining competitiveness within the

evolving hospitality landscape. For example, high levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty often lead to repeat visits, brand advocacy, and positive word-of-mouth, both offline and via digital platforms (Anyadighibe et al., 2024; Oywaya, 2023). These intangible assets can significantly enhance brand equity and market share. As such, incorporating non-financial metrics enables a more balanced and holistic assessment of hotel performance, aligning with contemporary management practices and customer-centric digital strategies (Gioko, 2024; Kariru, 2022).

2.2.2 Digital Marketing Platforms

Digital marketing within the hospitality sector has transitioned from basic promotional efforts to integrated, data-driven strategies that engage customers across the full spectrum of the purchase journey. In today's digital landscape, hotel brands are not only expected to promote offerings but also deliver seamless digital experiences, foster relationships, and collect actionable insights through their digital touchpoints (Olson et al., 2021; Shankar et al., 2022). As such, digital marketing platforms serve both operational and strategic functions that impact brand positioning, customer retention, and financial performance (Van Esch & Black, 2021).

This study emphasizes four digital marketing platforms with proven relevance to hotel operations: email marketing, social media marketing, online travel agencies (OTAs), and website optimization. Each platform contributes uniquely to enhancing performance metrics such as occupancy rate, customer loyalty, average daily rate (ADR), and repeat purchase behavior (Mohammad, 2022; Gona, 2024).

2.2.2.1 Email Marketing

Email marketing is one of the oldest yet most cost-effective digital channels for direct communication in the hospitality sector. It facilitates personalized outreach through promotional offers, transactional messages, post-stay surveys, and loyalty programs (Chi, 2021; Masrianto et al., 2022). This channel is particularly effective in engaging past guests and nurturing prospective ones through behavior-triggered campaigns.

Well-segmented email marketing enhances customer engagement and supports retention, especially when powered by data analytics and automation tools (Mohammad, 2022; Shankar et al., 2022). For example, hotels can send customized messages based on booking history, preferences, or location, thereby improving the relevance and effectiveness of each interaction. Email marketing also supports re-engagement of dormant guests, which is vital for maintaining brand loyalty.

In the Kenyan context, particularly within star-rated hotels in Mombasa, email marketing remains underutilized despite its potential for maintaining customer relationships post-departure (Gioko, 2024). Hotels with robust ICT infrastructure are better positioned to implement automated email workflows that lead to increased booking conversions and higher repeat visit rates (Oywaya, 2023).

2.2.2.2 Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing has evolved into a dynamic, multidimensional tool for brand storytelling, customer service, reputation management, and peer-to-peer influence. Leading platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter (now X), and TikTok

offer hotels the ability to humanize their brands and foster online communities through multimedia content and real-time engagement (Wang & Kim, 2022; Suprayitno, 2024).

From a strategic standpoint, social media contributes to marketing intelligence by offering insights into consumer behavior, preferences, and trends. User-generated content, influencer collaborations, and targeted advertising are vital tools for shaping traveler perceptions and triggering intent to book (Rachmad, 2024; Theodorakopoulos & Theodoropoulou, 2024).

Importantly, platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are increasingly favored by younger segments of travelers who value authenticity and experiential storytelling. However, studies show varied platform effectiveness. For instance, Instagram may not be as impactful in the Kenyan hospitality market compared to platforms like Facebook or YouTube due to lower user engagement and content saturation (Oywaya, 2023).

In Mombasa's hospitality scene, hotels with an integrated social media strategy, combined with ICT-enabling tools like chatbots, data analytics, and automated scheduling, are more likely to experience improvements in brand visibility and direct bookings (Gioko, 2024; Deb et al., 2024).

2.2.2.3 Online Travel Agencies (OTAs)

OTAs play a critical role in the hotel booking ecosystem by enhancing visibility, offering comparative pricing, and providing booking convenience to global travelers. Prominent OTAs like Booking.com, Expedia, and Agoda allow hotels to reach diverse customer

segments, including international tourists, business travelers, and budget-conscious guests (Zhang et al., 2022).

While OTAs improve discoverability, they introduce challenges related to profit margins and customer ownership. Commission fees can range between 15–25%, significantly reducing net income for hoteliers (Lakha & Vaid, 2020). Furthermore, excessive reliance on OTAs undermines direct booking strategies and limits a hotel’s ability to cultivate long-term guest relationships (Shankar et al., 2022).

Trust and security, which are central elements of OTA system integrity, are key determinants of consumer booking behavior (Mohammad, 2022). In regions like Kenya, where digital trust remains a concern, the credibility of OTAs influences customer adoption and satisfaction levels (Anyadighibe et al., 2024). Hotels in Mombasa that use OTAs alongside personalized follow-ups, loyalty incentives, and quality service delivery are better able to convert OTA customers into direct repeat clients, thus reducing long-term dependence on intermediaries (Gona, 2024).

2.2.2.4 Website Optimization

A hotel’s website serves as its digital storefront, which is critical for direct bookings, brand presentation, and customer engagement. Optimizing website performance involves enhancing speed, mobile responsiveness, user interface, SEO (Search Engine Optimization), and security protocols (Han et al., 2023; Yongvongphaiboon & Chantamas, 2021).

Key optimization practices include integrating booking engines, real-time room availability, and content personalization. Enhanced user experience leads to lower bounce rates, higher conversion rates, and improved customer satisfaction (Rahman et al., 2020; Masrianto et al., 2022). Moreover, web analytics tools enable hoteliers to monitor visitor behavior, optimize campaigns, and respond to market trends.

In the Kenyan context, disparities in ICT infrastructure affect the implementation and success of website optimization strategies. Hotels with reliable internet, skilled IT teams, and updated content management systems (CMS) demonstrate stronger digital presence and improved performance metrics (Gioko, 2024; Kariru, 2022). For star-rated hotels in Mombasa, investment in multilingual capabilities, local payment gateways, and mobile-first design enhances accessibility and broadens market reach, particularly in attracting diaspora and international guests.

2.2.3 ICT Infrastructure

The inclusion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure as a moderating variable in this study is grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV). ICT infrastructure forms part of a hotel's strategic assets, which are resources that are rare, inimitable, and valuable, enabling firms to enhance digital capabilities and sustain competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). ICT infrastructure influences how well a hotel can deploy, scale, and integrate digital marketing tools, ultimately shaping how these strategies convert into performance outcomes such as guest engagement, service personalization, operational efficiency, and revenue generation (Sharma et al., 2020; Li et al., 2022). In this study, ICT infrastructure is conceptualized

through three dimensions: access, cost, and regulation, all of which significantly affect the success of digital marketing strategies in the hospitality industry, particularly in developing contexts like Mombasa County.

2.2.3.1 Access

Access refers to the availability, quality, and consistency of foundational digital resources, including high-speed internet connectivity, modern computing equipment, and the interoperability of software systems. These elements are critical in ensuring that hotel websites, social media accounts, OTAs, and CRM systems function seamlessly and in real time (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019). Empirical studies indicate that hotels with superior access to ICT resources are better positioned to execute multichannel digital campaigns, personalize content, and gather analytics for customer insight (Kabadayi et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2023).

However, in developing economies such as Kenya, disparities in digital infrastructure present significant challenges. Rural-urban gaps in broadband access, unstable internet speeds, and inconsistent system integration remain common barriers, particularly for independently owned star-rated hotels (Okeke et al., 2023; Ndung'u & Waema, 2022). These infrastructural limitations hinder real-time responsiveness and reduce digital campaign efficacy. As supported by Wachira and Omwenga (2021), limited ICT access in some Kenyan counties compromises customer engagement and undermines the ability of hotels to execute data-driven marketing.

2.2.3.2 Cost

Cost encompasses both the initial capital outlay and ongoing expenses related to ICT acquisition, maintenance, and system upgrades. In regions with constrained ICT ecosystems, these costs are often inflated due to import dependencies, inadequate local technical expertise, and limited economies of scale (World Bank, 2021). High costs act as barriers to entry for smaller and mid-sized hotels, thereby perpetuating a digital divide within the hospitality sector (Munyua & Karanja, 2022; Ndung'u & Waema, 2022).

Empirical literature emphasizes that the lack of cost-effective access to digital tools results in partial or fragmented adoption of platforms such as CRM software, SEO tools, email automation, and AI chatbots (Kumar et al., 2023; Wachira & Omwenga, 2021). In Kenya, particularly in coastal destinations like Mombasa, hotels frequently cite ICT affordability as a key constraint to consistent digital marketing implementation (Kossaibati et al., 2023). Cost inefficiencies further translate into reduced agility, weak personalization, and lost opportunities in capturing mobile-first and tech-savvy travelers.

2.2.3.3 Regulation

The regulatory environment governing ICT use, including cybersecurity, data protection, and digital taxation, has a substantial impact on how hotels manage digital platforms. Compliance with laws such as the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Kenya's Data Protection Act, 2019, is not merely a legal obligation but also a strategic imperative that enhances consumer trust, digital legitimacy, and reputational capital (Kossaibati et al, 2023; Gichuru & Otieno, 2022).

Hotels operating in jurisdictions with well-defined and enforced ICT policies tend to adopt secure and privacy-compliant digital infrastructures, which improve user confidence, especially in areas involving online payments, customer profiling, and loyalty programs (Asiimwe & Lim, 2021). Moreover, tourism regulators and ICT authorities in Kenya have recently intensified efforts to align digital marketing practices with national digital economy blueprints, emphasizing ethical and transparent data use (CAK, 2022). Failure to align with such frameworks may result in penalties, data breaches, and customer attrition.

In summary, ICT infrastructure plays a pivotal moderating role in determining the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in hotels. Access, cost, and regulation each exert critical influence on whether digital platforms become tools for competitive advantage or liabilities that widen performance gaps.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

2.3.1 Email Marketing and Hotel Performance

Email marketing remains a foundational pillar in the digital marketing mix of the hospitality industry due to its cost-effectiveness, measurability, and ability to establish direct and personalized communication with existing and prospective customers. Globally, it has evolved from basic promotional content to dynamic, data-driven engagement that leverages customer profiles, booking history, and behavioral analytics (Chi, 2021; Tsiotsou, 2022). This evolution allows hotels to foster loyalty, drive repeat bookings, and maintain top-of-mind brand awareness among consumers.

Empirical studies across developed markets affirm the efficacy of email marketing in enhancing customer engagement, retention, and ultimately financial performance. For

example, Yang et al. (2019) and Schaap (2021) demonstrated that personalization, achieved through targeted content based on guest preferences, significantly improves email open rates and customer return rates. Suleiman et al. (2023) add that integrating automation and behavioral targeting into email marketing strategies boosts conversion rates and maximizes customer lifetime value.

Furthermore, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are being increasingly incorporated into email marketing to refine segmentation, predict optimal sending times, and personalize subject lines and content in real-time. These innovations not only enhance user experience but also provide hotels with scalable tools to drive customer-centric campaigns (Zia & Khan, 2023). In a similar vein, Kotut and Ng'etich (2023) argue that AI-enhanced email systems help hospitality firms make data-informed decisions, particularly in dynamic pricing and upselling opportunities, further linking email strategies to bottom-line performance.

However, the bulk of existing research tends to overemphasize email marketing's role in generating financial returns such as RevPAR or ADR, with relatively limited exploration into its contribution to non-financial performance indicators like customer satisfaction, purchase behavior, and loyalty. According to Lyu and Wang (2023), such non-financial metrics have become equally critical in highly competitive markets, where customer relationships and emotional connections shape long-term brand equity.

In the African context, and specifically in Kenya, empirical research directly assessing email marketing's impact on hotel performance remains sparse. Most available studies address digital marketing holistically rather than disaggregating by platform. Nevertheless,

broader digital innovation studies provide context. For instance, Gioko et al. (2021) revealed that the adoption of digital technologies, including email systems, had a positive effect on customer satisfaction and operational efficiency in three- to five-star hotels in Nairobi. Similarly, Wairimu and Wanjiru (2023) noted that personalized digital communication led to stronger customer-brand relationships, which translated into increased guest retention and brand loyalty.

This study responded to the identified gap by disaggregating email marketing into three core constructs, namely personalization, automation, and customer segmentation, to evaluate their specific influence on customer purchase behavior, one of the non-financial indicators of hotel performance. This approach is grounded in the recognition that in regions like Mombasa, where digital maturity varies across hotel categories, platform-specific strategies must be examined independently to derive actionable insights.

2.3.2 Social Media Marketing and Hotel Performance

Social media has revolutionized how businesses communicate with customers, creating an interactive, real-time, and highly personalized engagement ecosystem. In the hospitality industry, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), TikTok, and YouTube play a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions, influencing booking decisions, and strengthening brand loyalty (Talwar et al., 2020; Wang & Kim, 2022). These platforms enable hotels to humanize their brands, distribute rich media content, respond promptly to customer inquiries, and implement targeted promotions that reach diverse market segments.

Globally, social media marketing (SMM) has demonstrated its capacity to impact both financial and non-financial performance outcomes in the hotel sector. Tuten and Solomon (2021) argue that customer engagement on social media correlates positively with trust, brand equity, and intention to book. Appel et al. (2020) further highlight how social media fosters the development of brand communities, which are instrumental in strengthening customer loyalty and generating organic reach through user-generated content. However, they caution that content virality is unpredictable and that algorithmic shifts on platforms like Facebook and Instagram can suppress visibility unless brands continuously adapt their content strategy and posting frequency.

Moreover, platform-specific behavior and cultural nuances significantly influence campaign outcomes. For instance, Wang and Kim (2022) found that visual-centric platforms like Instagram are more effective in promoting premium or boutique hotel experiences, while Facebook is more suitable for community engagement and customer service. In contrast, YouTube excels in long-form storytelling and destination marketing. These distinctions suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach to SMM is suboptimal, particularly in diverse markets.

In developing economies, including Sub-Saharan Africa, the digital landscape poses unique challenges and opportunities. Limited connectivity, lower smartphone penetration in rural areas, and platform preferences based on demographic variables influence how hotels deploy social media marketing (Nyandoro et al., 2022). Furthermore, studies show that localized content, such as the use of local dialects, references to indigenous culture, or

region-specific promotions, tends to generate higher engagement rates (Mutuku & Muriuki, 2021).

