



SERVICE PROMOTION MIX STRATEGIES AND MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF INDIGENOUS HOTELS IN AKWA IBOM STATE

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ABSTRACT: *The researchers investigated the relationship between service promotion mix strategies and marketing performance of indigenous hotels in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The main objective was to determine the relationship between service promotion mix strategies and marketing performance of indigenous hotels in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The survey research design was utilized for the study. The study centered on three and four star hotels in Akwa Ibom State. The sample was 387 employees drawn from the indigenous hotels under study. Structured questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection. Simple linear regression was used to analyze data that was gotten from the field. The result reveals a significant relationship between the proxies of service promotion mix strategies and marketing performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State with internet/interactive marketing having the highest standardized coefficient. The researchers concluded that embracing service promotion dimensions does improve marketing performance and recommended that indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State that have not been using public relations to a large extent should do so in order to boost their marketing performance and also that indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State should engage in event/sponsorship in order to showcase their brand in events within the state. Also, advertising campaign should be emphasized more on the internet since a good number of the population is using this new platform.*

KEYWORDS: Promotion Mix, Marketing Performance, Indigenous Hotels, Hospitality Industry.



INTRODUCTION

The hospitality sector in Akwa Ibom State is unarguably a fast growing one in the South South region of Nigeria. The hospitality sector is a service segment within the tourism industry which provides lodging, food, entertainment and accommodation services to tourists or guests at a cost. It relates to other kind of organizations which offer shelter, food or both to people away from their homes. The service promotion in recent times has been attracting more attention in the hospitality sector probably because of its seeming impact on sales volume and profit (Federick, 2011). Every hospitality service provider aims at creating awareness and patronage for its products and this can be favourably achieved with the help of promotion mix. Hospitality organizations such as hotels, fast-food organizations and resorts are increasingly adopting this promotion mix to inform, persuade and remind their customers in order to achieve their organizational goals and objectives. This group of activities aimed at informing, persuading and reminding the customers in the service sector is termed service promotion.

Promotion is an exercise aimed at informing, persuading and influencing. So, the aim of promotion is to reach the targeted customers and convince them to buy. Promotion is vital element of marketing mix. In order to keep up with the competition and changing consumer needs and wants, firms are forced to adopt effective promotional strategies to promote growth beyond borders thus creating awareness and upsurge usage rates of their goods and services. Promotion strategies are the direct way an organization tries to reach its publics. Promotion strategies have remained the only way firms gain competitive edge in the market. It involves the combination of the eight basic elements of the promotion mix i.e. advertising, the internet/interactive marketing, direct marketing and commerce, sales promotion, event/sponsorships, public relations, word-of-mouth marketing and personal selling (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Promotion mix is a blend of communications tools used by a firm to carry out the promotion process and to communicate directly with its target audience. These promotional mix tools include advertising, the internet/interactive marketing, direct marketing and commerce, sales promotion, event/sponsorships, public relations, word-of-mouth marketing and personal selling. Many promotional tactics are used by business organization to survey in the modern business market. These promotional strategies enable firms to attract and retain customers thus increased growth in terms of return on investments due to expanded client base (Kotler, 2007). To survive in the competitive marketing environment, both small and large organizations need to implement promotional mix strategies in order to entice and retain customer hence long term relationships and development in terms of performance (Reid *et al*; 2005). Increased revenue, increased client-base and customer loyalty are measures of any organization marketing performance in the competitive market.

Ewah, Etuk, Eke & Usani (2022) describe performance in terms of output such as quantified objectives or profitability. This means that marketing performance is influenced by both actions and results. This description includes achieving expected levels as well as setting objectives. According to Eke (2022), marketing performance denotes the utilization of scarce resources by firms to meet the demands of customers for market related goals such as sales volume and market share. Ewah, *et al*; (2022) opined that measuring marketing performance avails firms the opportunity to align their marketing strategies, increase their competitive advantage and to



overcome the marketing tactics of their competitors. Eke (2022) further hold that to increase revenue and hit growth, a business must regularly increase sales volume at every given chance. Understanding your sales volume can tell you what product that is selling and the once that are not selling (Eno, Udonde & Ibok, 2022).

In the hospitality industries, there are different ways sales volumes and revenue can be influence and one of it is the adoption of the right service promotional mix strategies. The marketing performance of successful hospitality organizations is linked to the level of its sales volume and sales revenue which, among others is a function of awareness created by the hotels about their facilities and services. This is based on the observation that sales volume in many indigenous hotels declines after few years of existence, which has been blamed, among other things, on poor marketing approach with low level of awareness. Promotions have been one of the major features of the operations of these organizations. However, the major challenges faced by this service-oriented organization have been how to design an effective service promotion campaign that will attract and create awareness to its audience as inability to apply the right promotional mix elements and at the right time has serious implications on marketing performance. The challenge has been on how to select the right mix of promotional activities that will suit the particular business at a particular time and to then use it correctly to achieve a result.

Thus, this research was borne out of the researchers' desire to empirically assess which of the service promotional mix strategies would influence the marketing performance of the indigenous hotels in the state. By taking into the consideration the basic service promotional mix strategies used in hospitality industries - public relations, event/sponsorships and the internet/interactive marketing, the researchers examined the relationship between service promotion mix strategies on marketing performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to determine the relationship between service promotion mix strategies and marketing performance of indigenous hotels in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The specific objectives were;

1. To assess the relationship between Public Relations and marketing performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State.
2. To ascertain the relationship between Events/Sponsorship and marketing performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State.
3. To examine the relationship between Internet/Interactive Marketing and marketing performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State.



Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated from the objectives of the study as stated below:

1. To what extent do Public Relations influence the Marketing Performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State?
2. To what extent does Events/Sponsorship influence the Marketing Performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State?
3. To what extent does Internet/Interactive Marketing influence the Marketing Performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State?

