

**EFFECT OF MEDIA RELATIONS STRATEGIES ON PATRONAGE OF
SELECTED HOTELS IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Patronage is a big issue for any business because it directly influences overall performance of any company, whereby, the higher the patronage the higher the performance. However, patronage is shaped by a number of factors and this study seeks to assess the influence of media relations strategies on patronage of hotels in South East Nigeria. To attain this aim, quantitative research was designed with 510 responses gathered. Media relations strategies were measured with editorial writing, social media engagement and social media advertisement. Finding from the study reveal that these variables yield positive and significant influence on patronage of hotels. Therefore, there is a strong positive relationship between media relations strategies and the performance of hotels in South East Nigeria. It was concluded that hotel seeking to improve patronage should consider integrating editorial writing, social media engagement and social media advertisement in their promotional strategies.

Keyword: Advertisement, Engagement, Editorial Writing, Hotel, Patronage, Social Media,

Introduction

The role of the hospitality industry is crucial for local economies worldwide. Travel and tourism, being one of the largest global sectors, contributes significantly, generating \$6 trillion USD (equivalent to 9% of the global GDP) and supporting around 260 million jobs (World Tourism Organization, 2014). The hotel sector, a major source of employment, holds a significant potential to foster prosperity in local communities (Butler, 2008). Presently, tourism is recognized for its ability to generate wealth and economic growth internationally, and

Nigeria possesses numerous tourist attractions and resources that offer ample business opportunities for both local and foreign investors in the tourism sector. These opportunities can augment government revenue, particularly as the country diversifies its economy away from oil. Nigeria's diverse geographical features, such as the Savannah-Sahel in the North, the Hills and mountains in the East, and the Lagoons and Forests in the west, contribute to its potential to boost national revenue through tourism. However, the lodging aspect, which typically accounts for about fifty percent of tourist spending, must not be overlooked (Durodola & Oloyede, 2011).

The domains of Hotel, Motel, and Catering are integral components of tourism, and understanding the hotel industry's impact on growth necessitates considering its multiplier effect (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2016). The classification of hotels based on size, location, target audience, service levels, facilities, room count, ownership, and affiliations showcase their diversity. In developed countries, hotels influence more than just taxes, employment, income, and GDP, extending to create business activity across various sectors (Mensah, 2016). Hotel guests' expenditures extend to retail, recreation, transportation, and restaurants. Additionally, hotels serve as venues for business events, trade exhibitions, and conventions, contributing to economic expansion (Zengeni et al., 2013).

Nigeria's progress toward economic growth via hotel development is a significant endeavor. The hospitality industry's robust human resources and infrastructure development, coupled with the country's shift from oil dependence to tourism, underscore its potential. The hotel sector holds direct economic impacts on host communities through employment opportunities, structural advancements, income generation, and foreign exchange earnings (Amalu & Ajake, 2015). Moreover, it exerts indirect effects by supporting various tourism-related services like transportation, tour guides, arts and crafts, dining, security, and entertainment, thereby benefiting the local population through the multiplier effect (Amalu & Ajake, 2015). In the pursuit of economic expansion, the hotel sector, much like other businesses, requires tools like advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, and public relations. Media relations, a facet of public relations, offers a means of engaging with the target audience effectively. Successful media relations can attract and bolster patronage (Amalu & Ajake, 2015).

Media relations represents a specialized realm within public relations, focused on conveying an organization's key messages through media coverage. It involves collaborating with media outlets to positively and credibly communicate an organization's mission, policies, and practices (Adams, 2012). Coordinating directly with news producers, media relations encompass press conferences, releases, luncheons, awards, tours, briefings, editorials, documentaries, articles, interviews, social media, and more (Jane, 2008). It's crucial to distinguish between public relations and media relations, as the former extends beyond media to encompass the general public (Ridgway, 2006).

The media serves as a vital and credible communication channel, making media relations an indispensable component of a communication strategy. Understanding the media is key to optimizing communication outcomes (Joseph, 2016). Initiating interaction with the media presents unique challenges, given their autonomy in selecting stories of interest. Building a positive relationship with media professionals involves providing timely and engaging stories and visuals that align with their audience's interests (Cutuli, 2008). Media relations extends beyond reacting to proactive engagement, especially in the face of competition and

propaganda. Transparent and straightforward communication is vital for accurate reporting, making media relations crucial, particularly during times of business culture transformation and mergers (Varghese & Abdul-Raphman, 2014). Effective media relations contribute to positive publicity, enhancing an organization's image, while also protecting against potential reputational damage (Seitel, 2017). Ultimately, media relations is a cost-effective marketing tool used worldwide to reach target audiences through the media's broad reach and influence. It raises awareness, enhances understanding, and creates a positive organizational profile through favorable news stories and ongoing accomplishments (Adams, 2012).