Within the Kenyan hospitality context, empirical evidence indicates that social media is a critical driver of non-financial performance metrics such as customer satisfaction, brand awareness, and repeat patronage. Achieng (2021) established that in classified hotels in Mombasa County, strategic use of social media improved customer loyalty by fostering consistent communication, transparency, and trust. Similarly, Maina and Gichunge (2023) observed that social media enabled real-time customer feedback mechanisms, which hotels used to tailor services, resolve complaints promptly, and strengthen relational marketing efforts.

This study builds on the above findings by interrogating the specific constructs of marketing intelligence and idea diffusion in social media platforms and their influence on consumer trust and repeat purchase behavior, two key indicators of hotel performance. By emphasizing localized strategies and platform-specific engagement patterns, the research aims to provide granular insights that inform evidence-based digital marketing strategies among Kenyan star-rated hotels.

2.3.3 Online Travel Agencies and Hotel Performance

Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) have transformed hotel distribution models by digitizing how room inventories are marketed, priced, and sold to both local and international consumers. Globally, OTAs such as Booking.com, Expedia, Agoda, and Airbnb serve as pivotal intermediaries that provide wide market exposure, real-time availability, price comparison features, and customer reviews that influence purchase behavior (Law et al.,

2020; Zhang et al., 2022). For hotels, OTAs offer access to vast digital audiences and advanced analytics but often at the cost of commission fees and reduced control over brand messaging and customer relationships.

The influence of OTAs on hotel performance extends beyond occupancy rates to include customer acquisition, brand visibility, and even pricing strategies. Lakha and Vaid (2020) found that while OTAs enhance booking volumes and expand geographic reach, their use may compromise direct customer relationships and service personalization, which are vital for brand differentiation and long-term loyalty. Similarly, Berné et al. (2021) noted that overdependence on OTAs can lead to "platform dependency," where hotels become constrained by dynamic pricing algorithms and visibility rankings beyond their control.

User-centered design and digital interface quality are also increasingly critical to OTA performance. Zhang et al. (2022) observed that intuitive, mobile-friendly OTAs improve user satisfaction and decrease cart abandonment, especially among younger travelers who value speed and convenience. Factors such as secure payment systems, real-time confirmation, filter functionality, and interactive maps contribute to a frictionless booking experience. OTAs with strong UX/UI design are more likely to convert lookers into bookers and build trust, especially in a context where first impressions often occur online (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014).

The role of online reviews and peer-generated content is also foundational. Zhang et al. (2022) emphasize that customer-generated reviews, especially detailed narratives and star ratings, are key determinants of perceived hotel quality. This form of digital word-of-

mouth significantly influences booking intentions, particularly in competitive urban markets.

However, much of the academic literature focuses on Western or East Asian markets, with minimal contextualization for the Sub-Saharan African tourism landscape. In these regions, disparities in internet access, digital literacy, and consumer trust in online transactions pose unique barriers to effective OTA adoption (Wanjiru & Karimi, 2022; Nyandoro et al., 2022). For instance, in markets like Kenya, consumers often prefer hybrid booking pathways, starting with OTAs for research but completing the transaction via direct calls or walk-ins due to trust concerns or lack of mobile payment interoperability (Kinyanjui & Mwangi, 2023).

Locally, although Kenya-specific OTA research remains underdeveloped, existing studies on digital marketing in hotels provide insights into OTA-related performance impacts. Maina and Murigi (2021) observed that Nairobi's five-star hotels that strategically integrated OTAs with other digital tools, such as CRM systems, responsive websites, and loyalty programs, experienced stronger customer satisfaction and enhanced brand equity. A similar observation was made by Kipruto and Mutisya (2023), who found that hotels that actively monitor and respond to OTA reviews tend to have higher occupancy and repeat business compared to those that do not.

This study responds to the evident gap by specifically examining OTA usability, trust mechanisms, and their influence on occupancy rates and customer retention among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County. It considers how OTA interface quality, review management, and integration with existing ICT infrastructure moderate these outcomes,

thereby contributing context-specific knowledge to the discourse on digital intermediation in hospitality.

2.3.4 Website Optimization and Hotel Performance

Website optimization is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of digital competitiveness and operational efficiency within the hospitality industry. An optimized website is not merely a digital storefront, it is a dynamic, interactive tool that supports brand storytelling, facilitates direct bookings, and fosters consumer trust (Han et al., 2023; Pervez et al., 2018). Globally, research has emphasized the pivotal role of website features such as search engine optimization (SEO), mobile responsiveness, intuitive navigation, and user-generated content integration in enhancing customer experience and purchase behavior (Rahman et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023). These features are known to directly influence key digital performance indicators like bounce rates, time-on-site, and ultimately, conversion rates.

From a user-centered design (UCD) perspective, website optimization is no longer just about aesthetics or technical speed, it involves designing web experiences based on an in-depth understanding of user behavior, goals, and preferences (Zhang et al., 2022; Musambira et al., 2024). When hotels prioritize usability, mobile-friendliness, fast-loading pages, and localized content (e.g., languages, maps, and cultural tips), they create environments that encourage longer engagements, repeat visits, and higher booking probabilities (Han et al., 2023). For example, hotels that integrate live chat support, secure payment gateways, and personalized offers based on browsing behavior report

significantly higher customer satisfaction and perceived service quality (Suleiman et al., 2023).

Moreover, evidence from global hospitality markets confirms that well-optimized websites enhance non-financial performance metrics, including brand equity, perceived value, and customer loyalty. Zhang et al. (2022) assert that streamlined booking interfaces reduce cognitive effort and abandonment rates, thereby elevating guest confidence and trust. Similarly, Rahman et al. (2020) demonstrate that hotels that provide accessible and localized information, such as transportation tips and local attractions, cultivate deeper customer relationships and higher likelihoods of referral.

However, a considerable portion of existing empirical literature still centers on developed markets, such as Europe, North America, and parts of Asia, with insufficient attention to contextual challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa. In African contexts, infrastructural limitations, constrained budgets, and limited digital literacy among operators affect how website optimization is implemented and scaled (Munyua & Karanja, 2022; Okeke et al., 2023).

In the Kenyan hotel industry, particularly in regions like Mombasa County where tourism is a significant economic driver, website optimization remains underutilized despite its high potential for impact. Gioko et al. (2021) emphasize that improved website functionality and responsiveness are critical components of broader digital transformation strategies in three- to five-star hotels. Their findings show that websites with effective content alignment, booking simplicity, and visual storytelling significantly improve guest satisfaction, trust, and repeat booking behavior.

Furthermore, Muriuki and Kimani (2023) underscore that in Kenya's coastal hospitality segment, the absence of optimized websites often leads to reliance on intermediaries such as OTAs, which increases marketing costs and limits direct customer engagement. Investments in strategic digital assets, including responsive, SEO-optimized, and mobile-compatible websites, offer not only cost efficiencies but also autonomy over branding and customer relationships.

This study, therefore, sought to interrogate the effectiveness of website optimization in improving customer purchase behavior, conversion rates, and perceived value in Mombasa's star-rated hotels. The operational constructs evaluated include usability (navigation, responsiveness), content relevance (imagery, localized content), and technical performance (speed, integration capabilities).

2.3.5 ICT Infrastructure as a Moderator

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure is increasingly recognized as a foundational enabler of digital transformation across service-oriented industries, particularly in hospitality. From the perspective of the Resource-Based View (RBV), ICT infrastructure constitutes a strategic asset that enhances a hotel's capability to deploy digital marketing platforms effectively, translating them into competitive advantage and improved performance outcomes (Barney, 1991; Sharma et al., 2020). Concurrently, in the context of hotels, robust ICT infrastructure enables seamless integration of marketing technologies, real-time service delivery, and enhanced customer engagement.

Globally, Adeola and Evans (2019) demonstrated that IT capabilities play a pivotal role in mediating the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in African

hotels. Their findings underscore the strategic importance of ICT in service innovation, especially in developing regions. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2022) observed that ICT infrastructure is indispensable in supporting agile marketing strategies through data analytics, platform interoperability, and content personalization.

Despite this recognized potential, infrastructure-related limitations, such as high costs, intermittent connectivity, and regulatory inconsistencies, continue to challenge digital transformation in Sub-Saharan Africa. Okeke et al. (2023) found that the absence of cohesive digital infrastructure hampers the scalability and impact of digital marketing efforts. These barriers often restrict hotels from leveraging advanced functionalities of email marketing, website optimization, social media platforms, and Online Travel Agencies (OTAs), thereby weakening their influence on performance indicators like customer retention, brand equity, and booking conversion rates.

While existing literature predominantly treats ICT as an enabler or mediating factor, its role as a moderating variable has received limited empirical attention. This study sought to fill that gap by testing whether ICT infrastructure, operationalized through access, cost, and regulatory environment, modifies the strength and direction of the relationship between digital marketing platform usage and hotel performance. By focusing on star-rated hotels in Mombasa County, the study contextualized the moderating role of ICT infrastructure within Kenya's unique technological and regulatory landscape. In doing so, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how ICT readiness amplifies or constrains the effectiveness of digital marketing investments in emerging hospitality markets.

2.4 Summary of Research Gaps

The following table (Table 2.1) summarizes the key research gaps identified in the literature, highlighting areas where further exploration is needed to deepen understanding and contribute to the field.

Table 2. 1: Summary of Research Gaps

Thematic Area	Key Sources Reviewed	Findings	Research Gap	This Study Addresses
Hotel Performance	Morgan et al. (2023); STR Global (2024); Wadongo et al. (2010)	Highlight financial performance and operational KPIs; call for integrating non-financial metrics in dynamic markets	Local studies lack emphasis on performance measures such as guest loyalty, repeat behavior, and satisfaction	Adopts non-financial performance indicators including occupancy, ADR, repeat purchases, and buyer behavior
Email Marketing	Yang et al. (2019); Gioko et al. (2021); Suleiman et al. (2023);	Shows personalized email marketing enhances engagement, trust, and conversion;	Limited empirical linkage between email personalization and measurable loyalty in the	Measures the effect of targeted email campaigns on guest satisfaction and repeat purchase

Thematic Area	Key Sources Reviewed	Findings	Research Gap	This Study Addresses
	Shafiee et al. (2022)	content timing and relevance are critical	Kenyan hospitality sector	behavior in Mombasa
Social Media Marketing	Appel et al. (2020); Achieng (2021); Wang & Kim (2022); Odoom et al. (2023); Mugambi & Kariuki (2021)	Social platforms foster engagement, brand communities, and loyalty; platform-specific usage (e.g., Instagram vs. Facebook) varies in impact	Kenyan studies rarely isolate platform-specific effects or link them to hotel performance outcomes	Disaggregates the effects of Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter use on brand loyalty and customer retention
Online Travel Agencies	Zhang et al. (2022); Maina & Murigi (2021); Lakha &	OTAs expand visibility and booking rates; interface quality and review credibility strongly	Insufficient local research on usability and customer trust in OTA platforms	Analyzes how OTA interface quality and user-generated content impact trust and

Thematic Area	Key Sources Reviewed	Findings	Research Gap	This Study Addresses
	Vaid (2020); Muthini (2020)	influence purchase decisions		occupancy rates in Mombasa hotels
Website Optimization	Pervez et al. (2018); Han et al. (2023); Rahman et al. (2020); Gioko et al. (2021); Gikonyo et al. (2022)	Optimized websites drive direct bookings through SEO, mobile responsiveness, speed, and relevance; visual quality boosts conversion	Underexamined in Sub-Saharan and Kenyan hotel sectors	Investigates usability, loading speed, content alignment, and SEO on conversion rates in Mombasa's hotel websites
ICT Infrastructure	Adeola & Evans (2019); Okeke et al. (2023); Kossaibati et al. (2023); Sharma et al.	ICT infrastructure enables efficient digital tool use; gaps in connectivity, cost, and regulation hinder ROI from digital investments	Often omitted as a moderating variable in digital marketing-performance models	Statistically models the moderating effect of ICT readiness on the link between digital platforms and performance

Thematic Area	Key Sources Reviewed	Findings	Research Gap	This Study Addresses
	(2020); Gichuru et al. (2023)			

Source: Researcher Compilation (2023)

2.5 Conclusion of the Literature Review

This chapter has synthesized current theoretical and empirical insights into the relationship between digital marketing platforms and hotel performance, with a particular emphasis on non-financial performance indicators. Drawing upon both global literature and context-specific studies from Kenya, the review has established a nuanced understanding of how personalization, social engagement, technological readiness, and user experience collectively shape customer-centric outcomes in the hospitality industry.

The reviewed studies underscore the pivotal role of digital marketing strategies, such as social media engagement, email marketing, online travel agency (OTA) utilization, and website enhancement, in enhancing repeat purchase, customer purchase behavior, daily average rate, and occupancy rate. These dimensions, while often non-financial in nature, are essential for sustaining competitive advantage and fostering long-term organizational success in an increasingly digitalized market environment.

In the Kenyan context, particularly within the county of Mombasa, the integration of digital marketing tools has demonstrated significant potential to improve service delivery and

customer experience. Strategies including targeted email marketing, responsive and optimized websites, and active presence on social platforms and OTAs have emerged as key drivers of value creation.

Importantly, the literature also reveals critical research gaps, particularly regarding the moderating role of ICT infrastructure and the contextualization of global findings to Sub-Saharan Africa. These gaps inform the development of the study's conceptual framework and guide the methodological approach detailed in the following chapter. Overall, the convergence of global perspectives with localized insights provides a robust foundation for evaluating the strategic impact of digital marketing platforms on hotel performance in the Kenyan hospitality sector.

This alignment of digital marketing capabilities with supportive ICT infrastructure is particularly relevant to star rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, where technological investments may moderate the effectiveness of digital strategies on performance outcomes.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology employed to investigate the efficacy of digital marketing platforms in enhancing the performance of star-rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya, considering the moderating role of ICT infrastructure. It presents a systematic description of the research design, target population, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, and data analysis procedures adopted in the study.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted an explanatory research design to investigate the moderating effect of ICT infrastructure on the relationship between digital marketing platforms and hotel performance in the county of Mombasa, Kenya. The explanatory design is appropriate for studies that aim to examine causal relationships among variables and test the influence of one variable on another (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this case, the study sought to determine how various digital marketing platforms, namely email marketing, social media marketing, online travel agencies (OTAs), and website optimization, affect non-financial hotel performance metrics (repeat purchase, customer purchase behavior, daily average rate, and occupancy rate), and how ICT infrastructure moderated these relationships.