Hypotheses of the study

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between Public Relations and Marketing Performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between Events/Sponsorship and Marketing Performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between Internet/Interactive Marketing and Marketing Performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Promotion Mix Strategy

Promotion is one of the 7Ps of service marketing (others are product, price, process, people, physical evidence and place- Jonnasson, 2007). Promotion or marketing communications as popularly known involves the sharing of information as well as the dissemination of information about a company's products, services, ideas, experience etc. This sharing and dissemination of information can take the form of promotional activities in marketing. In this study, marketing communication and promotional mix are used interchangeably. Promotion according to Brassington & Pettitt (2000) is the direct way in which an organization communicates the product or service to its target audiences. Promotion appears to be the direct way an organization tries to reach its publics. The promotion activities not only serve as a means of communication between companies and consumers, but also as a tool to influence consumers to purchase or use of service's activities in accordance with the wishes and needs. This is done by using promotional tools.



Promotion is a basic ingredient in the marketing campaign, involving a collection of incentive tools, mostly short-term, designed to stimulate the purchase of a faster or larger on specific goods or services by consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Promotion can use the basics of audio and visual communication for marketing, with a view to providing a message to the market (Assauri, 2012). Each time an organization makes a marketing campaign, it always has to design a message which aligns with company value and understand through which channel the target audience wants to receive the information. The business can use numerous channels for spreading the message to actual and potential clients and through them the communication is seen as a process in which persuasive information are transferred. These channels could be of different natures: offline media (e.g. newspapers, brochures, billboard, events and sponsorship, guerrilla marketing, public relation radio/TV advertisement) and online ones (e.g. website, social media, pay-per-click marketing, email marketing) (Eno & Udonde, 2022).

Effective marketing communication allows the establishments of brand awareness and a progressive brand image. These then form the brand understanding structures that initiate the differentiated responses that institute brand equity (Eno & Udonde, 2022). The role of promotion has been redefined into managing long term relationships with prudently selected customers, including construction of a learning connection where the marketer attains a dialogue with an individual consumer (Dawes & Brown, 2000). According to Etuk, Anyadighibe, James & Ulo (2022), Promotion is executed using a number of tools, known as promotional tools, and they basically include advertising, personal selling, public relations, publicity, direct marketing, sales promotion, and word of mouth. These tools are strategically combined, integrated and coordinated to communicate persuasively with target markets with the ultimate goal of eliciting a positive response. A promotional mix is a group of various promotional tools coordinated and utilized firms to maximize the performance of their promotional campaigns. The marketer's charge is to find the right promotion mix for a certain brand. It is the coordination of a variety of promotional approaches by marketers to thrill customers to patronize their goods and services (Anyadighibe, Etuk, James & Inyang, 2021). It is the specific combination of promotional tools, channels, and processes in order to effectively promote the goods, services, and brand of a business organization (Anyadighibe, Etuk, James & Inyang, 2021).

Proxies of Service Promotion Mix Strategy of Hospitality Industries

According to Brassington & Pettitt (2000), promotion mix strategy is a tool in which a firm uses to communicate its goods or services to its target audiences. In an effort to share information a source sends a message through a channel to a receiver who replies with a feedback. For instance, a hotel manager may want to sell his facilities and services to consumers through any of the communication channels (newspapers, radios, TV etc.). In communication the primary goal is to influence the behaviour of the receiver in some ways. Thus, a business organization adopts a communication strategy with a view of influencing the receiver to take actions favourable to the organization (i.e. customers responding positively to the products and market offerings). A firm must develop both communications and training programs, to extent the new brand message internally through all levels of the company. To the external stakeholders, in turn, the company might include customer and journalist promotion packages, advertising, sponsoring to its promotion strategy (Udonde, Ibok & Eke, 2022). In the marketing community, this includes



activities such as advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations/publicity and direct marketing, which are referred to as marketing communications or promotions (Grundick, 2013). Hospitality industries like its counterparts in other sectors of the economy apply this promotion mix as one of their marketing tools and techniques in their operations. These promotion mix tools include advertising, the internet/interactive marketing, direct marketing and commerce, sales promotion, event/sponsorships, public relations, word-of-mouth marketing and personal selling.

Advertising: Any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of goods, services and ideas by an identified sponsor through print media (magazines and newspapers), broadcast media (television and radio), network media (telephone, cable, satellite, wireless), electronic media (audiotape, videotape, videodisk, CD-ROM, Web page), and display media (billboards, signs, posters). This is the major promotion strategy of hospitality organizations, whereby non-personal presentations are made in the mass media (radio, TV, billboards and magazines) about their facilities and products offerings. According to Anyadighibe, Etim, Etuk, Kajang & Ekom (2021), the implementation of new technologies and methods in the field of marketing have generated various platforms for firms to reach their target markets and effect their marketing campaigns and operations. Specifically in the advertising world, these new technologies and methods have created new tools and media for advertisers to execute their advertising campaigns to their target audiences in order to effectively achieve established advertising objectives (Anyadighibe *et al*; 2021). Among the advertising tools and media created by new technologies are outdoor advertising, social media advertising, television advertising, mobile advertising, online advertising, display advertising, radio advertising, print advertising, to mention a few. The advertising campaigns and messages are geared toward creating awareness about the goods/services, the benefits associated with the services and location where tourists could avail themselves of the services of the organizations.