In the present era, effective engagement with the media holds a crucial role in bolstering the successful operations of businesses, particularly within the hotel industry. Within this sector, skillful media relations equate to adeptly addressing an organization's concerns (Eja et al., 2020). Absent a well-devised strategy that effectively reaches the intended target audience, hotels have no means to attract patronage, ultimately impacting revenue growth (Stevens & Hisle, 2016). Envision the frustration a tourist might experience when embarking on an adventure without information about the tourist sites they plan to visit. Likewise, a hotel guest's experience can be compromised when they are inadequately informed about the hotel's services.

Regrettably, despite the substantial benefits hotels offer to sustain the hospitality industry and contribute to the economy, some hoteliers have encountered challenges in their communication strategies, particularly regarding media utilization (type, content, channel, personnel) (Eja, Inah, Ushie, Itu, 2020). Certain Nigerian hotels persist in using outdated communication mediums to market their offerings. Furthermore, some hotel management teams remain unaware of the potency of effective media relations strategies (such as social media, editorials, media conferences, documentary films, among others) in driving customer patronage. This lack of awareness might contribute to low customer turnout, diminished productivity, higher employee turnover, reduced market competitiveness, limited innovation, and more. Notably, these consequences can influence various aspects like hotel traffic, occupancy rates, ratings, and the type and quality of guests attracted (Ndu, 2016).

The result of the aforementioned scenario is that hotels lacking a proper understanding of media relations strategies are at risk of underperforming. Research has demonstrated that media relations can publicize government initiatives, raise awareness about organizational activities, and yield positive effects on business, hotel, and tourism industry performance. However, existing literature has yet to explore the impact of media relations on hotel patronage in the specific context of southeastern Nigeria, leaving a substantial gap in understanding. Hence, within this context, this research aims to ascertain the influence of media relations strategies on customer patronage of hotels in southeastern Nigeria. The objective is to recommend media relations approaches aligned with global best practices to address this gap and enhance the industry's effectiveness.

Literature Review

The Concept of Media Relations

Media relations has retained its significance as a pivotal domain within the field of public relations (Shaw & White, 2014). While media relations and public relations are often used interchangeably, they possess distinct nuances (Diamond, 2021). Although interconnected, they aren't synonymous. Generally, media relations strategies focus on achieving specific

objectives, such as creating or managing publicity. Another angle to media relations involves collaborating with the media to avert negative coverage or to provide balanced perspectives to mitigate harm (Diamond, 2021).

Supa and Zoch (2009) define media relations as a methodical, well-planned, purposeful, and mutually beneficial association between a public relations practitioner and a mass media journalist. Obierien (2014) describes media relations as a systematic, cooperative interaction between a company and mass media outlets like television, newspapers, and the internet. Cherwick (2018) asserts that media relations encompass how an organization narrates a story and how that message is disseminated through various media channels. According to Cherwick (2018), media relations comprise three core elements: the sender (organization) transmitting the message, the transmitter (media) delivering the information via platforms like television, radio, and newspapers, and the receiver (audience) absorbing the message and offering feedback.

Within every organization, one of the paramount functions of corporate communication is media relations. The advent of new digital media technology has elevated content services and delivery platforms beyond traditional media. Organizations employ diverse media, such as Twitter, Facebook, newspapers, Gmail, LinkedIn, blogs, and online portals, to convey information and news (Obierien, 2014). In today's landscape, organizations must effectively communicate their ideas, initiatives, and goals to specific segments of the population. Obierien (2014) emphasizes that the internet facilitates targeted communication with reporters, analysts, consumers, and opinion leaders. Public relations departments utilize tools like electronic mail, the internet, extracts, CD-ROMs, and websites. The evolution of media relations has been propelled and refined by the internet. Digital press kits are replacing traditional counterparts, product launches occur online, and interviews are conducted via digital platforms.

Theoretical Framework

Media Richness Theory

This work is founded on Media Richness Theory, also known as Information Richness Theory, it was originally formulated by Daft and Lengel (2009). This theory serves as a framework for assessing and comparing the effectiveness of various communication channels, such as phone calls, video conferencing, and email. For instance, while a phone call lacks the ability to convey visual cues like gestures, video conferencing can transmit such cues to a certain extent.