A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing structured questionnaires to collect numerical data from respondents across selected star-rated hotels in Mombasa. The design facilitated the testing of hypothesized relationships through statistical techniques, including multiple regression and moderation analysis. This approach enabled the researcher to

objectively measure the strength and direction of relationships between variables and to generalize the findings to the broader hotel sector within the county. The cross-sectional nature of the study allowed for data collection at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of how digital marketing platforms and ICT infrastructure interact to influence performance outcomes in the hospitality sector.

3.3 Measurement of Variables

The study examined five core constructs. The independent variables included email marketing, social media marketing, online travel agencies (OTAs), and website optimization. ICT infrastructure was treated as a moderating variable, while hotel performance served as the dependent variable. Each variable was operationalized using established dimensions drawn from existing literature and measured using structured questionnaire items based on a five-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods, particularly to test relationships and moderation effects. Table 3.1 summarizes the operationalization of each variable, corresponding dimensions, analysis techniques, and the type of data collected.

Table 3. 1: Measurement of Study Variables

Variable	Dimensions	Analysis Techniques	Data Type
Email Marketing	- Promotional emails	Descriptive	& Ordinal
	- Retention emails	Inferential	
	- Newsletters		
Social Media Marketing	- Marketing intelligence	Descriptive	& Ordinal
	- Idea propagation	Inferential	
	- Platform interaction		
Online Travel Agencies	- Customer segmentation	Descriptive	& Ordinal
	- Platform integrity	Inferential	
	- User-friendliness		
Website Optimization	- Page loading speed	Descriptive	& Ordinal
	- Content creation	Inferential	
	- Keyword search		
ICT Infrastructure	- Accessibility	Descriptive	& Ordinal
	- Cost	Inferential	
	- Regulatory environment		
Hotel Performance	- Repeat purchase	Descriptive	& Ordinal
	- Customer purchase behavior	Inferential	
	- Daily average rate (ADR)		
	- Occupancy rate		

Source: Researcher (2023)

3.4 Location of the Study

This study was conducted in the county of Mombasa (Appendix G), a prominent coastal region in Kenya known for its rich cultural heritage, pristine beaches, and a concentration of high-rated hotels that significantly contribute to both local and national economies. Mombasa's strategic importance in Kenya's tourism sector is underscored by its status as a leading tourist destination, attracting a substantial number of both domestic and international visitors annually (Tourism Research Institute [TRI], 2024).

The selection of the county of Mombasa as the study location was informed by several factors. Firstly, the county's vibrant tourism industry provides a dynamic environment to examine the effectiveness of digital marketing platforms on hotel performance. The Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife has recognized Mombasa's pivotal role in the country's tourism landscape, noting its substantial contribution to tourism revenues and employment (Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, 2024).

Secondly, Mombasa's diverse tourism offerings, including historical sites, marine parks, and cultural festivals, make it an ideal setting to explore the interplay between digital marketing strategies and hotel performance. The county's commitment to enhancing its tourism infrastructure and adopting innovative marketing approaches further justifies its selection for this study (TRI, 2024).

By focusing on the county of Mombasa, this research aimed to provide insights that can inform the development of effective digital marketing strategies tailored to the unique characteristics of Kenya's coastal tourism sector.

3.5 Target Population

The study focused on star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya. While a 2021 survey conducted by the Central Bank of Kenya identified approximately 410 hospitality establishments in the county, including hotels, resorts, and conference venues, the study specifically narrowed its scope to star-rated hotels, as classified by the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA). According to TRA records from 2020, 18 classified hotels (Appendix F) were operating within the county at that time. These establishments formed the basis for the study's target population.

As such, the study targeted a total of 90 employees (Appendix H). The unit of analysis was the individual marketing employee, allowing for an in-depth evaluation of digital marketing practices and their perceived impact on the performance of star-rated hotels within Mombasa's dynamic hospitality sector.

3.5.1 Exclusion Criteria

This study excluded individuals who were not part of the marketing departments of the 18 star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, as classified by the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA) in 2020. Specifically, personnel from other departments, such as housekeeping, food and beverage, or front office, were not considered for inclusion. Additionally, employees from hotels not officially classified by the TRA in 2020 were excluded to maintain consistency in the study's focus on standardized hotel classifications.

The exclusion criteria were designed to ensure that the data collected were directly relevant to the research objectives, which centered on the impact of digital marketing strategies within the marketing departments of officially recognized star-rated hotels. By narrowing

the scope to this specific group, the study aimed to enhance the validity and reliability of its findings.

3.5.2 Inclusion Criteria

The study included marketing department staff employed in the 18 star-rated hotels located in the county of Mombasa, as officially documented by the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA) in 2020. These establishments were selected based on their classification status, ensuring a standardized level of service and operational procedures across the sample (Tourism Regulatory Authority, 2020).

The inclusion criteria encompassed individuals holding positions such as General Managers, Marketing Managers, and other marketing staff within the identified hotels. This approach was influenced by the consistent organizational structure observed during a preliminary reconnaissance survey, which revealed that each hotel typically had two managers (General and Marketing Managers) and three marketing staff members. This staffing pattern informed the decision to select five respondents per hotel, aligning with methodologies employed in similar studies (Chen et al., 2022; Leninkumar, 2017).

By focusing on marketing personnel within officially classified star-rated hotels, the study aimed to gather relevant and coherent data pertinent to the research objectives, particularly concerning the impact of digital marketing strategies on hotel performance.

3.6 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The study adopted a cluster sampling approach to manage the large and diverse population of hotels in the county of Mombasa, which comprises approximately 410 establishments (Central Bank of Kenya, 2021). The population was first clustered into two groups: star-

rated and non–star-rated hotels. These clusters were based on the classification provided by the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA).

From these clusters, the study purposively selected the star-rated hotel cluster as the focus of inquiry. Star-rated hotels were chosen due to their structured management systems, formal marketing departments, and strategic positioning within the hospitality sector. This allowed for a more meaningful analysis of digital marketing practices within establishments where such systems are expected to be formalized and active.

Given the manageable number of only 18 star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, the study applied a census approach within this cluster, including all 18 hotels listed by the TRA. This strategy was adopted to enhance representativeness and minimize sampling error, aligning with guidance from Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) for studies involving small populations.

Within each hotel, a purposive sampling technique was used to select five key respondents (Appendix H) who were directly involved in the planning, execution, or oversight of digital marketing activities. These roles typically included general managers, marketing managers, digital marketing officers, and marketing staff, positions responsible for shaping and implementing digital engagement strategies.

This approach was consistent with Bryman (2016), who emphasized the value of purposive sampling in selecting “information-rich cases” with direct relevance to the research objectives. By targeting staff with hands-on experience in digital marketing platform usage, the study ensured that the data collected were reliable, relevant, and insightful. Accordingly, the final sample size was: 90 (18 hotels × 5 respondents per hotel).

3.7 Research Instruments

This study employed a structured questionnaire (Appendix B), developed by the researcher, as the primary research instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was specifically crafted to capture respondents' knowledge, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors regarding the utilization of digital marketing platforms and their effect on hotel performance. Each item was purposefully aligned with the study's objectives and research hypotheses to ensure comprehensive coverage of the constructs under investigation and to promote content validity.

The use of a questionnaire was selected for its practicality, efficiency, and ability to collect large volumes of standardized data from a geographically distributed population within a relatively short timeframe. Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) underscore that questionnaires are particularly suitable for quantitative research involving descriptive and correlational designs, as they allow for consistency in responses and facilitate statistical analysis.

The questionnaire was structured into thematic sections based on the study's independent variables (email marketing, social media marketing, online travel agencies, and website optimization), alongside the moderating variable (ICT infrastructure) and the dependent variable (hotel performance). Likert-type scales were incorporated to measure respondent attitudes and perceptions on an ordinal scale, enabling both descriptive and inferential analysis.

To ensure clarity and effectiveness, the researcher subjected the self-developed questionnaire to expert review and a pilot test conducted on a subset of respondents who were not part of the final sample. The feedback obtained from these preliminary

evaluations led to refinements in question wording, structure, and relevance. The validated instrument provided a robust and structured means of capturing data from marketing personnel across all 18 star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, generating rich empirical insights in alignment with the study's conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

3.8 Reliability and Validity Tests

To ensure that the research instrument measured the intended constructs with accuracy and consistency, both reliability and validity tests were conducted. These tests were essential for confirming the credibility of the questionnaire and the robustness of the data collected.

3.8.1 Reliability Test

Reliability refers to the consistency of a measurement instrument. In this study, internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for each of the key constructs: email marketing, social media marketing, online travel agencies, website optimization, and hotel performance.

Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70, as recommended by Nunnally (1978), indicating a high level of reliability. Specifically, email marketing had a reliability coefficient of 0.945, social media marketing 0.883, online travel agencies 0.884, and website optimization 0.750, and hotel performance 0.916. These results demonstrated that the measurement items within each construct were internally consistent and reliable for data analysis.

Table 3. 2: Reliability Test Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Email Marketing	0.945	Reliable
Social Media Marketing	0.883	Reliable
Online Travel Agencies	0.884	Reliable
Website Optimization	0.750	Reliable
Hotel Performance	0.916	Reliable

Source: Pilot Data (2023)

3.8.2 Validity Tests

Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure. To assess construct validity, the study employed exploratory factor analysis (EFA), supported by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The KMO statistic was 0.843, which is well above the acceptable threshold of 0.50, suggesting that the sample was adequate for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity returned a chi-square value of 410.131 with a significance level (p-value) of 0.000, indicating that the correlations between items were sufficiently large for EFA.

Additionally, content validity was reinforced through expert review. The instrument was examined by academic supervisors and experienced researchers, who assessed each item for relevance, clarity, and alignment with the research objectives. Their feedback informed the revision of several questionnaire items during the pilot testing phase.

Table 3. 3: Validity Test Results

Test	Result
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.843
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	$\chi^2 = 410.131$
Degrees of Freedom (df)	10
Significance (p-value)	0.000

Source: Pilot Data (2023)

Based on these findings, the instrument was deemed both valid and reliable for data collection and subsequent statistical analysis.

3.9 Data Collection Techniques

The data collection process followed a structured and systematic sequence to ensure accuracy, consistency, and ethical compliance. The researcher began by developing a structured questionnaire grounded in the study’s conceptual framework and research objectives. Items were carefully formulated to align with the variables under investigation—email marketing, social media marketing, online travel agencies, website optimization, ICT infrastructure, and hotel performance.

Prior to full deployment, a pilot study was conducted in randomly selected star rated hotels located in nearby Kilifi County. These hotels were chosen as they offered a similar operational context while being outside the main study area, thereby reducing the risk of contamination or bias. The pilot helped to evaluate the clarity, coherence, and relevance of questionnaire items. Based on feedback received, modifications were made to enhance the instrument’s precision and comprehensibility.

Once finalized, the questionnaire was administered to respondents through a direct, face-to-face distribution process at the participating hotels. Respondents were guided through the instructions, and questions were clarified when needed to ensure data accuracy. Completed responses were reviewed for completeness and consistency before being entered into a secure database.

The collected data were subsequently coded and organized for analysis using statistical software (SPSS Version 26). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, while inferential techniques such as correlation and multiple regression were employed to test hypotheses and examine relationships among variables.

Throughout the entire data collection process, strict adherence to ethical standards was maintained. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. The integrity of participants' responses was preserved by ensuring voluntary participation and secure handling of data in compliance with institutional and regulatory requirements.

3.10 Data Processing, Analysis and Presentation

The data collected through the questionnaire underwent a rigorous preparation process prior to analysis. This included screening for completeness, consistency, and accuracy to eliminate any redundant or incomplete entries. Cleaned data were subsequently coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26 for analysis.

The study employed a two-tiered statistical approach: descriptive and inferential. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations,

were used to summarize the characteristics of the data and provide an overview of respondent classification and responses to the main study constructs (Kwon et al., 2021).

Inferential statistics were then used to examine the relationships and test hypotheses derived from the conceptual framework. These included Pearson correlation analysis, multiple linear regression, analysis of variables (ANOVA) and moderation analysis. Specifically, correlation analysis was applied to identify the strength and direction of relationships between independent and dependent variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the combined and individual effects of the independent variables on hotel performance.

To test the moderating effect of ICT infrastructure on the relationship between digital marketing platforms and hotel performance, a hierarchical regression approach was used. This involved three stages: first, entering the independent variables into the model; second, adding the moderator (ICT infrastructure); and third, including the interaction term (digital marketing platforms \times ICT infrastructure). The statistical significance of the interaction term was assessed to confirm the presence and strength of moderation, as recommended by Hapsoro et al. (2022).

The analysis results were presented in the form of tables and figures to ensure clarity, ease of interpretation, and alignment with the study objectives.

3.10.1 Diagnostic Tests

Before conducting regression analysis, the dataset was subjected to diagnostic tests to ensure its suitability for linear modeling, as recommended by Field (2018) and Gujarati and Porter (2020):

- i. **Normality Test:** Conducted using Shapiro-Wilk tests and histogram plots to ensure that the residuals were normally distributed, which is critical for valid hypothesis testing.
- ii. **Multicollinearity:** Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was used to check for multicollinearity among the independent variables, ensuring that predictor variables were not highly correlated with one another.
- iii. **Autocorrelation:** The Durbin-Watson statistic was used to confirm the independence of residuals, as autocorrelation can distort regression coefficients.
- iv. **Heteroskedasticity:** Residual scatterplots were analyzed to ensure homoscedasticity, i.e., equal variance of errors across all levels of independent variables.

These diagnostic tests enhanced the reliability and robustness of the regression analysis.

3.10.2 Regression Analysis

To examine the relationship between the independent variables (digital marketing platforms) and the dependent variable (hotel performance), the study adopted a multiple linear regression model. This design is consistent with the study's objective of testing hypothesized associations among variables (Bryman, 2016; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26. The standard regression model was:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y = Hotel Performance, α = Constant (intercept), β_1 to β_4 = Regression coefficients

X_1 = Email Marketing, X_2 = Social Media Marketing, X_3 = Online Travel Agencies

X_4 = Website Optimization, ϵ = Error term

This model quantified the individual and combined influence of digital marketing platforms on hotel performance.