Brassington & Pettit (2000) defined advertising strategy as any paid form of non-personal communication focused on target audience and transmitted via various mass media in order to stimulate and present goods, services or idea. Advertising strategy has evolved into a critical tool for every company looking to stay competitive in today's market and become stronger. Industry's ability to strengthen its market share and limit the impact of competition is dependent on its advertising strategy (Etuk, & Emenyi, 2022). According to Etuk, & Emenyi (2022) advertising strategy is a way of supplying a high-quality product that meets client needs, at an affordable price, and with a larger distribution network, all backed up by an effective promotion plan. The key variance between advertising and other promotional tools is that it is impersonal and connects with large numbers of people via paid media channels. The hospitality services organization can use its advertising for either its short-term or its long-term objectives. Hospitality industries attempting to create a long-term relationship, can build up of its name by using institutional advertising. The institutional advertising consists of promotion of the firms' image as a whole and promotion of the products offered, with extra emphasis on the firm's name organization. The organization seeks through its marketing communications to build awareness and to impress customers looking for the best range of hospitality services. An essential part of advertising is to make the service tangible in the mind of the consumer in order to lessen perceived risk and provide a clear idea of what the service is made of.



Sales Promotion: A variety of short-term incentives to inspire trial or purchase of a goods or services including customer promotions (samples, coupons, and premiums), trade promotions (advertising and display allowances), and firm and sales force promotions (contests for sales representatives). Brassington & Pettit (2000) defined sales promotion as a tactical marketing technique with mostly short- term incentives, which are to add value to the product, in order to achieve specific sales or marketing objectives. Sales promotion in the hospitality industry appears to be most effectively used in combination with advertising. The primary objectives of sales promotion within hospitality services are attract new customers; to increase market share in selected market segments; and to lower the cost of acquiring new customers by seeking to avoid direct price competition with other hospitality industries. According to Kotler, Bowen & Makens (2010), some sale promotion incentives used by hotel industries to attract customers include discounts on accommodation, drinks, foods etc., to influence customers to buy their products as well as to improve franchisee's effectiveness especially during festive period.

Some sales promotion techniques employed by hospitality management in Nigeria include musical shows, comedy, family getaway, lottery, entertainment, coupons, samples, contests, etc. to draw potential customers to the hotels (Adejo, 2013). Hotels employ sales support activities and measures to establish personal and indirect contact with customers or trade intermediaries. Sales promotional incentives are also provided to aid other players in the tourism industry such as tourist service enterprises, tour operators and national and regional tourist organizations and travel agencies to improve their effectiveness.

Events and Sponsorship: Company-sponsored activities and programs designed to build daily or special brand-related interactions with customers, including arts, sports and entertainment. Many businesses are placing increased essentiality on sponsorships, and are reaping the rewards. Sponsorship marketing occurs when an event receives financial support from an organization (the sponsor) and in return provides the opportunity to the sponsor to associate itself with the event. This, in turn, creates publicity for the sponsor (Shimp, 2010). It is a scenario that places the marketer in the same environment as the consumer, and makes the message of the organization more relevant and credible. Apart from the advantage this brings, sponsorships also provide several other benefits (Koekemoer, 2014). These include, among others, niche marketing flexibility, enhanced brand equity and cost-effective media coverage.

Like all the tools in the promotional mix, sponsorship activities also need to be integrated with the other elements of the organization's promotions, and serve the higher purpose of reaching general communication objectives.

Public Relations and Publicity: A variety of programs directed internally to staffs of the firm or externally to customers, other firms, the government and media to encourage or protect a firm's image or its individual product communications. Public Relations are planned and deliberate plans, policies and programmes designed by the organizations to gain acceptance, trust and harmony between the society and the organization. It involves the corporate social responsibility programmes of the company. In the area of hospitality, public relations involves measures designed to create and improve the image of hotels facilities and services, create a more favourable climate for its advertising and sales support activities, especially in regard to news



media. According to Brassington & Pettit (2000) the heart of public relations (PR) is to look after the nature and quality of the relationship between the firm and its different publics, and to build a mutual understanding. Public relations cover a range of activities such as creation and maintenance of corporate identity and image; charitable participation, sponsorship and community initiatives; media relation for the dissemination of good news as well as for crisis management, such as damage limitation.

Moreover, an organization can attend trade exhibitions to create stronger relationships with key suppliers and customers as well as enhancing the organization's presence and reputation within the market (Brassington & Pettit, 2000).

Direct Marketing: According to Brassington & Pettit (2000) direct marketing refers to an interactive system of marketing, using one or numerous advertising media to achieve measurable response anywhere, forming a basis for building and further developing an on-going direct connection between a firm and its customers, to be able to build and sustain quality relationship with hundreds or thousands of customers. Jobber (2007) defined direct marketing as the distribution of product, information and promotional benefits to target consumer through interactive communication in a way that allows response to be measures. According to Anyadighibe, Etuk, James & Inyang (2021), given the fast globalization of the world and the modernization of communication technologies, firms have crafted digitized mechanisms and channels for communicating with customers in order to promote their services. These channels include telephones, websites, social media, electronic mail, blogs, and mobile application software.

The hospitality industries has extended its face to face selling towards direct marketing of products and services in the form of phone, mail or computer transactions. Moles (2000) opined that as computer literacy and the accessibility of computers increase and the costs decrease. Furthermore, the internet technology also makes it possible to follow individual customer usage. The world is becoming global and with the introduction of the internet, consumers can now make choice and select from different products with a click from their phones. Direct marketing has replaced the traditional mass media of television, radio, newspapers with the internet. Direct marketing brings the market directly into the home and office of an individual buyer instead of the buyer having to go to the market. It requires immediate response and as such the effectiveness of most direct marketing campaigns can be assessed quantitatively. The practice of direct marketing is an interactive marketing system that utilizes a variety of media to elicit a response from a database of target customers (Arens *et al.*, 2011). The interactive nature of direct marketing enables it to be an integration of advertising, selling, buying and distribution. This format enables a higher level of interactivity than is offered by traditional mass-media advertising. For example, Internet advertising offers click-through links that enable the consumer to click on an advertisement of interest; this will, in turn, take him/her to the website of the offering. Usually the product can then be ordered and paid for online. This also provides the considerable advantage of convenience.

