

Measuring Guest Attitudes Towards Effective E-Marketing Strategies for Five-Star Hotels

Wajdy Omran*

Abstract *This research explores the impact of e-marketing strategies on guest attitudes in five-star hotels in Syria, with a focus on understanding guests' perceptions of these digital approaches. Despite the growing importance of e-marketing, there remains limited empirical examination of its effectiveness in the Syrian hotel industry, which this study addresses by examining guest satisfaction and engagement. Data were collected via survey and in-depth interviews with page subscribers and hotel management, providing both quantitative and qualitative insights. Findings showed that page attractiveness and ease of access positively impact guest attitudes, while inadequate information and limited responsiveness from administrators reduce satisfaction. Younger, local subscribers especially females reported higher satisfaction with hotel e-marketing, contrasting with lower satisfaction among public sector employees. These insights highlight the importance of visually engaging, accessible, and informative content to foster positive guest perceptions. This study contributes to the literature by highlighting specific guest segments' varied responses to e-marketing in tourism, underscoring the need for tailored strategies. Providing actional guide for Syrian hotel professionals/managers to enhance page credibility and engagement by aligning content with guest expectations and preferences, thereby improving overall service perception and guest loyalty.*

Keywords: *E-Marketing Strategies, Hotel Industry, Guest Satisfaction, Hospitality Marketing*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development and deployment of information technology has positively changed the functioning of industries and so has it been with the hospitality industry (O'Connor & Murphy, 2004). It is shifting toward internet marketing that enables hotels to reach an extended base of clientele who can interact with them and personalize service. E-marketing becomes very important if a hotel wants to remain competitive (Law et al., 2020). The main advantages of e-marketing are high accessibility, cost efficiency, and ability to use different types of interactive communication channels to meet the expectations of modern customers (Wynn & Jones, 2022). However, even with the increasing trend in the adoption of e-marketing strategies, there exists a marked difference in the level of implementation and effectiveness across hotels within diverse economic and cultural settings (Tellis et al., 2019). This difference indicates the need for further investigation into the specific dynamics of e-marketing in diverse hotel settings.

Previous research has examined numerous facets characterizing e-marketing in hotels, its impact on guest satisfaction, loyalty, and brand perception (Alnawas & Hemsley-Brown, 2019; Chiang, 2020). Such studies did suggest that if applied correctly, e-marketing strategies could ramp up guests' attitude toward hotels in terms of engagement and loyalty (Al-Bourini et al., 2021; Alhawamdeh, 2023). Nevertheless, the academic community has reached mixed results about e-marketing affecting hotels, particularly regions with high infrastructural discrepancies and vast digital literacy differential (S. Zhang et al., 2024). In a region such as Syria, where poor economic and infrastructural conditions impinge on business conduct, the fact that e-marketing may well facilitate guest engagement is complex, and perhaps not so impactful (Dabrowski et al., 2019). Nevertheless, these also raise an important question: To what extent can e-marketing be said to function in hotel environments constrained by such barriers, and therefore how much do these frustrations in experience affect guest perceptions and engagement?

* Department of Management, School of Economics, Management and Political Science, Centre for Research in Economics and Management (NIPE), University of Minho, Braga, Portugal. Email: id9909@alunos.uminho.pt (Corresponding author)

A multitude of studies have examined the impact of e-marketing within the hotel context on guest-related constructions such as satisfaction, loyalty, and perception of brand. The studies supported that the usage of e-marketing has impacted the guests' attitude towards a hotel in relation to its engagement and loyalty when implemented correctly (Khalayleh & Al-Hawary, 2022; Wang & Wong, 2021). However, extrapolating such findings has left the academic community divided over the impact of e-marketing on hotels, especially in regions where infrastructural and domain wide digital inefficiencies coexist (Davras & Caber, 2019). In countries such as Syria, with poor economic and infrastructural conditions of conducting business, the proposition that e-marketing will strengthen guest engagement is simplistic and non-critical (Alasfar, 2023; Toual et al., n.d.) But this also raises a very important question: To what extent can one claim that e-marketing works in hotel settings caught in such constraints; and to what degree do these frustrations in experience continue to, in turn, affect guest perceptions and engagements?