3.10.3 Moderation Analysis

To evaluate the moderating effect of ICT infrastructure on the relationship between digital marketing platforms and hotel performance, a moderated multiple regression model was employed. This approach is recommended when testing for interaction effects between predictor and moderating variables (Aiken & West, 1991; Hayes, 2018).

The moderation model was:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X + \beta_2 Z + \beta_3 (X \times Z) + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y = Hotel Performance, **X** = Composite index of Digital Marketing Platforms

Z = ICT Infrastructure, **X × Z** = Interaction Term, **β₁ to β₃** = Coefficients

α = Constant, **ε** = Error term

The significance of the interaction term (**X × Z**) was used to determine whether ICT infrastructure moderated the relationship between digital marketing and performance.

This analysis was anchored in the Resource-Based View (RBV), which holds that ICT capabilities enhance the value and utility of marketing resources (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). ICT infrastructure allows for better integration, automation, and personalization of digital campaigns, thus amplifying the performance outcomes of digital platforms.

3.11 Logistical and Ethical Considerations

3.11.1 Logistical Considerations

The study was conducted following proper institutional and national procedures to ensure legitimacy and smooth implementation. Approval to conduct the research was obtained from the university's ethics review committee and the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). These approvals were essential for aligning the research with institutional and national protocols and for authorizing access to participants and data sources (Appendix C, D, and E).

Logistical arrangements included selecting a sample of star-rated hotels within Mombasa County, reaching out to management, and coordinating with digital marketing personnel for questionnaire administration. Data collection took place between October 2022 and November 2023, and targeted marketing departments that were actively using digital platforms. Given the digital nature of the study, particular attention was paid to securing online responses and storage systems, minimizing disruption to hotel operations and maximizing the integrity of the data collection process.

3.11.2 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the highest standards of ethical research conduct, ensuring all processes involving human subjects were handled with integrity, transparency, and accountability. Ethical approval from relevant authorities (Appendix C, D, and E) ensured that the research complied with national and institutional standards for protecting participants' rights and welfare.

Principles of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed (Appendix A). Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any stage, and how their data would be protected. No personally identifying information was collected, and all data were anonymized to prevent tracing responses to individuals or specific hotels.

Community-level ethical concerns were also addressed, especially due to the study's focus on digital engagement in the hospitality sector. Informed consent was obtained not only from individual respondents but also from hotel management. Participants were briefed on how their responses would be used to contribute to improving digital marketing practices and service delivery in Mombasa's tourism industry.

Special attention was given to ethical concerns related to digital research. Secure data handling practices were implemented to prevent unauthorized access or misuse of information. These precautions reflect ethical best practices for digital research, particularly when dealing with sensitive personal and business data (Van der Merwe, 2003; Resnik, 2020).

Finally, the dissemination strategy prioritized collective insights over individual-level data. Results were presented in a way that protected participant anonymity and respected the dignity of all stakeholders, aiming to support the enhancement of digital marketing strategies in a respectful and constructive manner.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings derived from the data collected through structured questionnaires administered to marketing staff in star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa. The results are organized in alignment with the study's objectives and hypotheses. Both descriptive and inferential statistics are used to analyze the data, while interpretations link findings to the theoretical framework, specifically the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Commitment-Trust Theory (CTT).

4.2 Response Rate

The study targeted 90 respondents drawn from the marketing departments of 18 star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa. Out of the 90 questionnaires distributed, 87 were returned duly completed, yielding a response rate of 96.7%. Only 3 questionnaires were not returned, accounting for 3.3% non-response. According to Fosnacht et al. (2017), a response rate above 50% is considered excellent in organizational and social science research. Therefore, the achieved response rate was highly satisfactory and ensured data reliability and representativeness.

The distribution of responses by hotel classification is shown in Table 4.1. The majority of responses came from 3-star (41.6%) and 4-star (28.7%) hotels, followed by 2-star (23.0%) and 5-star hotels (5.7%). This spread reflects the actual concentration of star-rated hotels in the county and ensures that findings are representative across different hotel categories.

Table 4. 1: Responses per Star Rated Hotel Category

Classification and Star Rating	Frequency	Percent
2 Star (**)	20	23.0%
3 Star (***)	37	41.6%
4 Star (****)	25	28.7%
5 Star (*****)	5	5.7%
Total	87	100%

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.3 Objective I: To Evaluate the Impact of Email Marketing on the Performance of Star Rated Hotels in the County of Mombasa, Kenya

4.3.1 Descriptive Statistics for Email Marketing

To assess the role of email marketing in enhancing hotel performance, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with several statements relating to email marketing practices on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to summarize responses, as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4. 2: Descriptive Statistics for Email Marketing

Email Marketing Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
The hotel sends personalized advertisements to customers via email	4.86	0.379
The hotel responds to queries posed by customers via email	4.85	0.390
Email marketing is done regularly to customers and potential customers	4.80	0.525
The hotel sends email newsletters to customers	4.77	0.642

Source: Research Data (2024)

The results demonstrate strong agreement across all four indicators of email marketing, with mean scores ranging from 4.77 to 4.86. These findings indicate that star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa actively engage in personalized and responsive email marketing practices. The low standard deviations, ranging from 0.379 to 0.642, suggest minimal variation in responses, indicating consistency of these practices among hotels.

The highest-rated practice was “sending personalized advertisements,” which aligns with previous studies identifying personalization as a key driver of customer engagement, loyalty, and repeat patronage (Yang et al., 2019; Chi, 2021; Tsiotsou, 2022). Similarly, high agreement with query responsiveness supports findings by Suleiman et al. (2023) and Wairimu and Wanjiru (2023), who argue that prompt and personalized responses foster trust, enhance service satisfaction, and strengthen customer-brand relationships. The

consistently high ratings across all indicators also reflect Kotut and Ng'etich's (2023) observation that hotels leveraging automation and data analytics for email campaigns experience higher relevance, efficiency, and performance outcomes.

4.3.2 Hypothesis Testing: H₀₁: Email marketing has no significant effect on the performance of star rated hotels in the County of Mombasa, Kenya.

To test this hypothesis, multiple regression analysis was conducted. The results indicate a statistically significant positive relationship between email marketing and hotel performance ($B = 0.150$, $t = 3.179$, $p = 0.002$), as shown in Table 4.14. Since the p-value is less than the threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) was rejected.

This finding suggests that email marketing significantly contributes to the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa. It supports the Resource-Based View (RBV), which posits that strategic internal capabilities such as targeted and personalized communication provide a sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 2001). The results are also consistent with the Commitment-Trust Theory, which holds that consistent, value-oriented, and trust-building communication leads to stronger customer relationships and improved organizational performance (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

In line with prior research, these findings affirm that email marketing is not merely a supplementary tool but a strategic driver of performance. Studies by Gioko et al. (2021), Wairimu and Wanjiru (2023) similarly highlight that personalized digital communication strategies contribute to operational efficiency, guest retention, and brand loyalty in Kenyan hotels. Internationally, Tsotsou (2022) and Zia and Khan (2023) report that AI-enhanced

personalization and behavioral targeting improve engagement rates and optimize conversion, thereby boosting both financial and non-financial performance indicators.

Furthermore, the emphasis on non-financial outcomes such as repeat purchases, customer purchase behavior, daily average rate, and occupancy rate aligns with Lyu and Wang's (2023) assertion that in competitive hospitality markets, customer satisfaction and emotional connection are equally vital as traditional financial metrics. This convergence of descriptive and inferential results underscores the strategic importance of sustaining and refining email marketing strategies to remain competitive in an increasingly digital hospitality environment.

4.4 Objective II: To Assess the Influence of Social Media Marketing on the Performance of Star Rated Hotels in the County of Mombasa, Kenya

4.4.1 Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Marketing

To evaluate the role of Social Media Marketing (SMM) in enhancing hotel performance, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with key statements reflecting social media practices in their hotels. Responses were collected on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Table 4.3 presents the descriptive statistics.

Table 4. 3: Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Marketing

Social Media Marketing Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
The hotel conducts promotions and campaigns via social media	4.83	0.651
The hotel timely responds to customer queries via social media	4.82	0.674
The hotel has attracted customers via social media	4.79	0.684
The hotel has active social media accounts for customer engagement	4.51	0.713

Source: Research Data (2024)

The findings indicate strong agreement across all indicators of social media marketing, with mean values ranging from 4.51 to 4.83. This suggests that hotel marketing personnel strongly support the implementation of social media strategies, particularly in conducting promotional campaigns and responding to customer queries. The moderate standard deviations (0.651–0.713) indicate consistency in perception, with slight variations likely linked to differences in platform use and target market focus.

These results reflect the global trend of hotels using social media to boost visibility, improve customer interaction, and attract clientele (Talwar et al., 2020; Wang & Kim, 2022). Prior studies show that prompt responsiveness and relevant promotional content enhance trust, brand affinity, and satisfaction, all of which contribute to non-financial performance (Tuten & Solomon, 2021; Achieng, 2021). In Kenya’s hospitality sector, social media engagement has been shown to strengthen loyalty by fostering consistent

communication and transparency (Maina & Gichunge, 2023). In addition to general SMM practices, respondents were also asked to evaluate the effectiveness of specific platforms used by their hotels. Table 4.31 presents the results.

Table 4.3 1: Social Media Marketing Platforms Used

Platform	Mean	Std. Deviation
YouTube	4.92	0.313
Twitter	4.49	0.680
Facebook	4.30	0.794
Instagram	3.37	1.431

Source: Research Data (2024)

YouTube recorded the highest mean ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 0.313$), indicating near-universal agreement on its effectiveness in promoting hotel services. Twitter ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.680$) and Facebook ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.794$) were also rated highly, while Instagram received the lowest rating ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.431$), suggesting mixed perceptions. This aligns with research showing that video-centric platforms like YouTube are particularly effective in hospitality storytelling and destination marketing (Gitonga et al., 2023; Appel et al., 2020). Twitter’s strength in real-time engagement (Gure & Karugu, 2020) and Facebook’s role in community building (Wang & Kim, 2022) remain evident.

The relatively low effectiveness rating for Instagram mirrors findings by Musa and Mwangi (2021) and Oywaya (2023), who noted that Instagram’s performance varies with the target audience and the hotel’s ability to produce high-quality visual content. Such

platform-specific patterns confirm that a one-size-fits-all social media strategy is suboptimal (Wang & Kim, 2022; Nyandoro et al., 2022). Hotels that align content with platform strengths and audience demographics are more likely to experience improved performance outcomes.

4.4.2 Hypothesis Testing: H₀₂: Social media marketing has no significant effect on the performance of star rated hotels in the County of Mombasa, Kenya.

Multiple regression analysis was performed to assess the relationship between SMM and hotel performance. The results revealed a statistically significant positive effect ($B = 0.450$, $t = 3.771$, $p < 0.001$), as shown in Table 4.14. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H₀₂) was rejected.

This confirms that social media marketing significantly influences hotel performance in Mombasa County. The results are consistent with the Commitment-Trust Theory, which posits that ongoing engagement through interactive platforms fosters trust and long-term customer relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). From the Resource-Based View (RBV), social media competencies are valuable intangible assets that can create sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 2001).

These findings are in line with global evidence that active engagement, personalized content, and community building through social media boost both financial and non-financial performance (Appel et al., 2020; Talwar et al., 2020; Tuten & Solomon, 2021). In the Kenyan context, studies by Achieng (2021) and Maina & Gichunge (2023) show that strategic use of social media improves customer retention, brand awareness, and repeat patronage. Furthermore, the preference for YouTube supports recent literature

emphasizing the dominance of video-driven storytelling in hospitality marketing (Gitonga et al., 2023; Mutuku & Muriuki, 2021).

Overall, the results validate that well-executed, platform-specific social media strategies directly contribute to hotel performance. They also highlight the need for hotels to adapt their digital marketing efforts to evolving platform trends and audience behaviors to sustain competitive advantage.

4.5 Objective III: To Determine the Impact of Online Travel Agencies on the Performance of Star Rated Hotels in the County of Mombasa, Kenya

4.5.1 Descriptive Statistics for Online Travel Agencies

To assess the impact of Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) on hotel performance, respondents were asked to rate their agreement with key statements regarding OTA practices, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Table 4.4 presents the descriptive results.

Table 4. 4: Descriptive Statistics for Online Travel Agencies

Online Travel Agencies Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customers are more willing to book trips with the online travel agencies	4.97	0.184
Online travel agencies segment their customers for stellar service	4.95	0.260
Online travel agencies have user-friendly sites for customers	4.95	0.211
Online travel agencies conduct their activities with high integrity	4.92	0.348

Source: Research Data (2024)

The results indicate an overwhelmingly positive perception of OTAs among hotel staff. The highest-rated item, “customers are more willing to book trips with online travel agencies,” achieved a mean score of 4.97 with minimal variance (SD = 0.184), reflecting near-unanimous agreement. Similarly, high agreement was recorded for customer segmentation (M = 4.95, SD = 0.260) and user-friendly design (M = 4.95, SD = 0.211), which affirms global findings that intuitive OTA interfaces enhance customer satisfaction and booking intentions (Zhang et al., 2022; Albattat, 2020). High operational integrity (M = 4.92, SD = 0.348) further supports the Commitment-Trust Theory, which highlights credibility as a driver of long-term loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), though the slightly greater variability here suggests opportunities for improved transparency and data protection.

These descriptive findings are consistent with research showing that OTAs improve discoverability, offer comparative pricing, and cater to diverse traveler preferences, thereby positively influencing booking volumes and brand visibility (Lakha & Vaid, 2020; Berné et al., 2021). Locally, Wambugu and Njiru (2023) observed that Kenyan hotels using OTAs as part of an integrated digital strategy significantly improved customer acquisition rates. Additionally, Maina and Murigi (2021) found that Nairobi's five-star hotels achieved higher occupancy when OTA partnerships were complemented with direct booking incentives, loyalty programs, and proactive review management.

4.5.2 Hypothesis Testing: H₀₃: Online travel agencies have no significant effect on the performance of star rated hotels in the County of Mombasa, Kenya.

To test this hypothesis, regression analysis was used. The results revealed a statistically significant effect of online travel agencies on hotel performance, with $B = 0.292$, $t = 2.451$, and $p = 0.016$ ($p < 0.05$), as shown in Table 4.14. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H₀₃) was rejected.