Direct marketing it allows the organization to quantify responses and thus evaluate the success of the campaign (O'Guinn *et al.*, 2009). Direct marketing covers a wide range of methodology such



as direct mail, telemarketing, direct response advertising, catalogue marketing and electronic media.

Internet/Interactive Marketing: Online actions designed to engage consumers or prospects and directly or indirectly raise consciousness, improve image, or stimulate sales of products. Since its origin in September 1969, the Internet has transformed marketing and advertising. The Internet is the most noticeable interactive medium today. Interactivity refers to the ability of an organization to link and connect with its customers. The Internet is a network that lends itself to a myriad of communication objectives ranging from building awareness to the actual selling of the product. This activity is referred to as e-commerce. According to Etuk & Akpan (2015), the internet is a marketer's vision come true, with myriads of e-tools that brought about small cost operations that can reach large customers simultaneously. As part of the promotional tool, the Internet allows the customer access to a huge amount of specific product information without the consumer having to enter a store and talk with a salesperson.

The adoption of internet marketing has significantly enhanced customers in Nigeria especially in the area of improved patronage, on-time (effective) service delivery and reduced marketing cost. It helps firm's to identify and target market clusters, study needs and position themselves to fulfill those needs (Uford, Charles & Etuk, 2022). The result is that companies are able to reduce costs while increasing their customer reach using internet marketing. Furthermore, internet marketing allows two-way communication between the customers and the seller (Etuk, Awah & Akpan 2022), allowing for iterative strategies to achieve a competitive advantage. Internet marketing has created exciting new and cheaper ways to learn about and track customers, create products and service tailored to meet customer's needs, distribute product more efficiently and communicate with potential customers effectively. These activities has the capability to mobilize saving, build customers satisfaction, patronage and repeat purchase of the product (Etuk, Awah & Akpan, 2022).

The modern generation of interactive media is m-commerce (mobile commerce). This includes wireless and mobile communications. It allows an organization to communicate with the customer while the customer is on the move. The message usually includes a link to the related website, which the customer can then access via the cell phone's Internet browser. Marketers may also use e-mail to send messages to target customers. The consumer generally has the option to choose whether or not he or she would like to receive marketing communication e-mails from the organization. This occurs when a person registers on a website, and in the process is required to indicate permission to receive marketing messages. The Internet also provides ample opportunities for advertisers.

Concept of Marketing Performance

According to Gakii & Maina (2019) in Eke (2022), marketing performance is the application of scarce resources by firms to meet the demand of customers for market related goals such as profit, market share and sales level among others. Since a substantial amount of money, time and effort is spent on marketing activities, it is needful for the marketing department to show the effects of their efforts on the company's overall performance (Eke, 2022). These effects are



usually measured using the number of sales or sales volume, profit margin, number of website visitors, customer's brand awareness levels and market share. According to Eagelman (2013), measuring marketing performance allows a company to bring into line its marketing strategy, strengthen its competitive edge, and avoid or overcome its competitors' marketing efforts. Only by measuring the effectiveness of a company's marketing gains can it develop a new plan and increase sales while meeting its goals (Wang & Chang, 2013). Darroch & McNaughton (2005) argued that organizations can adopt the objective and subjective measure on marketing performance. The objective measure according to them assesses the actual performance of the firm or absolute scales. The subjective measures on the other hand centre on managers assessment of the performance of their business unit or firm, relative to expectations of competitors. Performance measures can also be measured in terms of financial measure (in this case profit) and non-financial measures e.g. market share, sales growth, positive marketing image, industrial harmony, team spirit, etc. (Scholam, Rose & Kropp, 2005).

Marketing performance in this context is measured by the number of visitors or likes to social media page, number of clicks on an advert, the amount of time spent on the website, the number of sales as a result of e-marketing and the influence of e-marketing on brand awareness, customer loyalty, engagement and satisfaction (Eke, 2022). Total revenues, customer satisfaction, Market share, and client acquisition can all be used to weigh market performance (Gunday *et al.*, 2012; Rashid, 2008; Sullivan & Dooley, 2009). Marketing performance is essential to overall business performance even in the hospitality industries. This essentiality is being manifested in indicators such as strong brand awareness, expressions of consumer preference, sales volume, and high levels of market share (Grønholdt & Martensen, 2006). However, the achievement of robust marketing performance can be problematic for businesses if the right service promotion mix strategies are not in place.

Determinants of Marketing Performance

Sales Level: This is the total quantity of goods sold or services rendered by a business at a certain period of time or the number of items sold by a company over a given period of time such as fiscal quarter or a year (Ndikubwimana 2016). The sales level is used to quantify the amount, usually in cartons or crates, etc., of goods being sold at a given period. This is frequently used as well with goods but it could be as used within a service firm. In service, sales level can be measure with the amount of customer satisfaction, referrals, repurchase and customer retention. The essence of sales level is prominent in many businesses and that the firm performance and profit of the firm can be summarized in their sales level. One of the crucial goals of firms is to boost its sales level in order to attain greater scale in its processes and advance profitability and due to this fact, managers always seek to increase their market share. To increase marketing performance and hit growth, a firm must continually increase its sales level by all means.

Market Share: O'Regan (2002) describe market share as a firm's sales in relative to overall industry sales for a certain time. Pearce & Robinson (2003) also explain that market share is the sales of a business in relation to those of her rivals in the market and that market share in most cases can be used to reveal competitive position. It is also believed that increased market share



can be linked with success and decreased market share is a manifestation of unfavorable actions by companies and usually equated with failure.

Competitiveness: Competitiveness of a company means adapting its goods or services to the market and competition requirements, particularly in terms of quality, product range, price as well as optimal sales channels and methods of promotion (Siudek & Zawajska, 2014). A firm's competitiveness is its economic strength against its rivals in the marketplace where goods, services, people and innovations move freely despite the geographical boundaries (Eke, 2022). The ability to gain a higher competitiveness advantage over ones rivalry helps to determine how well the company is performing.