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Service Quality and Guest Satisfaction in Economically Constrained Hotels

Service quality in e-marketing has a crucial factor for guest satisfaction in the hospitality industry (Ukaj & Mullatahiri, 2019). Effective e-marketing enables hotels to reach a broader guests, build relationships and foster loyalty through efficient and personalized service (Shuai & Wu, 2011), superior service quality can help mitigate limitations by enhancing guest perceptions and engagement (Chand, 2010; Nunkoo et al., 2020). High-quality service builds a strong competitive advantage by attracting and retaining guests, which is vital for revenue stability, especially in financially constrained environments where guest loyalty is essential for survival (Sigala, 2018).

Service quality reflects a hotel's ability to meet or exceed guest expectations through its service delivery. Originally captured SERVQUAL dimensions (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy), service quality has been expanded to include digital interactions (Setiono & Hidayat, 2022). In e-marketing service quality refers to the ease of access to information, promptness in responding to inquiries and reliability in deliver promised online services (Zeithaml et al., 2002). This expanded conceptualization recognize that guests interact with hotels through digital platforms, which must deliver the same quality standard as face-to-face services (Kester S. Ong et al., 2024).

The expectancy-disconfirmation theory (EDT) posits that guest satisfaction results when the perceived service exceed expectations. Research has consistently support this theory within the hospitality industry, showing that service quality is positively associated with guest satisfaction and loyalty (Pereira et al., 2015). Several studies in hospitality has highlighted how responsiveness and reliability in digital channels improves guest satisfaction (Abdulrab & Hezam, 2024; Ciasullo et al., 2021). However, research in regions with economic constraints, where digital access may be limit, remain scarce (Hackl & Najdi, 2024). In such contexts, the challenge lie in delivering consistent, quality service through online platforms to ensure guest satisfaction (Zhao et al., 2025), despite a wealth of research on quality of service, studies that explore the concept in economically constrained contexts remains limited. In these settings, hotels may faces challenges such as limited digital infrastructure and varying levels of digital literacy among guests (Lattacher & Wdowiak, 2023). Understanding the impacts of service quality on guest satisfaction in such regions is essential for developing strategies for meeting guests' needs within these limitations (F. Zhang et al., 2023). Addressing this gap will provide practical insights for hoteliers optimizing e-marketing efforts in economically challenged settings which can lead to improve guest satisfaction and retention, thus we hypothesis:

H1: Higher service quality in e-marketing positively associated with guest satisfaction in hotels operating under economic constraints.

Ease of Access and Guest Loyalty

Ease of access to information is a fundamental aspect of guest service in e-marketing, allowing guests to interacts with a hotel's online presence. In the hospitality industry, accessible reduces friction in guest interactions and decision-making processes (C. K. H. Lee et al., 2024). By providing clear and easily accessible informations, hotels enhance guest trust and foster loyalty (Chang et al., 2022). For regions with constrained digital infrastructure, ensuring ease of access becomes critical, as guests may has limited opportunities to engage with hotel services offline. Ease of access refers to the Guest-friendliness of digital platforms, encompassing website/app navigation, speed and accessibility of essential informations (Sánchez-Franco & Aramendia-Muneta, 2023). Unlike traditional in-person service, where interaction is direct, digital access must ensure that guests find relevant information quickly and without difficulty. When access is easy, guests are more likely to remain engaged with the hotel brand (S. Lee et al., 2023). This concept include aspects such as responsive website design, efficient loading times, and an intuitive Guest interface, all of which contribute to

a positive Guest experience in e-marketing (Chen & Lehto, 2025). Previous research support that ease of access is related positively with guest loyalty particularly in digital settings. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) suggests that guests are more likely develop favourable attitudes and intentions toward brands, providing a smooth, accessible online experience (Han et al., 2024). For example, when guests can easily navigates a hotel's online resources, they feel satisfied and develop a sense of loyalty (Alam et al., 2023). However, studies focusing on ease of access in regions with digital access constraints lacking, highlighting a need for further investigation. Despite the importance of digital access influence guest loyalty, limited research on how ease of access affects loyalty in regions with significant infrastructural limitations (Belhadi et al., 2023). Guests may face barriers such as inconsistent internet connectivity, limited mobile device accessibility, or poor website performance. Investigating this relationship will help hotels in constrained regions understand how enhances their digital services to foster loyalty, even when guests may face access challenges, thus we formulate this hypothesis:

H2: The ease of access to online information in e-marketing positively impacts guest loyalty for hotels facing infrastructural challenges.