These results confirm that OTAs meaningfully enhance hotel performance metrics such as occupancy rate, customer acquisition, and repeat bookings. From the Resource-Based View (RBV), OTAs represent strategic partnerships that extend a hotel's distribution network and brand exposure, creating intangible competitive assets (Barney, 2001). The Commitment-Trust Theory further explains that customer trust in OTA platforms, shaped by usability, integrity, and review credibility, strengthens long-term relationship potential (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

However, while OTAs deliver valuable reach and revenue opportunities, literature cautions against overreliance. Excessive dependence may lead to reduced profit margins due to commissions and diminished control over brand messaging (Lakha & Vaid, 2020; Berné et al., 2021). In line with Wanjiru and Karimi (2022), hotels in Mombasa should therefore balance OTA benefits with robust direct booking strategies, ensuring revenue optimization and stronger ownership of customer relationships.

4.6 Objective IV: To Examine the Effect of Website Optimization on the Performance of Star Rated Hotels in the County of Mombasa, Kenya

4.6.1 Descriptive Statistics for Website Optimization

To determine the impact of website optimization on hotel performance, respondents evaluated key elements of their hotels’ websites using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4. 5: Descriptive Statistics for Website Optimization

Website Optimization Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
The hotel’s website is presentable and attractive	4.97	0.239
The hotel website is optimized to appear on keyword searches on search engines	4.95	0.260
There is adequate content for the website to operate optimally	4.94	0.234
The hotel’s website has a fast page loading speed	4.93	0.297

Source: Research Data (2024)

All website optimization indicators received very high mean scores, ranging from 4.93 to 4.97. The lowest standard deviation (0.234) was recorded for website content sufficiency, while the highest (0.297) was for loading speed, indicating minimal variation in responses and a consistently strong perception of website quality.

These results align with global findings that visual appeal, technical speed, and content adequacy are critical in enhancing customer experience and driving booking decisions (Han et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2020; Pervez et al., 2018). The high ratings for visual attractiveness support the User-Centered Design perspective, which emphasizes intuitive navigation and appealing layouts as drivers of user engagement (Zhang et al., 2022; Musambira et al., 2024). The strong ratings for search engine optimization also reflect the importance of discoverability, a factor Wang et al. (2023) found to directly influence online visibility and conversion rates.

In the Kenyan hospitality context, these findings reinforce Gioko et al. (2021), who observed that strategic website enhancements in three- to five-star hotels contribute to higher guest satisfaction and repeat bookings. Muriuki and Kimani (2023) further argue that hotels with well-optimized websites reduce overreliance on OTAs, thereby improving cost efficiency and strengthening brand autonomy. This study adds to that local evidence, demonstrating that star-rated hotels in Mombasa have embraced multiple aspects of website optimization to enhance performance outcomes.

4.6.2 Hypothesis Testing: H₀₄: Website optimization has no significant effect on performance of star rated hotels in the County of Mombasa, Kenya.

The regression analysis showed that website optimization had a statistically significant effect on hotel performance ($B = 0.158$, $t = 2.509$, $p = 0.014$), as reflected in Table 4.14. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{04}) was rejected.

This result affirms that website optimization significantly contributes to the performance of star-rated hotels in Mombasa. From a Resource-Based View (RBV) perspective, optimized websites constitute valuable intangible assets that differentiate a brand, improve operational efficiency, and enhance customer engagement (Barney, 2001). Commitment-Trust Theory also applies here, as well-optimized websites that deliver fast, reliable, and informative experiences help establish trust and strengthen long-term relationships with customers (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Incorporating the literature, it becomes evident that website optimization is not only about technical improvements but also about aligning content, usability, and aesthetics with guest expectations. Hotels that implement strategies such as secure payment gateways, localized content, and mobile-first design, as highlighted in studies by Suleiman et al. (2023) and Gioko et al. (2021), are more likely to see improvements in guest satisfaction, brand equity, and repeat business. The current study therefore underscores the need for Mombasa's star-rated hotels to continuously invest in comprehensive website optimization as a core driver of sustained competitive advantage in an increasingly digital marketplace.

4.7 Objective V: To investigate the moderating effect of ICT infrastructure on the relationship between digital marketing platforms and the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa, Kenya.

4.7.1 Descriptive Statistics for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Infrastructure

This objective sought to evaluate how ICT infrastructure may moderate the relationship between digital marketing platforms and hotel performance. Table 4.6 summarizes respondents’ perceptions of their ICT environment, guided by a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 4. 6: Descriptive Statistics for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Infrastructure

ICT Infrastructure Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
The management has capabilities to use the ICT resources	4.90	0.306
The regulation for ICT infrastructure is not punitive to the hotels	4.83	0.554
The hotel has access to reliable ICT infrastructure	4.74	0.946
The cost of usage of ICT is affordable for the hotels	4.63	1.047

Source: Research Data (2024)

The highest mean score (M = 4.90, SD = 0.306) highlights respondents’ confidence in managerial capability to utilize ICT tools effectively. This finding reinforces literature that emphasizes human capability as central to operationalizing digital strategies in hotels (Adeola & Evans, 2019). Strong agreement that ICT regulation is not punitive (M = 4.83)

suggests a generally supportive policy environment, which aligns with recent regulatory efforts to align digital marketing with national digital economy objectives (CAK, 2022; Kossabati, Mwangi, & Achieng, 2023).

Access to reliable infrastructure ($M = 4.74$) and affordability ($M = 4.63$) were positive but showed greater variability, as reflected in higher standard deviations. These differences are consistent with studies documenting rural-urban gaps, intermittent connectivity, and cost barriers in Sub-Saharan African hospitality contexts (Okeke et al., 2023; Ndung'u & Waema, 2022; Wachira & Omwenga, 2021). In short, while managerial capability and regulation appear supportive, practical constraints around access and cost remain uneven across star rated hotels in Mombasa.

4.7.2 Hypothesis Testing: H₀₅: ICT infrastructure has no moderating effect on the relationship between digital marketing and performance of star rated hotels in the County of Mombasa, Kenya.

The moderation hypothesis was tested using hierarchical regression analysis. The results, as presented in Table 4.17, revealed a statistically significant moderating effect of ICT infrastructure on the relationship between digital marketing and hotel performance ($B = 0.079$, $t = 2.257$, $p = 0.026 < 0.05$). Consequently, the study rejected the null hypothesis (H_{05}), concluding that ICT infrastructure significantly moderates the relationship between digital marketing strategies and hotel performance.

This result indicates that ICT infrastructure does not merely enable digital marketing but modifies how strongly digital marketing translates into performance outcomes. The finding supports the Resource-Based View by showing that ICT infrastructure can be a valuable

strategic resource that amplifies the benefits of digital marketing investments (Barney, 1991; Sharma et al., 2020). Adeola and Evans (2019) similarly demonstrate that IT capabilities strengthen links between service quality and customer satisfaction in African hotels, which is consistent with the moderating role observed here.

Mechanistically, ICT elements such as platform interoperability, analytics, and real-time connectivity enable more agile and personalized marketing, increasing conversion and retention when present at adequate levels (Zhang et al., 2022; Kabadayi et al., 2019). Conversely, infrastructural constraints around access and cost, documented by Okeke et al. (2023) and Ndung'u and Waema (2022), limit the scalability and effectiveness of email marketing, social media efforts, OTA integration, and website features, thereby reducing their impact on performance.

From the Commitment-Trust Theory perspective, ICT infrastructure also supports trust-building practices such as secure payment systems and data protection, which in turn influence consumer willingness to transact online (Asiimwe & Lim, 2021; Kossaibati et al., 2023). However, the presence of ICT alone is not sufficient. As the results imply, hotels must combine ICT readiness with strategic, customer-centric use of digital channels to realize superior outcomes.

The findings suggest that hotels with stronger ICT access, effective cost-management strategies, and adherence to regulatory requirements are better positioned to leverage digital marketing for improved performance. This underscores the importance for managers to invest not only in technical infrastructure but also in building human capability, as managerial expertise in utilizing ICT emerged as a critical factor in

translating infrastructure into tangible performance gains. Furthermore, policymakers and industry bodies should address the observed disparities in ICT access and affordability by promoting affordable connectivity and supporting local technical capacity building. Such interventions would enable a broader range of hotels to maximize the benefits of digital marketing investments.

4.8 Descriptive Statistics for Hotel Performance

This section presents descriptive statistics for the dependent variable; hotel performance, as perceived by respondents in relation to the use of digital marketing platforms. The analysis uses a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA), with a sample size of 87 (n = 87). The findings are summarized in Table 4.7.

Table 4. 7: Descriptive Statistics for Hotel Performance

Hotel Performance Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
The use of digital platforms has improved customer purchase behavior at the hotel	4.97	0.184
The overall profitability of the hotel has improved as a result of the use of digital platforms	4.94	0.279
The hotel has witnessed an increase in repeat purchases for its products due to the use of digital platforms	4.93	0.397
The hotel occupancy rate has greatly improved due to digital marketing platforms	4.91	0.362
The hotel's daily average rate has improved tremendously due to digital marketing platforms	4.86	0.632

Source: Researcher (2024)

The descriptive analysis shows that respondents perceive digital marketing platforms to have a strong and consistent positive effect on hotel performance across multiple dimensions. All measured indicators namely; customer purchase behavior, repeat purchase rates, occupancy rates, and average daily rate (ADR) scored above 4.8 on a 5-point scale, with low standard deviations, indicating broad agreement among respondents. This finding reinforces the view expressed in hospitality literature that hotel performance encompasses both financial and non-financial outcomes, including behavioral and experiential measures

such as loyalty, engagement, and brand advocacy (Morgan, Green, & Dwyer, 2023; Mohammad, 2022).

The highest-rated improvement was in customer purchase behavior, closely followed by repeat purchases and occupancy rates. This pattern aligns with earlier research indicating that digital marketing initiatives strengthen relational outcomes by enhancing visibility, customer interaction, and personalized service delivery (Olson et al., 2021; Van Esch & Stewart Black, 2021). These non-financial outcomes are important in competitive markets like Mombasa, where brand equity, emotional connection, and repeat visitation are critical for long-term success (Deb et al., 2024; Gona, 2024).

The results also support previous findings by Rahman et al. (2020), who observed that digital marketing tools play a pivotal role in fostering loyalty and behavioral engagement. Similar to Wadongo et al. (2010), this study affirms the importance of incorporating service quality, customer satisfaction, and online reputation into performance assessments, rather than relying solely on financial indicators. By integrating these behavioral metrics, hotels gain a more holistic understanding of their competitiveness in an increasingly digital marketplace (Anyadighibe et al., 2024; Oywaya, 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, the findings substantiate the Resource-Based View (Barney, 2001), as digital marketing capabilities emerge as valuable intangible assets that enhance competitiveness. They also affirm the Commitment-Trust Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), which posits that strong customer relationships and trust, fostered here through digital engagement, are essential for sustaining performance. In this sense, digital marketing platforms serve as both operational tools and relationship-building mechanisms,

driving improvements in occupancy, ADR, and customer loyalty in ways that traditional financial-only performance models may overlook.

4.9 Diagnostic Tests

To ensure that the data met the necessary assumptions for linear regression analysis, this study conducted several diagnostic tests. These included assessments for normality, multicollinearity, autocorrelation, and heteroscedasticity. These diagnostics are critical to verify that the regression results are valid and interpretable (Field, 2018).

4.9.1 Test for Normality

The assumption of normality posits that the residuals (errors) of the regression model should follow a normal distribution. To test this assumption, the study employed the Shapiro-Wilk Test, which is considered highly effective for small to medium-sized samples ($n < 2000$) (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). The test was applied to the unstandardized residuals of the regression model, with a sample size of 87. The results, shown in Table 4.8, yielded a Shapiro-Wilk test statistic of 0.904 and a p-value of 0.071.

Table 4. 8: Shapiro-Wilk Test for Normality

	Shapiro-Wilk			
	Statistic	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Unstandardized	.150	.904	87	.071
Residual				

Source: Research Data (2024)

Hypotheses:

- H_0 (Null Hypothesis): The residuals are normally distributed.
- H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): The residuals are not normally distributed.

At a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), the p-value (0.071) exceeds α , indicating insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. Thus, the residuals are assumed to be normally distributed, satisfying the assumption of normality for regression analysis. This outcome implies that the estimates of the regression coefficients and associated test statistics are reliable, as the normality of residuals ensures that the standard errors are unbiased and the p-values are valid.

4.9.2 Test for Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity refers to a situation where independent variables in a regression model are highly correlated, potentially compromising the reliability of coefficient estimates. To assess multicollinearity, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance statistics were evaluated, following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019) and O'Brien (2007). Refer to Table 4.9.

Table 4. 9: Test for Multicollinearity

Independent Variables	Tolerance	VIF
Email Marketing	0.805	1.243
Social Media Marketing	0.126	7.935
Online Travel Agencies	0.126	7.929
Website Optimization	0.454	2.203

a. Dependent Variable – Hotel Performance

Source: Research Data (2024)

As presented in Table 4.9, all VIF values for the independent variables were below the critical threshold of 10, and tolerance values exceeded the minimum acceptable limit of 0.1, indicating the absence of severe multicollinearity. Notably, Social Media Marketing and Online Travel Agencies exhibited relatively higher VIF values and lower tolerance values compared to other predictors, suggesting a moderate degree of multicollinearity between them. However, these values remained within acceptable ranges and did not compromise the overall validity of the regression model.

The absence of significant multicollinearity strengthens the confidence in the estimated regression coefficients, affirming the independent explanatory contribution of each digital marketing platform to hotel performance.

4.9.3 Test for Autocorrelation

Autocorrelation refers to the correlation of residuals across observations in regression analysis, and its presence violates the assumption of independent errors, an important assumption for ordinary least squares (OLS) regression (Gujarati & Porter, 2009). The Durbin-Watson (DW) statistic was used in this study to detect the presence of first-order autocorrelation in the residuals.

The DW statistic ranges between 0 and 4. A value near 2 indicates no autocorrelation, Values between 0 and <2 suggest positive autocorrelation and Values between 2 and 4 suggest negative autocorrelation (Turner, 2020).