Overview of the Hospitality Industry in Akwa Ibom State

According to Etuk & Ekong (2017), the hotel business is a sub-sector of the hospitality industries that is mainly associated with providing a temporary place for guest, travelers and tourists to stay. The hospitality industries are part of a larger enterprise known as the travel and tourism industry. The travel and tourism industry is gigantic group of businesses with one goal in common: providing essential or desired goods and services to travelers. Hospitality can be seen as a cautious, planned and sustained effort to create and maintain mutual understanding between a firm and the public, that is, the business of making and possession of friends and promoting an atmosphere of improved understanding. As a concept, hospitality is concerned with giving tourists wonderful experiences which includes food, drink and entertainment away from the home environment (Page & Connell, 2006). It is basically the relationship between the host and the guest. Hospitality has been described as the act or practice of kindness to strangers and visitors.

According to Page & Connell (2006), three domains of hospitality exist: private, social and commercial. The private domain is concerned with the provision of food, drink and accommodation in domestic setting, involving hosting and hospitality of friends and relatives by the host. Here a personal relationship is on reciprocal basis, implying that one that is the host today may be the guest to the same friends or relatives in the future. In the social domain, hospitality is perceived as an important socio-cultural vale, act or behaviour in social setting whereby the host treats guests, visitors and strangers with generosity and goodwill. According to Kinnear (2011), hospitality in this context is seen as a way of life, a trait of the people in a given society that has been passed from one generation to another.

Hospitality in the commercial domain is purely a business venture involving the reception and provision of accommodation, food, drinks and entertainment to guests, visitors, tourists and strangers at a fee (Drovic & Mansul, 2013). Here, hospitality service is not for charity but strictly profit-making. Today commercial hospitality services are characterized under profit motive. As a commercial activity, hospitality is a sector within tourism industry which includes such operators as hotels, restaurants, bakeries, car rental services, entertainment enterprises. The sector also relates to other kind of organizations that offer shelter, food or both to people away from their homes. This might include private clubs, casinos, resorts, attractions, etc.



Classification of the Hotels in Akwa Ibom State

Hotel can be categorized in various ways depending upon its location, clientele, size, length of stay, features. The reason for categorizing the hotels is more than one. For this study, hotels in Akwa Ibom State were categorized based on their star rating. Hostels can be classified into; One-Star Categories, Two-Star Categories, Three-Star Categories, Four-Star Categories and Five-Star Categories. Each of these categories is briefly discussed below;

One Star Hotel: Typically small hotels, located near affordable attractions, with basic facilities, with a family atmosphere. Limited range and simple facilities, acceptable standards of maintenance, cleanliness and comfort.

Two Star Hotel: Economy hotel, small to intermediate size hotel, located near reasonably priced attraction. Guest can presume little more than a one star, like comfortable well-equipped room with attached bath and professional staff.

Three Star Hotel: Moderate hotel, capacious accommodation, well equipped room and ornamented lobbies, located near business areas, moderate to tall price attractions, frequently have a medium size restaurant that serves breakfast via dinner. Facilities such as direct dial phone, toiletries, room service and pool are often provided.

Four Star Hotel: First class hotel, large formal hotel, located near major attractions, above average service levels, more than one restaurants, 24 hours room service, laundry, valet parking, travel desk, wellness center, pool, high class room décor.

Five Star Hotel: Larger hotel, high level of accommodation and service, large property, hotel lobby and rooms with stylish furnishing and linen, all contemporary and high end facilities and amenities, at least three restaurants, 24 hours room service, concierge to support customers 24 hours.

The Role of Service Promotion Mix Strategies on Marketing Performance

The effect of service promotional mix variables (advertising, public relations, events/sponsorship and internet/interactive marketing) is gleaned through its contributions and benefits of these elements to the organization individually or collectively. Marketing performance can be measured in terms of sales revenue, sales volume, market share, customer loyalty and favourable marketing image. This study adopted sales level and market share as the criteria for measuring marketing performance in the hospitality industries. According to Okewo (2009), the role of service promotion on marketing performance is essentially to encourage purchase. This is made possible by temporality improving the value of a brand while the objective of a promotion is to achieve a specific number of new or additional purchases. Nwankwo (2000) also added that the benefits of sales promotion are to increase sales volume of products, especially at the period when normal sales are sluggish. He further stated that promotion is used periodically (e.g. annually and semiannually) to clear goods in store before inventory taking and restocking. This, no doubt, reduces the cost of storage in the warehouse. In the hospitality, hotels sometimes offer



special coupons. Price slashes in hotel rooms for families, discounted meals and drinks to customers to entice them to visit the facility in order to boost sagging sales.

Other benefits of service promotion mix strategies on marketing performance include;

1. Providing information that helps to sell a product
2. Providing incentives that induce purchases
3. Enhancing product recall and recognition to facilitate trial of the product
4. Increasing sales during sluggish and off-season periods and changing consumers attitudes through the use of samples
5. Converting customers to regular users
6. Influencing stock level,
7. Cushioning the effect of price increase,
8. Encouraging trial of new or old product
9. Encouraging repeat purchasing
10. Increasing frequency and quantity of purchase
11. Increasing store traffic and facilitating feedback through trade shows, etc

Hotels have used radio, televisions and billboard advertising and referrals to increase the number of patrons and guests (Wemsey, 2012). As regards to advertising, its impacts on marketing performance are discernable through brand awareness and the stimulation of demand. Studies have proven that an additional increment of advertising yields increasing sales returns. In some instances, it forces competing hospitality organizations to raise their promotion budget in order to maintain market share. The assessment of marketing strategies of hospitality organizations revealed that hotels reaped a lot of benefits such as patronage and increase in sales from adopting advertising hence their continued application of this important promotional tool.