Credibility and Guest Trust in E-Marketing

Credibility refer to the trustworthiness and authenticity of a brand's digital content in e-marketing (Alamoudi et al., 2023). In hospitality, where guests count on online information make informed decisions, the credibility of e-marketing efforts is crucial in building trust (Rungruangjit, 2022). Ensuring credibility through transparent, accurate information is especially important in regions where guests may have varying levels of digital literacy, as it helps establish trust and fosters long-term engagement (Zhao et al., 2025).

Credibility in digital formats, which comprises of accuracy and source reliability (Dimitrios et al., 2023). In e-marketing, credibility gives honest, pertinent and dynamic data that visitors will utilize (Sparks et al., 2016). Credibility in a digital environment needs to be established through the quality of information, through online interactions done with transparency and good faithless which are vital for trust building; also transferring experience that expect intension behavior from guests (Li & Tsai, 2022).

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) suggests that when guests process information via the central route it because they are motivated and able to evaluate the credibility of that information, whereas processing the peripheral route indicates a lack of motivation and ability

(Shao et al., 2023). This study states that research proves guests consider e-marketing content more credible than any other brand-related material leading them to trust the valuable information and being inclined towards either engaging or dropping out from a brand (Dimitrios et al., 2023). Although, the need for credibility cues will increase in regions with low digital literacy so that the guests can trust their online information (Fu et al., 2024). While comprehensive work has done on the role of the e-marketing, limited researchs has analyzed issues requiring various levels of digital literacy and their significance to credibility. Building credibility can be the most important of e-marketing in economic areas where digital literacy might not be high, since guests would rely on trust when engaging.

H3: Credibility of e-marketing content significantly affect guest trust and engagement in regions with variable digital literacy.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Procedures

Data were collected using online survey designed to investigate the relationship between e-marketing service quality such ease of access, credibility, responsiveness guest satisfaction and loyalty in hotels within economically constrained regions. We selected these hotels: Four Seasons Hotel Damascus, Sheraton Damascus Hotel, Sheraton Aleppo Hotel, Cham Palace Hotel Damascus, and Talisman Hotel.

The survey divided into several sections to address several aspects of e-marketing service quality and guest perceptions. Each section of the survey corresponded to a specific stage of the guest journey and the core concepts of study: Section 1: Demographics and Digital Experience. This section collected data on participant demographics, such as age, gender, level of digital literacy. Additionally, questions on internet usage frequency and familiarity with digital services were included to contextualize the respondents' backgrounds and ensure they adequate experience with the hotel's e-marketing channels. Section 2: E-Marketing Service Quality – This section include items measuring participants' perceptions of service quality in the hotel's e-marketing, specifically focusing on ease of access, credibility, and responsiveness. Questions in this section were adapted from establish scales (e.g., SERVQUAL) to reflect e-marketing contexts (Sharma et al., 2024). Respondents rated aspects such as the accessibility of online informations, the reliability and accuracy of online content, and the responsiveness of hotel staff via digital platforms. Section 3: Guest Satisfaction and Loyalty, the last section captured data on guest satisfaction

and loyalty, Questions in this section assessed participants' overall satisfaction with the hotel's online services and whether would be likely to recommended or return to the hotel, This section was critical for testing hypotheses on the relationships between service quality and guest loyalty.

The survey was conduct online to ensure accessibility and ease of use, especially for participants who had engaged in the hotel's online services, to increase reliability, cultural relevance, the survey was initially pilot teste with a small sample representative of the study's target demographic, which provided feedback to refine questions and improve clarity.