As shown in Table 4.10, the DW statistic for this study was 1.810, which is close to the ideal value of 2.0. This indicates a slight positive autocorrelation among the residuals. However, this does not pose a serious concern in the context of this research, which is based on cross-sectional data collected through questionnaires rather than time-series data. According to Adams, Obaromi, and Irinews (2021), the Durbin-Watson test is primarily suited for identifying autocorrelation in time-ordered datasets. Given the static nature of the data in this study, the observed positive autocorrelation is not deemed problematic and does not threaten the validity of the regression results.

Table 4. 10: Test for Autocorrelation

Model	Durbin-Watson
1	1.810

a. Predictors: (Constant), Website Optimization, Email Marketing, Online Travel Agencies, Social Media Marketing

b. Dependent Variable: Hotel Performance

Source: Research Data (2024)

The acceptable Durbin-Watson statistic confirms that the residuals are sufficiently independent, meeting one of the key assumptions of regression analysis. This supports the integrity of the regression model and reinforces confidence in the validity of the statistical conclusions drawn from the analysis.

4.9.4 Test for Heteroskedasticity

Heteroskedasticity refers to the non-constant variance of the error terms across levels of an independent variable in a regression model. This violates one of the key assumptions of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression and can lead to inefficient estimates and biased standard errors (Wooldridge, 2013).

To assess the presence of heteroskedasticity in this study, a visual diagnostic was conducted using a residual scatter plot, where standardized residuals were plotted against fitted values. According to Astivia and Zumbo (2019), heteroskedasticity is visually

identifiable when the residuals fan out (cone shape) or display a systematic pattern across the plot.

As presented in Figure 4.1, the residuals appear randomly and evenly dispersed around the zero line without any visible pattern, cone shape, or clustering. This randomness indicates homoskedasticity, meaning that the assumption of constant error variance holds.

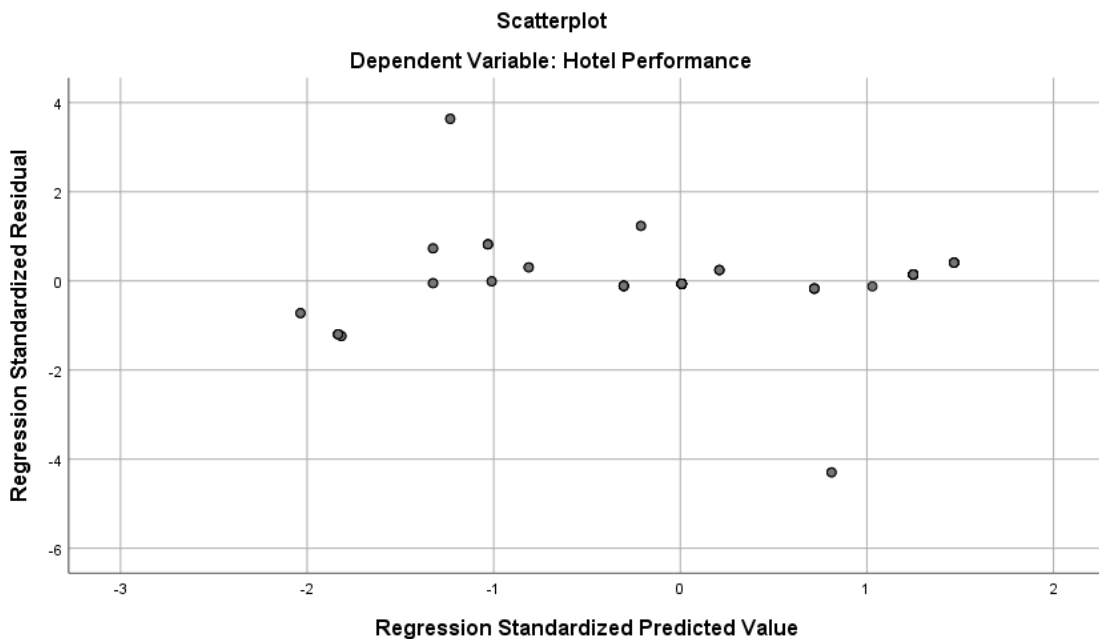


Figure 4. 1: Scatter Plot for Heteroskedasticity

Source: Researcher (2024)

The absence of heteroskedasticity confirms that the standard errors derived from the regression model are reliable, which strengthens the validity of statistical inference. With this assumption met, the study proceeded with parametric testing, including multiple regression analysis, without the need for corrective measures such as robust standard errors or variable transformation.

4.10 Correlation Analysis for the Study Variables

To assess the strength and direction of the linear relationships among the study variables, Pearson’s correlation coefficient (r) was computed. This coefficient measures the degree to which two continuous variables are linearly related. The results are summarized in Table 4.11.

Table 4. 11: Pearson Correlation Analysis

	Email Marketing	Social Media Marketing	Online Travel Agencies	Website Optimization
Hotel Performance	.504**	.892**	.884**	.749**

Performance

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); N = 87

Source: Research Data (2024)

The correlation matrix reveals statistically significant and positive relationships between all independent variables (digital marketing platforms) and the dependent variable (hotel performance). These associations confirm the preliminary assumptions of the study and align with the conceptual framework informed by the Resource-Based View and Commitment-Trust Theory. Based on Zaporozhets (2021), correlations are interpreted as:

- Very Weak: $r < 0.30$
- Weak: $0.30 \leq r < 0.50$
- Moderate: $0.50 \leq r < 0.70$

- Strong: $r \geq 0.70$

Applying this scale, the results show:

- Email Marketing and Hotel Performance: A moderate positive correlation ($r = .504$), indicating a significant but not dominant influence on performance.
- Social Media Marketing and Hotel Performance: A strong correlation ($r = .892$), suggesting that platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are highly impactful in driving engagement and performance outcomes.
- Online Travel Agencies and Hotel Performance: A strong correlation ($r = .884$), demonstrating the critical role of OTAs in visibility, bookings, and market reach.
- Website Optimization and Hotel Performance: Also a strong correlation ($r = .749$), highlighting the growing influence of user experience, loading speed, and search engine optimization in shaping guest behavior and satisfaction.

These findings reinforce that strategic deployment of digital marketing platforms has a measurable and significant association with enhanced hotel performance, particularly in customer engagement, brand visibility, repeat purchases, and occupancy rates. The correlation analysis provides empirical support for the study's proposition that digital marketing platforms, when effectively implemented, contribute meaningfully to the performance of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa. The results validate the importance of investing in tailored digital marketing strategies and aligning them with customer-centric outcomes to sustain competitive advantage in the hospitality sector.

4.11 Multiple Regression Analysis for Digital Marketing Platforms

This section presents the results of the multiple regression analysis conducted to evaluate the influence of digital marketing platforms, namely website optimization, email marketing, online travel agencies (OTAs), and social media marketing, on the performance of star-rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya.

As shown in Table 4.12, the regression model produced a high Adjusted R Square value of 0.846. This suggests that approximately 84.6% of the variance in hotel performance can be explained by the combined effects of the four digital marketing platforms under investigation. The remaining 15.4% of the variance is attributable to other factors not captured within the model.

These findings highlight the significant contribution of digital marketing efforts in enhancing hotel performance, particularly in terms of non-financial outcomes such as customer loyalty, repeat purchase behavior, and occupancy rates.

Table 4. 12: Regression Model Summary – Digital Marketing Platforms Only

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.924 ^a	0.853	0.846	0.32009	1.810

a. Predictors: (Constant), Website Optimization, Email Marketing, Online Travel Agencies, Social Media Marketing

b. Dependent Variable: Hotel Performance

Source: Research Data (2024)

These results align with prior studies demonstrating the positive impact of digital marketing strategies on organizational performance (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).

4.11.1 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Study Variables

To further evaluate the influence of the selected digital marketing platforms on hotel performance, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The positive residuals observed in the regression model suggest a meaningful relationship between the dependent variable; hotel performance, and the independent variables: website optimization, email marketing, online travel agencies, and social media marketing.

As shown in Table 4.13, the ANOVA results indicate that the overall regression model is statistically significant. This is evidenced by an F-value of 118.995, which is substantially greater than the critical F-value of 2.473 at the 0.05 significance level, with degrees of freedom (4, 82). The associated p-value (.000) further confirms the model's significance, indicating that the likelihood of the relationship occurring by chance is extremely low. Thus, the selected digital marketing strategies collectively have a significant impact on hotel performance.

Table 4. 13: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Study Variables

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	48.768	4	12.192	118.995	.000 ^b
Residual	8.402	82	0.102		
Total	57.170	86			

a. Dependent Variable: Hotel Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Website Optimization, Email Marketing, Online Travel Agencies, Social Media Marketing

Source: Research Data (2024)

4.11.2 Coefficients of the Regression Model

The coefficients of the regression model were derived from the analysis and are presented in Table 4.14. The resulting regression equation is as follows:

$$Y=0.133+0.165X_1+0.383X_2+0.234X_3+0.152X_4$$

Where: **Y** = Hotel Performance, **X₁**= Email Marketing, **X₂**= Social Media Marketing, **X₃**= Online Travel Agencies and **X₄**= Website Optimization.

Table 4. 14: Coefficients of the Regression Model

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.133	0.150		0.885	.379
Email Marketing	0.165	0.052	0.150	3.179	.002
Social Media Marketing	0.383	0.102	0.450	3.771	.000
Online Travel Agencies	0.234	0.096	0.292	2.451	.016
Website Optimization	0.152	0.060	0.158	2.509	.014

a. Dependent Variable: Hotel Performance

Source: Research Data (2024)

The regression coefficients provide valuable insights into the influence of individual digital marketing platforms on hotel performance in star rated hotels within the county of Mombasa, Kenya.

Email Marketing (B=0.165B, p=.002) shows a moderate yet statistically significant positive effect on hotel performance, suggesting that well-crafted email campaigns can enhance engagement and drive bookings.

Social Media Marketing stands out with the highest coefficient ($B=0.383$, $p=.000$), indicating a strong and significant impact. This highlights the strategic importance of maintaining a robust social media presence to interact with customers, increase brand visibility, and boost performance.

Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) also contribute significantly to performance outcomes ($B=0.234$, $p=.016$), emphasizing the role of third-party booking platforms in expanding customer reach and facilitating conversions.

Likewise, Website Optimization ($B=0.152$, $p=.014$) demonstrates a positive and statistically significant impact, underlining the importance of a user-friendly, responsive, and well-structured website in improving customer experience and enhancing hotel visibility online.

These findings carry important managerial implications for the hospitality industry in Mombasa. Hotels are encouraged to invest in comprehensive and integrated digital marketing strategies that include the four platforms analyzed. Special focus should be placed on social media and email marketing due to their direct and measurable influence on performance. Additionally, leveraging online travel agencies and maintaining an optimized website will ensure a seamless user experience, thereby enhancing competitiveness in the evolving digital landscape.

4.12 Moderating Effect of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Infrastructure

Following the establishment of the main effects, this section examines the potential moderating role of ICT infrastructure on the relationship between digital marketing platforms and hotel performance. The analysis proceeded in two stages: (i) assessing the main effect of ICT infrastructure and (ii) testing the interaction effect (moderation).

4.12.1 Model Summary Including ICT Infrastructure

In this model, ICT infrastructure was added as an independent variable alongside the digital marketing platforms to determine its direct contribution to hotel performance. As shown in Table 4.15, the inclusion of ICT infrastructure resulted in an Adjusted R Square value of 0.839, indicating that approximately 83.9% of the variance in hotel performance is explained.

Compared to the baseline model (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.846$), the slight decline of 0.7% suggests that ICT infrastructure alone, when added directly, does not significantly enhance the predictive power of the model. Nevertheless, its potential moderating role requires further examination through interaction term analysis.

Table 4. 15: Regression Model Summary – Including ICT Infrastructure

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
2	0.918	0.843	0.839	0.32678

a. Predictors: (Constant), Information Communications Technology Infrastructure, Digital Marketing Platforms

b. Dependent Variable: Hotel Performance

Source: Research Data (2024)

This finding resonates with suggestions from Mishra and Mishra (2016) that the technological environment, while vital, may not independently drive performance without being synergized with operational strategies.

The slight decrease in Adjusted R² upon the inclusion of ICT infrastructure suggests that while ICT infrastructure may contribute to hotel performance, its direct moderating effect in this context is limited. However, this result invites deeper interpretation. The inclusion of ICT infrastructure allows for a more nuanced understanding of the technological environment, accounting for elements such as data management systems, operational backend support, cybersecurity, data privacy compliance, and the robustness of the digital infrastructure in hotels.

These technological elements may introduce complexities that could dampen the direct effects of digital marketing efforts if not adequately managed. As such, the interaction between digital marketing and ICT infrastructure reflects a multifaceted dynamic, where

performance is influenced not only by marketing strategies but also by the operational capacity and technological readiness of the star rated hotels.

4.12.2 Moderated Regression Model with Interaction Term

To assess whether ICT infrastructure moderates the relationship between digital marketing platforms and hotel performance, an interaction term (Digital Marketing Platforms \times ICT Infrastructure) was introduced into the model.

As shown in Table 4.16, the moderated model yielded an Adjusted R Square of 0.847. This represents a slight improvement over the earlier models, suggesting that the interaction between digital marketing platforms and ICT infrastructure explains an additional proportion of variance in hotel performance.

Table 4. 16: Moderated Regression Model – Digital Marketing x ICT Infrastructure Interaction

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
3	0.926	0.857	0.847	0.31604

a. Predictors: (Constant), Information Communications Technology Infrastructure, Digital Marketing Platforms, Digital Marketing Platforms x ICT Infrastructure

b. Dependent Variable: Hotel Performance

Source: Research Data (2024)

The regression coefficients for the interaction term are summarized in Table 4.17.

Table 4 17: Regression Coefficients - Moderation Model

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-0.158	0.164	—	-0.963	0.337
Digital Marketing Platforms	0.911	0.053	0.841	17.179	0.000
ICT Infrastructure	0.051	0.043	0.055	1.186	0.238
Digital Marketing × ICT Infrastructure	0.079	0.035	0.078	2.257	0.026

Source: Research Data (2024)

The results show that:

- Digital Marketing Platforms remain a strong and significant predictor ($B = 0.911$, $\beta = 0.841$, $p < 0.001$).
- ICT Infrastructure alone does not have a statistically significant main effect ($B = 0.051$, $\beta = 0.055$, $p > 0.05$).
- However, the interaction term (Digital Marketing × ICT Infrastructure) is statistically significant ($B = 0.079$, $\beta = 0.078$, $p = 0.026$).