However, the sales effect of advertising is generally harder to measure than communication effect (McDaniel, 2002). This is because other factors affect sales such as product features, prices, product availability and activities of competitors. He stressed further that the fewer or more controllable these factors are, the easier is it to measure advertising impact on sales. Although advertising is a powerful determinant of demand, it cannot be solely and wholly responsible for sales. It commonly has less impact than environmental dynamics. The long-run sales are predicted on sound total marketing mix, not just advertising and profit (Umachie, 2008). Hicks (2013) suggested that hospitality organizations that adopt advertising should ensure that their physical ambience, service quality, service personnel and facilities are of high quality since these entire factors combine with advertising to affect sales.

The combinations of public relations to marketing performance and sales cannot be downplayed. The ultimate aim of hospitality organizations is to sell their products to tourists and travelers. The role of public relations in improving methods of communication with existing and potential customers cannot be underrated, but there are many other ways in which public relations assists sales promotion (Rondex, 2003). This includes facility tours for journalists, travel agents and photographers in order to generate publicity and positive words-of-mouth, liaison with the business communities and the academia to hold conferences, seminars and workshops as well as events sponsorship. Relationship and good will building help to bolster sales in the long run. There are, in addition special hotel features in tourist brochures, newspapers and periodicals tend to generate interest among potential customers, and consequently, enquire.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Independent Variables

Dependent Variables

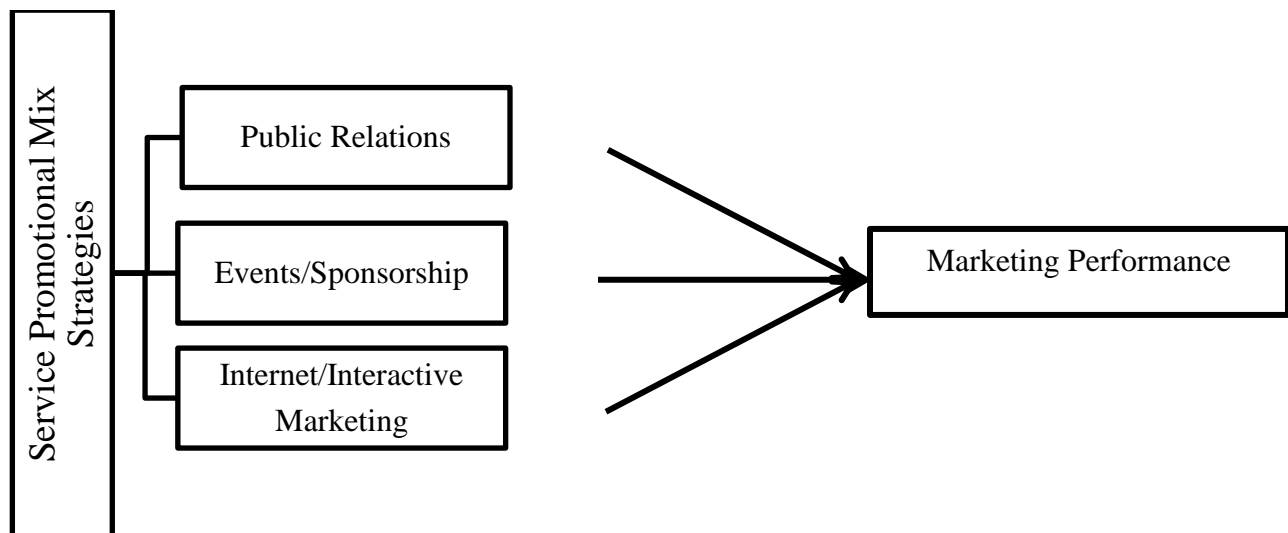


Figure 2.1: The Link between Service Promotion Mix Strategies and Marketing Performance

Source: Researcher’s Conceptualization, (2023)



Theoretical Framework

Various theories have been suggested by different authors in relation to marketing communication on performance. Some of the theories include; AIDA theory, hierarchy of effects theory and relationship marketing theory.

AIDA Theory (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000)

The AIDA model propounded by Aaker & Joachimsthaler in 2000 creates a detailed illustration about the whole procedure of how advertising effects customer behaviour and the purchase decisions. It is an acronym, which consists of the elements of attention, interest, desire and action. All of them are pertinent to the relationship between consumer behaviour and advertising. It explains how personal selling works and shows a set of stair-step stages which describe the process leading a potential customer to purchase.

The first factor, that is attention, describes the phase in which the brand manages to gain the attention of the customer via the advertisement that he/she has come into interaction with. It could be either good or bad attention or at times no attention at all. From the advertiser's position, only the first case is advantageous, one where the consumer pays encouraging attention to the advertisement and ultimately the brand (Kotler, 2007). Organizations create attention, interest, desire and attraction of their products in the market using appropriate channels of communication to reach the mass market. This thus stimulates their demand for an existing and new product in the market. Therefore, adoption of the theory by firms promotes tremendous growth of the companies in terms of client base, revenue and marketing performance (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

Empirical Review

Karunanithy & Sivesan (2013) did an empirical study on the Promotional Mix and Brand Equity: Mobile Service Providers in Sri Lanka. The main aim of their study was to explore the effects of promotional mix on equity of brands performing in the mobile service sectors. Data were collected from 107 selected customers of the mobile service companies. The outcome revealed that the correlation value between promotional mix and brand equity is 0.722 which is significance. According to the regression analysis, 52% of promotional mix influences brand equity. From the findings, the researchers concluded that promotional mix affects brand equity. The researcher recommended that mobile service providing firms should polish their promotional mix.