Sample Size and Participant Characteristics

The target population for the survey included guests who had interacted with the hotel's e-marketing channels, such as its website or social media platforms, to be eligible, participants were required to be at least 18 years old, has used the hotel's digital services within the last 12 months, and have engaged with its e-marketing content at least once. These criteria ensured that respondents had relevant experience with the hotel's digital services, which is essential for evaluating perceptions of service quality. Individuals under 18 or those with no interaction with the hotel's e-marketing was excluded. A power analysis was conducted to determine an appropriate sample size, with an expected medium effect size (Cohen's $f = 0.25$), an alpha level of 0.05, and power of 0.80, the analysis indicated a minimum sample approximately 200 participants. To enhance the robustness of results, 250 responses were target, allowing for any incomplete or invalid responses to be excluded without compromising statistical power, participant demographics, including digital literacy and internet use frequency, were collected to provide insights into the diverse backgrounds of respondents and to explore any potential demographic impacts on perceptions of e-marketing quality.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), chosen for robust data handling capabilities and suitability the study's statistical requirements (Plume, 2003). The analysis aimed test the hypotheses and provide insights into the role of service quality in e-marketing for guest satisfaction and loyalty. Descriptive analyses summarized the demographic profile of participants and responses to survey items. Measures of central tendency (mean and median) and variability (standard deviation) provided an overview of general participant characteristics and initial trends in responses regarding e-marketing quality, this step allowed better understanding of the overall sample and supported the interpretation of further analyses. To verify the reliability of the survey items within each construct, Cronbach's alpha was calculated. An alpha value of 0.7 or higher was considered acceptable, ensuring the internal consistency of items. Additionally, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to confirm the factor structure and validate those items grouped as expected within each service quality construct, further enhancing the validity of the measurement tool (Howard, 2023).

The Results

The following analysis presents key findings from the T-test, focusing on guest satisfaction with various aspects of the hotel's Facebook page. The results are organized into thematic categories, with each table summarizing the relevant aspects, mean satisfaction scores, significance, and interpretation.

The analysis in Table 1 shows mixed satisfaction levels regarding the adequacy of information on the hotel's e-marketing page. Guests expressed dissatisfaction with the depth of information, particularly concerning booking details. While information clarity scored positively, there were gaps in comprehensiveness.

Table 1: Information Adequacy on Hotel's Facebook Page

Information Aspect	Mean	Std. Dev.	Satisfaction Level	T-Test Sig.	Interpretation
Comprehensive service info	2.89	1.032	57.8% Negative	0.031	Insufficient detail in service information.
Clarity of booking information	2.7	1.121	54.0% Negative	0	Poor booking detail, contributing to Guest dissatisfaction.
Ease of understanding	3.27	0.953	65.4% Positive	0	Information is clear but lacks depth in some areas.

As Table 2 shows, accessibility of the page was rated positively, particularly in terms of finding the page. Ease

of interaction received a more moderate score, indicating a need for improvement in facilitating guest interaction with the hotel.

Table 2: Accessibility of Hotel's Facebook Page

Accessibility Aspect	Mean	Std. Dev.	Satisfaction Level	T-test Sig.	Interpretation
Ease of finding the page	3.24	1.176	64.8% Positive	0	The page is easily located, aiding Guest access.
Ease of interaction	3.03	1.105	60.6% Neutral	0.646	Moderate interaction ease can improve for better access.

The credibility factors, presented in Table 3, were rated neutrally to positively. Accuracy of displayed information received a neutral rating, while the truthfulness of advertised

benefits was viewed more favorably, indicating general trust in promotional claims.

Table 3: Credibility of Hotel's Facebook Page

Credibility Aspect	Mean	Std. Dev.	Satisfaction Level	T-Test Sig.	Interpretation
Accuracy of displayed information	2.97	0.822	59.4% Neutral	0.422	Mostly accurate, though there are occasional inconsistencies.
Truthfulness of advertised benefits	3.19	0.896	63.8% Positive	0.000	Guests trust promotional claims.