In the moderated regression model, the interaction term (Digital Marketing Platforms × ICT Infrastructure) emerged as statistically significant ($B = 0.079$, $\beta = 0.078$, $p = 0.026$),

suggesting that ICT infrastructure significantly moderates the relationship between digital marketing platforms and hotel performance. This finding underscores that the effectiveness of digital marketing efforts in enhancing hotel performance is contingent upon the strength and robustness of the hotel's ICT infrastructure.

Whereas previous analysis suggested that ICT infrastructure alone did not directly influence performance, the introduction of the interaction term reveals a more nuanced relationship. This highlights the importance of a synergistic effect between digital marketing strategies and ICT infrastructure: hotels with more advanced technological infrastructure are better equipped to leverage digital marketing platforms to improve performance outcomes such as customer loyalty, room occupancy, and daily average rate.

Thus, ICT infrastructure does not act in isolation; rather, it serves as a critical enabler or barrier to the effective execution of digital marketing campaigns, further enhancing the relationship between marketing strategies and hotel performance. This confirms the moderating role of ICT infrastructure and suggests that investments in digital marketing must be coupled with advancements in technological infrastructure to fully realize performance gains.

This finding is consistent with the theoretical perspectives of Aiken and West (1991) on interaction effects, and aligns with empirical evidence from studies such as Hayes (2018) and Sigala (2018) who emphasize the strategic synergy between technology adoption and digital marketing performance.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter synthesizes the study's findings in line with its objectives, highlighting key insights from the empirical analysis. It presents a new conceptual model linking digital marketing platforms and ICT infrastructure to hotel performance in Mombasa. The chapter concludes with evidence-based conclusions and practical recommendations for hotel practitioners, policymakers, and researchers, offering context-specific guidance grounded in the realities of Kenya's coastal hospitality industry.

5.2 Revised Conceptual Model

Following the statistical analyses presented in Chapter 4, a revised conceptual model was developed to reflect the significant findings of the study, particularly the moderating effect of ICT infrastructure on the relationship between digital marketing platforms and the performance of star-rated hotels in Mombasa County.

Although ICT infrastructure did not exhibit a statistically significant direct effect on hotel performance ($\beta = 0.055$, $p = 0.238$), the interaction term between digital marketing platforms and ICT infrastructure was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.078$, $p = 0.026$). This confirms that ICT infrastructure moderates the relationship, strengthening or conditioning the effect of digital marketing platforms on performance outcomes such as occupancy rate, repeat purchase, customer purchase behavior, and average daily rate (ADR).

As shown in the revised model (Figure 5.1), digital marketing platforms remain the primary independent variable influencing hotel performance. ICT infrastructure is positioned as a

moderator, illustrated by a dashed line intersecting the path between digital marketing platforms and hotel performance. This design visually reflects that the strength of the relationship between digital marketing and performance depends on the level of ICT infrastructure.

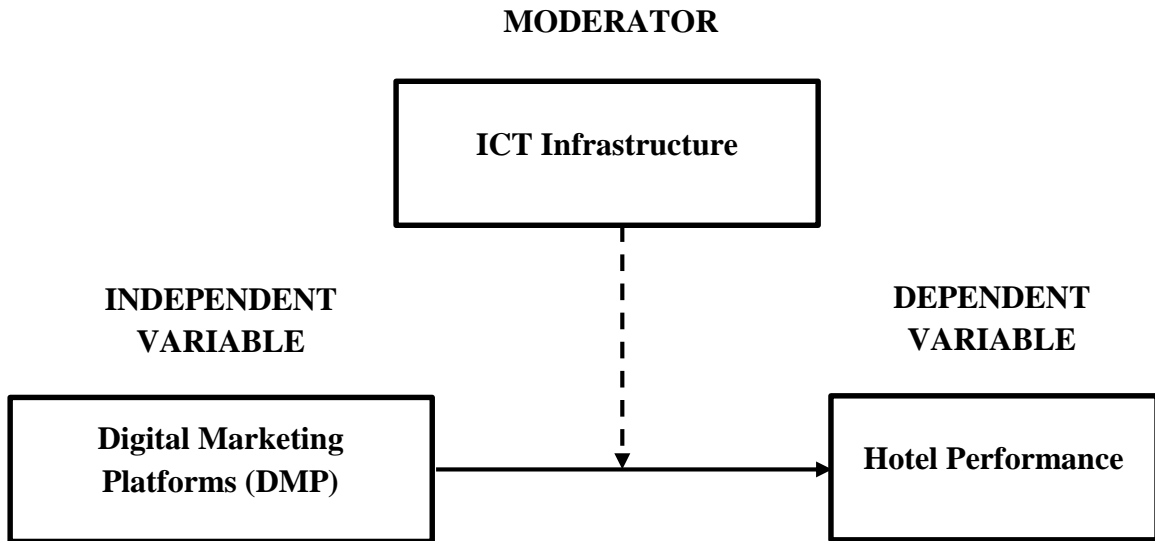


Figure 5. 1: Revised Moderation Model

Source: Researcher (2024)

The revised model highlights a critical insight: digital marketing platforms alone are insufficient to guarantee superior hotel performance. Their effectiveness is significantly enhanced by the technological environment in which they are implemented. Hotels with robust ICT infrastructure, including reliable internet connectivity, integrated booking systems, data analytics capabilities, cybersecurity measures, and digital communication tools, are better positioned to execute digital marketing strategies effectively and achieve measurable performance gains. This insight is especially relevant in light of recent global developments. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, digital transformation has

accelerated across the hospitality sector, with increased reliance on contactless technologies, mobile-based services, and online customer engagement.

Moreover, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and big data analytics is reshaping how hotels personalize marketing messages, predict customer preferences, and optimize pricing in real time. Consumer expectations have also evolved, with digitally savvy guests demanding seamless online experiences; from pre-booking research to post-stay feedback. In this dynamic landscape, digital marketing strategies that are not backed by strong ICT systems risk underperforming, as they fail to meet the speed, personalization, and data integration demanded by modern travelers. Therefore, the interplay between digital marketing and ICT infrastructure is not merely supportive, it is foundational to achieving sustained performance in today's technology-driven hospitality environment.

This finding aligns with the Resource-Based View (RBV), which posits that firm-specific resources and capabilities can serve as sources of sustained competitive advantage when they are valuable, rare, inimitable, and embedded within the organization. In this study, both digital marketing platforms and ICT infrastructure qualify as strategic resources, but their combined and well-integrated use provides greater performance leverage than either alone.

The results also resonate with the Commitment-Trust Theory (CTT), which emphasizes the role of trust and commitment in driving effective relationship marketing. Performance benefits such as improved brand loyalty and customer retention are more likely to materialize when digital marketing is supported by a reliable ICT environment that enables

secure, personalized, and timely customer engagement, thereby fostering trust and long-term commitment.

To further explain the moderation effect, this study draws on Contingency Theory as proposed by Donaldson (2001). The theory asserts that there is no universal strategy for organizational success; rather, the effectiveness of any approach depends on its fit with contextual variables. In this context, the model demonstrates that the influence of digital marketing platforms on performance is contingent on the level of ICT infrastructure. Hotels with better-developed ICT environments experience stronger positive impacts from digital marketing initiatives.

Thus, ICT infrastructure acts as a contextual enabler, amplifying the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies. This perspective provides a more nuanced understanding of the findings and underscores the need for hospitality firms to align their marketing and technological capabilities.

5.2.1 Implications of the Revised Model

The revised conceptual model offers both theoretical and practical contributions:

- **Theoretical contribution:** It synthesizes insights from RBV, CTT, and Contingency Theory to provide a holistic understanding of how digital capabilities and internal conditions interact to affect performance.
- **Practical contribution:** It informs hotel managers and policymakers that investments in digital marketing must be matched by complementary investments in ICT infrastructure. Without this alignment, the benefits of digital marketing may not be fully realized.

Overall, the revised model advances understanding of digital transformation in the hospitality sector and reinforces the strategic importance of integrating marketing and technological resources to achieve sustainable performance improvements.

5.3 Summary of Findings

This study sought to examine the efficacy of digital marketing platforms on the performance of star-rated hotels in Mombasa County, with a particular focus on the moderating role of ICT infrastructure. The findings provide important insights into how digital marketing strategies influence hotel performance and highlight the critical role played by ICT infrastructure in enhancing these effects.

5.3.1 Digital Marketing Platforms

- **Email Marketing**

The analysis revealed that email marketing had a significant positive effect on hotel performance. Hotels that employed personalized, frequent, and targeted email campaigns experienced improvements in customer retention and booking consistency. This form of marketing emerged as a cost-effective tool, particularly for fostering repeat business and building stronger customer relationships.

- **Social Media Marketing**

Social media marketing also showed a significant impact on hotel performance. Active engagement on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) enhanced hotel visibility, facilitated guest interaction, and improved brand perception. While the study did not specifically focus on influencer partnerships or user-generated content, findings indicated that engaging with audiences through regular updates and content led to

higher inquiries and increased customer interaction, which positively affected overall performance.

- **Online Travel Agencies (OTAs)**

OTAs were found to be a crucial factor in enhancing hotel performance, especially in reaching a wider market and increasing international bookings. Despite concerns over high commission fees, OTAs provided significant value, particularly for small and medium-sized hotels, by improving market visibility and boosting occupancy rates.

- **Website Optimization**

Website optimization emerged as another important factor in improving hotel performance. Hotels with SEO-optimized, mobile-friendly, and user-friendly websites reported higher direct bookings and positive customer feedback. Key features such as secure online booking engines, fast-loading pages, and easy navigation contributed to higher user trust and satisfaction, directly impacting performance outcomes.

5.3.2 Moderating Role of ICT Infrastructure

The study also examined the moderating role of ICT infrastructure in the relationship between digital marketing platforms and hotel performance. While ICT infrastructure alone did not exhibit a statistically significant direct effect on hotel performance ($\beta = 0.055$, $p = 0.238$), the interaction term between ICT infrastructure and digital marketing platforms proved statistically significant ($\beta = 0.078$, $p = 0.026$). This finding emphasizes that ICT infrastructure plays a critical moderating role, strengthening the effect of digital marketing on performance outcomes such as room occupancy, average daily rate (ADR), customer repeat purchase, and customer behavior.

Hotels with strong ICT infrastructure, such as reliable internet connectivity, integrated booking systems, data analytics, and secure digital tools, were better positioned to leverage digital marketing strategies effectively, leading to enhanced performance. This moderating effect aligns with the revised conceptual model presented earlier, which highlights the importance of a strong technological environment in maximizing the benefits of digital marketing platforms.

The findings underscore the necessity for hotels to invest in both digital marketing strategies and ICT infrastructure. While ICT infrastructure is crucial for supporting the execution of digital marketing strategies, the study emphasizes that the quality of digital marketing execution, including targeted campaigns, customer engagement, and content relevance, remains a central driver of performance. Therefore, it is essential for hotels to optimize their digital marketing approaches while ensuring that their ICT capabilities align with these strategies. This integrated approach will maximize performance improvements and sustain competitiveness in the Mombasa hotel market.

5.4 New Knowledge Contribution

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between digital marketing platforms and hotel performance, particularly in the context of star-rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya. While previous studies have explored digital marketing platforms in the broader hospitality industry, this study offers several novel contributions:

- **The Role of ICT Infrastructure as a Moderator**

One of the key contributions of this study is the identification of the moderating role of ICT infrastructure in the relationship between digital marketing platforms and hotel performance. While ICT infrastructure has been recognized as an important enabler of digital marketing, this study provides empirical evidence that its influence is not direct but rather enhances the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies. The research highlights that a robust ICT environment, comprising high-speed internet, integrated booking systems, data analytics, and secure communication tools, acts as a critical factor in optimizing the impact of digital marketing tools, thus offering new insights into the technological prerequisites for digital marketing success.

- **Contextual Focus on Mombasa's Hospitality Industry**

The study adds value by focusing on Mombasa County, a significant tourism hub in Kenya, which has not been extensively studied in relation to digital marketing and performance of hotels. By concentrating on this specific region, the research provides a localized understanding of how global digital marketing strategies are adapted and implemented within the context of Kenyan hospitality. This contextual focus addresses the gap in the literature regarding the application of digital marketing strategies in developing countries and coastal tourism destinations like Mombasa.

- **Integration of Multiple Theoretical Perspectives**

Another contribution lies in the integration of the Resource-Based View (RBV), Commitment-Trust Theory (CTT), and Contingency Theory in understanding the dynamics of digital marketing in the hospitality industry. The study links the theoretical underpinnings of RBV and CTT to digital marketing strategies, revealing how the

combination of organizational resources (digital marketing tools and ICT infrastructure) and customer trust can drive competitive advantage. Moreover, the application of Contingency Theory offers a nuanced perspective, suggesting that the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies is contingent upon the alignment of these strategies with the ICT infrastructure, thus providing a more holistic view of the factors influencing hotel performance.

- **Practical Implications for the Hospitality Sector**

This study contributes practical insights for hotel managers and policymakers, emphasizing the importance of aligning digital marketing efforts with ICT infrastructure investments. The findings suggest that digital marketing strategies, when executed effectively in conjunction with strong technological support, can lead to improved performance outcomes such as increased occupancy rates, customer satisfaction, and revenue growth. These insights offer valuable guidance for the strategic planning of digital transformation initiatives in the hospitality sector, particularly in emerging markets.

Therefore, this study adds new knowledge by highlighting the critical intersection between digital marketing strategies and ICT infrastructure, particularly in the context of star-rated hotels in the county of Mombasa. By exploring these dynamics, the study provides valuable contributions to both theoretical frameworks and practical approaches in hospitality management, particularly in the digital age.

5.5 Conclusions

This study set out to investigate the efficacy of digital marketing platforms on the performance of star-rated hotels in Mombasa County, with a specific focus on the

moderating role of ICT infrastructure. The findings lead to several key conclusions regarding the role of individual digital marketing strategies and the technological environment in which they operate.