Etuk, Udoh & Eke (2022) studied the weight of Electronic Marketing on Marketing Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The researchers' primary objective was to unravel the relationship between electronic marketing and marketing performance of small and medium scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State. The researchers embraced survey design. Data were gathered with the use of questionnaire. The sample size comprised of 366 SMEs operators nominated using simple random sampling. Two hypotheses were framed tested and analyzed using simple linear regression. It was discovered that there is significant relationship between the element of electronic marketing and marketing performance



of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. The researchers resolved that social media marketing and SMS marketing are vital elements of electronic marketing which enhance the marketing performance. The researchers recommended that SMEs that have not been using e-marketing strategies should do so in order to enrich their performance.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The survey research design was utilized for the study. This is because it will assist the researcher to collect valuable information from members of the respondents concerning their opinions about variables of interest to the researcher and useful in designing the questionnaire. Information were also collected from reflective analysis of sales performance records of the hotels before and after the promotion campaigns as well as the subjective judgement of the hotel managers regarding their performance in the past four years. This method of data collection is supported by Scholam, *et al*; (2005) who argued that subjective and objective (qualitative and quantitative) data are accepted for the analysis of marketing performance. The data was analyzed with the use of frequency tables and spearman rank order correlation method was adopted in testing the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable at a 0.05 level of significance.

The Study Area

The study centers on three and four star hotels in Akwa Ibom State. The three and four star hotels are the most predominant hospitality industry in the state and have helped to facilitate economic development. The study was executed in the state capital, Uyo and only the three and four star hotels within Uyo metropolis were taken into consideration.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of employees of all the 19 selected three and four star hotels in Akwa Ibom State who have operated in the state capital for the period of 5-10 years from the top level to the supervisory level making a total target of three hundred and eighty seven (387) employees. This staff strength was obtained from the records of the hotels visited in Uyo, the state capital.

Sample Size /Sampling Techniques

The sample size of the study was drawn from the total population of three hundred and seven (387) employees of hotel staff in Uyo metropolis. Employees of each of the 19 selected three and four star hotels. All the staff available at the time of the data collection was employed for the study. The sample size of 387 respondents was selected for the study. The assembled sample had the same proportion of individuals as the entire population; thus, complete enumeration was used to obtain the data for the study since the researcher attempted to ensure that all the observable characteristics of the population were taken into consideration in the sample.



That means $n=N$

Where;

n = sample size and N = population

Table 3.1: List of Selected Three and Four Star Hotels in Uyo Metropolis Selected for the Study

S/N	Names of Selected Three and Four Star Hotels in Uyo Metropolis	Location (Address)	Star Rating
1.	New Point Hotel	Atiku Abubakar, Uyo	Three Star Hotel
2.	Watbridge Hotel	IBB, Uyo	Four Star Hotel
3.	Decastle	Ewet Housing, Uyo	Three Star Hotel
4.	Villaview Hotel	Ewet Housing, Uyo	Three Star Hotel
5.	Eemjnm Hotel	Brooks Street, Uyo	Four Star Hotel
6.	Rosmohr Hotel	Ewet Housing, Uyo	Four Star Hotel
7.	Edinan Hotel	Aka Etinan, Uyo	Four Star Hotel
8.	De Latern Hotel	Idoro Road, Uyo	Three Star Hotel
9.	Camp Gee Hotel	Uyo, Ringroad 3	Three Star Hotel
10.	Tranquility Hotel	Aka Road, Uyo	Three Star Hotel
11.	Madella Queens	Calabar Itu, Itu	Three Star Hotel
12.	Davok Suites	Ewet Housing, Uyo	Three Star Hotel
13.	Datti Hotel	Ewet Housing, Uyo	Three Star Hotel
14.	Venus Hotel	Shelter Afrique, Uyo	Three Star Hotel
15.	Emrosy Hotel	Shelter Afrique, Uyo	Three Star Hotel
16.	Luton Park	Ewet Housing, Uyo	Four Star Hotel
17.	Tom's View	Aka Itiam, Uyo	Three Star Hotel
18.	Kosam Global Hotel and Suites	Abak Road Federal Housing	Three Star Hotel
19.	Ibom Icon Hotel	Nwaniba, Uyo	Four Star Hotel

Source: *Researcher's Compilation, (2023)*

Sources and Nature of Data

Data for this research was collected from primary sources. This is because the researcher adopted the survey research design for the study. The primary data were obtained with the use of questionnaire, designed to enable respondents express their independent opinions. The data will be collected from employees of 19 selected three and four star hotels within Uyo Metropolis. The secondary data were collected from the company's annual reports, newsletters, official diaries, brochures, textbooks and academic journals.



Design and Administration of Research Instrument

The questionnaire copies will be distributed to 387 employees of selected 19 selected three and four star hotels within Uyo Metropolis of Akwa Ibom State of which 384 copies of questionnaire was correctly filled and retrieved by the researcher. The survey instrument will have two sections; the first section contains questions about the respondents' demographic data including gender, age, and educational level, employee's position in the company as well as the employee's duration in the hotel. The second section will make up of items designed to elicit information relating to the effect of service promotion mix strategies on marketing performance effect of hotels within Uyo metropolis in Akwa Ibom State. These includes questions that will measure the effect of advertising, public relations, events/sponsorships and internet/interactive marketing and the third section will includes questions about marketing performance. The data collecting questionnaire was a close-ended questionnaire where the researcher gave the respondents options from where they choose the one or ones that most represent their views, opinions, attitudes or behaviour. The researcher will adopt a five-point Likert scale for the questionnaire which was rated as follows:

Strongly Agreed (SA) =4

Agreed (A) =3

Disagreed (D) =2

Strongly Disagreed (SD) =1

Undecided (UD) =0

Model Specification

Marketing performance was estimated as a direct function of some service promotion mix strategies (public relations, events/sponsorships and internet/interactive marketing)