Table 4 highlights that the attractiveness of the page was rated highly, particularly in design and visual appeal. Guests

found the visual presentation engaging, which contributes positively to the e-marketing strategy.

Table 4: Attractiveness of Hotel's Facebook Page

Attractiveness Aspect	Mean	Std. Dev.	Satisfaction Level	T-Test Sig.	Interpretation
Design appeal	3.42	0.795	68.4% Positive	0.000	Strong visual appeal; effectively engages Guests.
Visual appeal compared to competitors	3.16	0.808	63.2% Positive	0.000	Competitive visual quality that attracts Guests.

DISCUSSION

The current study aim to examine the role and impact of e-marketing strategies in Syrian hotels, focusing on how digital marketing practices are being utilized to engage tourists/guests, enhance brand visibility, and drive booking decisions in the context of the Syrian hospitality sector. Given the political and economic challenges faced by the country, understanding how hotels leverage e-marketing tools to remain competitive in the international tourism market is crucial (Köseoglu et al., 2021). This research aimed to provide insights into the adoption of e-marketing strategies and their effectiveness in improving customer engagement and hotel performance.

The findings of the study revealed that while many Syrian hotels has made some efforts to integrate e-marketing tools such as social media platforms, websites, and email marketing, a massive portion of hotels still relies on traditional marketing channels, such as word-of-mouth and local advertising (Shen et al., 2022), which limits their ability to reach international tourists. This finding aligns with the study's aim to explore the digital marketing practices

of Syrian hotels but also highlight the gaps in strategy implementation, suggesting that many establishments are still in the preliminary stages of e-marketing adoption (van Laer et al., 2019).

The results are consistent with some findings in the literature that show hotels in emerging markets face challenges in fully adopting e-marketing strategies due to resource limitations, lacking of digital skills, and the unstable political and economics environment (Ma et al., 2022), contrasting with studies from more stable regions, which suggest that digital marketing has become a crucial tool for the hospitality industry to reach global markets and enhance customer experiences (Cabriló et al., 2024). The study's findings indicates that while e-marketing holds potential, Syrian hotels face unique challenges in its widespread application, primarily due to the infrastructure limitations and the lack of a cohesive national strategy for tourism promotion (Acar, 2024).

A novel aspect of this study focus on the interplay between the external environment marked by ongoing political instability and the internal constraints faced by Syrian hotels. Unlike studies from more developed tourism destinations,

which highlight the positive impact of e-marketing on hotel performance, this research underscores the importance of contextual factors in shaping digital marketing practices. Hotels in Syria are constrained by both limited internet access and a lack of effective digital marketing tools that could enhance their visibility on global platforms (Khoury, 1984), the interpretation of these findings suggest several key links with theory and context. The technology acceptance model (TAM) posits that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are crucial factors influencing the adoption of innovative technologies (Davis, 1989). In the context of Syrian hotels, many owners and managers perceive e-marketing tools as either too complex to implement or not immediately useful due to the unstable political climate and limit reach to international audiences. This explains the partial adoption of digital tools. Furthermore, the resource-based view (RBV) theory, which argue that firms can achieve competitive advantage through unique resources and capabilities (Monson, 2024), can be applied here, Syrian hotels face limitations in resources, such as trained personnel and access to advanced digital marketing technologies, which restrict their ability to compete effectively in the global market (Au & Ekiz, 2009). The findings suggest that Syrian hotels may needs to develop more localized and resource-efficient digital marketing strategies, focusing on creating engaging content for regional tourists rather than global platforms (Gray, 1997).