To begin with, email marketing was found to have a strong and positive influence on hotel performance. Personalized, targeted, and frequent email campaigns enhanced customer retention and consistency in bookings. This channel proved particularly effective in fostering repeat business, making it a cost-efficient approach to sustaining guest relationships and supporting long-term performance.

Similarly, social media marketing emerged as a vital driver of visibility and customer engagement. Active use of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly twitter) helped hotels in Mombasa improve brand perception and attract higher levels of customer interaction. Although the study did not delve deeply into influencer marketing or user-generated content, it became evident that timely and interactive content on social platforms led to increased inquiries and improved customer awareness, both of which positively influenced performance metrics.

Online travel agencies (OTAs) also played a significant role in boosting hotel performance, particularly by expanding market reach and facilitating international bookings. Despite challenges related to high commission fees, OTAs provided unmatched visibility and access to a global customer base, especially for small and mid-sized hotels that might lack sophisticated marketing infrastructure.

In addition, website optimization was shown to have a substantial impact on performance outcomes. Hotels with well-optimized, mobile-friendly, and user-centric websites benefited from increased direct bookings and improved customer feedback. Features such as secure booking engines, fast-loading speeds, and intuitive navigation were crucial in enhancing customer trust and conversion rates.

While ICT infrastructure did not independently predict hotel performance, it played a significant moderating role in strengthening the impact of digital marketing platforms. Hotels with robust ICT systems, including reliable internet connectivity, integrated booking platforms, and advanced data analytics tools, were better positioned to deploy digital strategies effectively. This interaction amplified the effectiveness of digital marketing, leading to improved occupancy rates, stronger customer engagement, and better revenue outcomes.

Overall, the study concludes that the successful use of digital marketing in the hospitality sector is dependent not only on the strategies employed but also on the supporting technological infrastructure. The alignment of well-executed digital marketing campaigns with a solid ICT foundation creates a synergistic effect that drives hotel performance. Therefore, to remain competitive in the digital age, hotels must adopt a holistic approach; one that combines strategic digital marketing efforts with continuous investment in ICT capabilities.

5.6 Recommendations

5.6.1 Recommendations for Hotel Managers

- **Invest in Robust ICT Infrastructure**

Hotels should prioritize the development of strong ICT systems, including high-speed internet, integrated booking platforms, and data analytics in order to support the successful implementation of digital marketing strategies.

- **Segment and Personalize Email Campaigns**

Managers should use customer segmentation and personalized content in email marketing to enhance customer retention and improve booking consistency.

- **Develop a Cohesive Social Media Strategy**

A comprehensive content plan with consistent engagement on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter), including influencer partnerships, will enhance visibility and strengthen brand loyalty.

- **Continuously Optimize Hotel Websites**

Hotels must regularly update and optimize their websites for SEO, mobile responsiveness, and booking efficiency to encourage direct bookings and improve user experience.

- **Analyze OTA Performance and Encourage Direct Bookings**

While leveraging OTAs to expand market reach, hotels should also track performance metrics and invest in direct booking strategies, such as loyalty programs and exclusive offers, to improve profit margins.

5.6.2 Recommendations for Policymakers and Tourism Authorities

- **Facilitate Digital Infrastructure Development**

Governments and tourism agencies should invest in regional ICT infrastructure, especially in tourism-heavy zones like Mombasa, to support sector-wide digital transformation.

- **Provide Incentives for Hotel Digitization**

Financial incentives such as grants, subsidies, or tax breaks can motivate hotels to invest in digital tools and technologies.

- **Sponsor Digital Skills Training Programs**

Policymakers should fund capacity-building initiatives that train hotel personnel in digital marketing, ICT usage, and emerging technologies relevant to hospitality.

- **Promote Academic-Industry Innovation Partnerships**

Establishing digital innovation labs through collaboration with universities can encourage the development and application of advanced marketing technologies such as AI, predictive analytics, and big data.

5.6.3 Recommendations for Academia and Future Researchers

- **Explore the Role of Digital Skills and Organizational Culture**

Future studies should assess how staff capabilities and internal organizational culture influence the success of digital marketing and ICT adoption.

- **Investigate the Impact on Customer Lifetime Value**

Researchers should evaluate how digital marketing contributes not only to short-term bookings but also to long-term customer loyalty and profitability.

5.7 Areas for Further Research

This study opens several avenues for future exploration, including:

- **Impact of Emerging Technologies on Hotel Marketing**

Future research should examine how innovations such as AI-powered chatbots, virtual tours, and augmented reality affect hotel marketing performance and customer satisfaction.

- **Longitudinal Studies on Digital Marketing Sustainability**

Studies tracking the effectiveness of digital marketing over time would offer insights into its long-term viability and performance trends.

- **Comparative Studies Across Regions and Hotel Categories**

Comparing digital marketing outcomes between coastal and inland hotels, or between independent and chain hotels, could uncover context-specific strategies and challenges.

- **Customer Perspectives on Digital Communication Channels**

Investigating how customers perceive and interact with various digital tools (e.g., email, social media, chatbots) can help hotels tailor their communication approaches to improve service quality and satisfaction.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Introduction

Angore B. Mbitha,
P.O. Box 3735 – 80100
MOMBASA

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: DATA COLLECTION

Please allow me to formally request your assistance in completing a data collection project for my Master of Science in Hospitality and Tourism Management degree at Kenyatta University's School of Business, Economics, and Tourism. The title of the research is: *Efficacy of Digital Marketing Platforms on Performance of Star Rated Hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya: Moderating Role of ICT Infrastructure*. The procedure for the study will include the use of questionnaires. The data gathered will be kept confidential. The questionnaires will be collected after two weeks.

You may withdraw from this study anytime. There are no health risks or downsides to taking part in the study.

If needed, I can provide a copy of the study to your company. And the study is purely for academic purposes.

Thank you in advance.

Yours Faithfully,

Angore Benedict Mbitha
Researcher

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Hotel Marketing Employees

Please provide information on the following questions. The data gathered will be utilized for academic reasons only, and the responses will be kept completely confidential.

Section A: Rating of your hotel

Tick appropriately in the spaces provided

Classification and Star Rating	One Star *	
	Two Star **	
	Three Star ***	
	Four Star ****	
	Five Star *****	

Section B: Digital Marketing Platforms

The statements below are questions about digital marketing platforms. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 denoting strong disagreement, 2 denoting disagreement, 3 denoting neutrality, 4 denoting agreement, and 5 denoting strong agreement, please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements on digital marketing platforms at your hotel.

Email Marketing	1	2	3	4	5
1. The hotel sends email newsletters to customers					
2. The hotel sends personalized advertisements to customers via email					
3. The hotel responds to queries posed by customers via email					

4. Email marketing is done regularly to customers and potential customers					
Social Media Marketing					
1. The hotel has active social media accounts for customer engagement e.g.					
2. Facebook					
3. Instagram					
4. Twitter					
5. YouTube					
6. The hotel has attracted customers via social media					
7. The hotel conducts promotions and campaigns via social media					
8. The hotel timely responds to customer queries via social media					
Online Travel Agencies					
1. Online travel agencies conduct their activities with high integrity					
2. Online travel agencies have user friendly sites for customers					
3. Online travel agencies segment their customers for stellar service					
4. Customers are more willing to book trips with the online travel agencies					

Website Optimization					
1. The hotels website has a fast page loading speed					
2. There is adequate content for the website to operate optimally					
3. The hotel website is optimized to appear on key word searches on the search engines					
4. The hotels website is presentable and attractive					

SECTION C: ICT Infrastructure

The following statements ICT infrastructure related questions. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your hotel on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 standing for "Strongly Disagree," 2 for "Disagree," 3 for "Neutral," 4 for "Agree," and 5 for "Strongly Agree."

ICT Infrastructure	1	2	3	4	5
1. The hotel has access to reliable ICT infrastructure					
2. The cost of usage of ICT is affordable for the hotels					
3. The regulation for ICT infrastructure is not punitive to the hotels					
4. The management has capabilities to use the ICT resources					
5. ICT is fully integrated in the operations of the hotel					

SECTION D: Hotel Performance

The following statements represent hotel performance related questions. Please rate your agreement with each of the following items as related to hotel performance as influenced by digital marketing platforms using the scale of 1-5 where 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree and 5 Strongly Agree.

Hotel Performance	1	2	3	4	5
1. The hotel has witnessed an increase in repeat purchase for its products due to the use of digital platforms					
2. The use of digital platform has improved customer purchase behavior at the hotel					
3. The hotels daily average rate as improved tremendously due to digital marketing platforms					
4. The hotel occupancy rate has greatly improved due to digital marketing platforms					
5. The overall profitability of the hotel has improved as a result of the use of digital platforms					

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix C: Authorization Letter From KU Graduate School



**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DEAN GRADUATE SCHOOL**

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke

P.O. Box 43844, 00100

NAIROBI, KENYA

Tel. 020-8704150

Website: www.ku.ac.ke

Internal Memo

FROM: Executive Dean, Graduate School

DATE: 20th July 2023

TO: Mr. Angore Benedict Mbitha
c/o Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management

REF: T129/OL/14796/2009

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

=====

This is to inform you that Graduate School Board, at its meeting on 12th July, 2023 approved your Research Proposal for the M.Sc. Degree entitled, "*Efficacy of Digital Marketing Platforms on Performance of Star Rated Hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya.*"

You may now proceed with your Data collection, subject to clearance with the Director General, National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation and Ethics Review Committee, Kenyatta University.

As you embark on your data collection, please note that you will be required to submit to Graduate School completed Supervision Tracking and Progress Report Forms per semester. The Forms are available at the University's Website under Graduate School webpage downloads.

Also, please ensure that you publish article(s) from your thesis before submitting it to Graduate School for examination as per the Commission for University Education and Kenyatta University guidelines.

Thank you.


DR. HARRIET ISABOKE

FOR: EXECUTIVE DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL



c.c Chairman, Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management

Supervisors:

1. Dr. Shem Wambugu Maingi
c/o Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management
Kenyatta University
2. Dr. Duncan Shirandula
c/o Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management
Kenyatta University

HC/TWA

Appendix D: Authorization Letter From KU Ethics Committee



**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ETHICS AND SAFETY**

Fax: 8711242/8711575
Email: chairman.kuerc@ku.ac.ke
Nairobi, 00100

P. O. Box 43844,

Tel: 8710901/12

Website: www.ku.ac.ke
Our Ref: **KU/ERC/APPROVAL/VOL.1**

Date: 11th September, 2023

Angore Mbitha
P.O Box 43844, 00100
Nairobi.

Dear Mr. Mbitha,

**APPLICATION NUMBER: PKU/2779/I1904- EFFICACY OF DIGITAL MARKETING
PLATFORMS ON PERFORMANCE OF STAR RATED HOTEL**

This is to inform you that **KENYATTA UNIVERSITY ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE** has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is **PKU/2779/I1904**. The approval period is **11th /9/2023 to 11th /09/2024**.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by **KENYATTA UNIVERSITY ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE**
- iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to **KENYATTA UNIVERSITY ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE** within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to **KENYATTA UNIVERSITY ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE** within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the

- approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to **KENYATTA UNIVERSITY ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

To serve you better, researchers are kindly requested to access and complete a customer feedback form and sent it back online as you continue with research and upon completion of data collection found on the following website link;
;https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1ytWefDwvyz5h1oz_VIn0xbxg3uGdlDzMXFWNDsMrRPQ/edit?usp=sharing

Yours sincerely



Prof. Judith Kimiywe

Director: Centre for Research Ethics and Safety

Appendix E: NACOSTI Permit

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION
REPUBLIC OF KENYA

Ref No: **359902**

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Mr. Angore Benedict Mbitha of Kenyatta University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Mombasa on the topic: EFFICACY OF DIGITAL MARKETING PLATFORMS ON PERFORMANCE OF STAR RATED HOTELS IN MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA for the period ending : 29/September/2024.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/23/29968**

359902
Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY &
INNOVATION

Verification QR Code



NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

See overleaf for conditions

Appendix F: List of Star-rated Hotels in the county of Mombasa

Hotel Name	Region	County	Star Rating
1. Pride Inn Paradise	Coast	Mombasa	*****
2. Sarova White Sands Beach Resort and Spa	Coast	Mombasa	****
3. Voyager Beach Resort	Coast	Mombasa	****
4. Severin Sea Lodge	Coast	Mombasa	****
5. Serena Beach Resort and Spa	Coast	Mombasa	****
6. Marina English Point	Coast	Mombasa	****
7. Bahari Beach Hotel	Coast	Mombasa	***
8. Kenya Bay Beach Hotel	Coast	Mombasa	***
9. Royal Court Hotel	Coast	Mombasa	***
10. Isinya Resorts Limited (Bliss Hotel)	Coast	Mombasa	***
11. PrideInn Mombasa	Coast	Mombasa	***
12. Azul Margarita Beach Resort	Coast	Mombasa	***
13. JacyJoka Apartments	Coast	Mombasa	***
14. Bollywood Bites	Coast	Mombasa	***
15. Plaza Beach Hotel	Coast	Mombasa	**
16. Castle Royal Hotel	Coast	Mombasa	**
17. Midview Hotel	Coast	Mombasa	**
18. Gasaro Hotel Limited	Coast	Mombasa	**

Source: Tourism Regulatory Authority (2020)

Appendix H: Target Population

Hotel	Targeted Respondents
Azul Margarita Beach Resort	5
Bahari Beach Hotel	5
Bollywood Bites	5
Castle Royal Hotel	5
Gasaro Hotel Limited	5
Isinya Resorts Limited (Bliss Hotel)	5
JacyJoka Apartments	5
Kenya Bay Beach Hotel	5
Marina English Point	5
Midview Hotel	5
Plaza Beach Hotel	5
PrideInn Mombasa	5
PrideInn Paradise	5
Royal Court Hotel	5
Sarova White Sands Beach Resort and Spa	5
Serena Beach Resort and Spa	5
Severin Sea Lodge	5
Voyager Beach Resort	5
Total	90

Source: Researcher (2023)

Appendix I: Budget

Budget Item	Estimated Cost (KES)
1. Proposal Development	10,000
2. Data Collection	30,000
3. Research Assistants	20,000
4. Data Analysis	15,000
5. Professional Editing & Formatting	10,000
6. Printing & Binding	20,000
7. Communication & Contingencies	20,000
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST	KES 125,000