This can be expressed in functional equation form as;

$$Y = F (X_1, X_2, X_3,)$$

Recoded to represent the variables, it is presented as;

$$MP= F (PR, ES, IIM)$$

The model representing the relationship that exists between each independent variable (X_1 , X_2 , X_3) and the dependent variable (Y) was expressed in this form;

$$H_{01}: Y = a_0 + b_1 X_1 + e$$

$$H_{02}: Y = a_0 + b_2 X_2 + e$$

$$H_{03}: Y = a_0 + b_3 X_3 + e$$



To represent the variables in use, the equations were presented as:

$$H_{01}: MP = a_0 + b_1 PR + e$$

$$H_{02}: MP = a_0 + b_2 ES + e$$

$$H_{03}: MP = a_0 + b_3 IIM + e$$

Where: MP (Y) = Marketing performance

PR(X₁) = Public Relations

ES(X₂) = Events/Sponsorships

IIM(X₃) = Internet/Interactive Marketing

e = error term

The above estimated equations are linear function which was used in testing the model separately.

Method of Data Analysis

The questionnaire was edited for consistency and completeness, data were analyzed and explained to suit the objectives. The Spearman rank order correlation coefficient was used in testing the hypotheses formulated for the study at a 0.05 level of significance. Spearman rank order correlation coefficient was used to test the hypotheses. This is because it is more effective in ascertaining if the two non-parametric data samples with ties are correlated.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Test of Hypothesis One

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between Public Relations and Marketing Performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.847 ^a	.718	.716	2.14541

a. Predictors: (Constant), Public Relations

**ANOVA^a**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1689.225	1	1689.225	367.000	.000 ^b
	Residual	662.802	364	4.603		
	Total	2352.027	365			

a. Dependent Variable: Marketing performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Public relations

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.897	.725		8.129	.000
	Public relation	.735	.038	.847	19.157	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Marketing performance

The table above with R value of 0.847 indicates that there is a significant influence between the dependent and the independent variables. The R-Square value of 0.718 implies that about 71.8% of the variation in marketing performance was explained by public relations. The F-calculated value of 367.000 and P-value of 0.000 implies that the model was adequate. That is, the independent variable was able to explain the dependent variable very well. The constant value of 5.897 indicates that keeping independent variable (public relations) constant, marketing performance will remain at 5.897. The coefficient of public relations was 0.735 which means that a unit change in public relations will lead to 0.735 unit change in marketing performance. The P-value of 0.000 means that the effect of public relations on marketing performance was statistically significant.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between Events/Sponsorship and Marketing

Performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.900 ^a	.810	.808	1.76312

a. Predictors: (Constant), Events/Sponsorship

**ANOVA^a**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1904.392	1	1904.392	612.625	.000 ^b
	Residual	447.635	364	3.109		
	Total	2352.027	365			

a. Dependent Variable: Marketing performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Events/Sponsorship

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.686	.690		3.894	.000
	Attitude	.853	.034	.900	24.751	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Marketing performance

The table above with R value of 0.900 indicates that there is a significant effect between the dependent and the independent variables. The R-Square value of 0.810 implies that about 81.0% of the variation in marketing performance was explained by events/sponsorship. The F-calculated value of 612.625 and P-value of 0.000 implies that the model was adequate. That is, the independent variable was able to explain the dependent variable very well. The constant value of 2.686 indicates that keeping independent variable (Events/Sponsorship) constant, marketing performance will remain at 2.686. The coefficient of attitude was 0.853 which means that a unit change in events/sponsorship will lead to 0.853 unit change in marketing performance. The P-value of 0.000 means that the influence of events/sponsorship on marketing performance was statistically significant.

Test of Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between Internet/Interactive Marketing and Marketing Performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.896 ^a	.802	.801	1.79810

a. Predictors: (Constant), Internet/Interactive

**ANOVA^a**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1886.450	1	1886.450	583.466	.000 ^b
	Residual	465.578	364	3.233		
	Total	2352.027	365			

a. Dependent Variable: Marketing performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Internet/Interactive

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.918	.738		2.600	.010
	Internet/Interactive	.921	.038	.896	24.155	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Marketing performance

The table above with R value of 0.896 indicates that there is a significant effect between the dependent and the independent variables. The R-Square value of 0.802 implies that about 80.2% of the variation in marketing performance was explained by Internet/Interactive. The F-calculated value of 583.466 and P-value of 0.000 implies that the model was adequate. That is, the independent variable was able to explain the dependent variable very well. The constant value of 1.918 indicates that keeping independent variable (Internet/Interactive) constant, marketing performance will remain at 1.918. The coefficient of Internet/Interactive was 0.921 which means that a unit change in Internet/Interactive will lead to 0.921 unit change in marketing performance. The P-value of 0.000 means that the effect of Internet/Interactive on marketing performance was statistically significant.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

From the findings, the study shows that there is a significant positive relationship between the three proxies of service promotion mix strategies and marketing performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State.

The first hypothesis shows that public relations influences marketing performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State with a regression coefficient of 0.735. The second hypothesis shows that event/sponsorship influences marketing performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State with a regression coefficient of 0.853 while the third hypothesis shows that internet/interactive marketing influences marketing performance of indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State with a regression coefficient of 0.921.



CONCLUSION

The findings of the study clearly show that embracing service promotion mix dimensions does improve marketing performance. The empirical results of the study clearly highlight that those indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State who are ardent in adopting the modern promotion mix and incorporating it into their business strategies, have achieved above average performance and have sustainably changed their businesses by synchronizing their customers, business processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations were arrived;

- i. Indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State that have not been using public relations to a large extent should do so in order to boost their marketing performance.
- ii. Indigenous hotels in Akwa Ibom State should engage in event/sponsorship in order to showcase their brand in events within the state.
- iii. Advertising campaign should be emphasized more on the internet since a good number of the population are using this new platform.

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