Theoretical Implications

This study provides several important theoretical contributions to the body of knowledge on e-marketing in the hospitality industry, particularly in emerg and conflict-affected markets. First, it enhances our understanding of how the unique context of Syria characterized by political instability, economic challenges, and limited infrastructure shapes the adoption and effectiveness of e-marketing strategies in hotels. While previous research has focused primarily on developed countries or stable emerging markets, this study sheds light on how external factors can significantly influences digital marketing practices. It underscores the importance of considering the socio-political context when studying technology adoption in the hospitality sector, a perspective that has been underexplored in the existing literature. Second, the study extends the technology acceptance model (TAM) and the resource-based view (RBV) theory by apply them in a context where both internal resource constraints and external environmental factors are crucial in shaping the digital marketing strategies of hotels, the findings suggests that perceived usefulness and ease of use of digital marketing tools are influenced not only by the technological capabilities of the hotels but also by

broader contextual factors such as infrastructure and political stability. This insight call for a nuanced application of these theories in unstable or resource-limited environments, thus enriching their scope and applicability, finally, the study contributes to the emerging field of digital transformation in tourism by offering a case study of a conflict-ridden country, highlighting the resilience and adaptability of businesses in navigating a rapidly evolving digital landscape despite significant external challenges. The findings from this study can inspire further research into e-marketing strategies in similar conflict-affected regions, help scholars understand how the intersection of technology and geopolitical instability affects business practices in the hospitality sector.

Practical Implications

The study highlight the importance of adopting digital marketing strategies that are tailored to the unique constraints and challenges faced by businesses in such contexts, for instance, Syrian hotels could benefit from focusing on cost-effective and locally relevant digital marketing tools, such as social media platforms popular within the region, rather than trying to compete on a global scale. This localized approach could help increases engagement with regional tourists while gradually building a stronger online presence. Second, the study suggests that hotel managers should prioritize improving their knowledge and skills related to digital marketing, since many managers in Syria perceive e-marketing as complex and not immediately useful, target training programs on the benefits and practical use of digital marketing tools could help shift these perceptions. This could be accomplish through partnerships with local universities, online courses, or industry associations that focus on digital skills development for hospitality professionals. Moreover, the study emphasizes the need for greater collaboration between government bodies, industry associations, and private sector stakeholders to creates a more supportive environment for digital marketing in the hospitality industry. For example, initiatives that improve internet connectivity, offer subsidies for digital marketing tools, or provide platforms for sharing best practices helping Syrian hotels overcome some of the resource limitations face. Finally, the results suggest that Syrian hotels should focus on creating unique and engaging content that highlights local culture, heritage, and experiences to attract both regional and international tourists, leveraging the distinct features of Syria cultural and historical tourism offerings, hotels can build a niche market online, despite the geopolitical challenges. This could involve using storytelling, high-quality images, and videos to showcase the country's heritage, along with engaging with online communities through social media platforms to fostering customer loyalty and advocacy.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the adoption and impact of e-marketing strategies in Syrian hotels, focusing on how digital marketing tools are utilized in the context of Syria's socio-political and economic challenges. It sought to explore the factors influencing the adoption of e-marketing and its effectiveness in improving hotel performance and customer engagement. The study found that while some Syrian hotels have adopted e-marketing tools such as social media and websites, their use remains inconsistent and limited. Many hotels continue relying on traditional marketing channels, preventing them from effectively reaching international markets. Barriers to broader e-marketing adoption included limited resources, poor internet infrastructure, and a lack of digital expertise. Despite these challenges, few hotels have begun to focus on regional digital marketing efforts, showing potential for growth in local markets. This study emphasizes the need for context-specific, resource-efficient e-marketing strategies for Syrian hotels. The findings highlight the potential for growth through regional marketing efforts and offer practical insights for improving digital marketing practices in conflict-affected hospitality sectors.

Limitation and Future Research

The study presented several limitations that open avenues for future research. The study's reliance on participants' subjective assessments of the hotel's Facebook page may have introduced bias, as perceptions can vary significantly based on personal expectations and demographic factors. Additionally, the findings primarily reflect the attitudes of guests within Damascus, limiting the generalizability of the results to a broader population. Future research could benefit from a more diverse sample across different regions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of customer attitudes toward electronic marketing in the hospitality sector. Another limitation involves the study's focus on a single hotel, which may restrict the findings' applicability to other types of hotels or geographic areas. Future studies could examine multiple hotels/hotel chains to assess the effectiveness of e-marketing strategies in different settings. Furthermore, future research could explore other variables influencing satisfaction with digital marketing efforts, such as the frequency of interactions on social media platforms/the specific types of content shared by hotels.

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