The central premise of Media Richness Theory posits that the complexity and uncertainty of a task determine the appropriate richness level of the communication medium. It contends that for conveying equivocal matters, richer and more personal communication channels are more effective than leaner, less rich ones. The primary application of this theory is in evaluating communication methods within organizations, especially to address challenges like unclear or convoluted messages. Notably, the empirical studies of this theory have typically explored the choice of communication medium by managers rather than the subsequent impact of its usage. A significant implication of Media Richness Theory is that senders must judiciously select communication channels. Senders using less rich media should recognize the limitations of these channels in terms of feedback, conveying multiple cues, tailoring messages, and expressing emotions. Organizations might find that important decisions necessitate face-to-face interactions due to the limitations of less rich mediums like email. The theory underscores that the importance of a message to a recipient correlates with the richness level required for

its effective communication. Different communication media offer distinct advantages and disadvantages; some are more immediate, while others convey vocal cues more accurately.

Given that Media Richness Theory defines information's "ability to alter understanding within a timeframe" (Daft 2009), it is deemed highly valuable for individuals and organizations seeking to convey messages. Effective and efficient communication hinges on the specific nature of the medium employed. There is no universal communication tool suitable for all scenarios in influencing the behavior of both employees and customers within an organization. Diverse communication strategies, such as public speaking engagements, sponsorships, mediation, newsletters, and events, serve different purposes. The choice of strategy is determined by the message's nature; for instance, if targeting rural areas where literacy rates are low, newsletters would be ineffective, and speaking engagements or sponsorships would be more appropriate. Urban audiences and organizational staff may benefit from face-to-face interactions, group meetings, or focus group discussions.

The relevance of Media Richness Theory to the present study lies in its assertion that mass media can discern and employ optimal and effective media relations strategies. These strategies can raise awareness and publicize a company's (hotel's) products, thereby attracting customer patronage.

Media Relations and Business Performance

Among the essential functions of corporate communication, media relations stand out as pivotal for every organization's success. Media plays a multifaceted role in advancing business growth. Regular interaction with the media, as highlighted by Silva (2009), fosters robust and positive relationships. Thus, it is imperative to consistently provide the media with accurate, comprehensive, and affirmative updates regarding an organization's initiatives, plans, projects, and undertakings. This consistent media engagement contributes to elevating the organization's standing and influence. Identifying key media contacts is crucial, and managers must leverage media opportunities to their fullest extent. Positive media coverage, whether on television, prominent newspapers, articles, or social platforms like Facebook and Twitter, significantly elevates a business's prominence (Silva, 2009).

Alhadid and Qaddomi (2016) conducted a study to explore the influence of media relations on company image in Jordan. Their objective was to elucidate the role of media relations in shaping company image, while also investigating the moderating role of social media in this relationship. Employing a survey design, the researchers gathered data from both primary and secondary sources. Their study population consisted of employees and management from Applied Science Private University in Jordan, from which a sample of 100 respondents was drawn. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the collected data. The findings indicated a positive impact of media relations on company image, with social media playing a significant moderating role. The study's conclusion emphasized that effective media relations contribute to a company's image and recommended investing in robust media relations strategies to enhance reputation.

Oladele et al. (2019) conducted a study focusing on the influence of facility visits on customer patronage within selected hotels in south-west Nigeria. Their research aimed to assess how facility visits contribute to increased customer patronage. The study employed a survey research design, using both primary and multistage sampling techniques. The sample encompassed 69 hotels of varying sizes. Data was collected via questionnaires and subjected

to descriptive and inferential analyses, including hierarchical multiple regression. The results revealed a positive and significant relationship between facility visits and customer patronage. The researchers concluded that well-organized facility visits can serve as indicators of customer patronage and recommended consistent planning and execution of facility visits, particularly during significant developments.

Mabweazara, Muneri, and Ndlovu (2020) undertook a study investigating the effect of news releases on clients' patronage of properties in Nairobi, Kenya. Adopting a survey design, their research used primary and secondary data sources and focused on selected real estate developers and property seekers. The sample comprised 120 respondents, and regression analysis was employed for data analysis. The study disclosed that news releases significantly influence client patronage of properties. The researchers concluded that timely and quality news releases are crucial for fostering patronage and recommended organizations, particularly property developers, to prioritize news releases as effective tools for disseminating information and generating awareness.

Chukwu and Ifediora (2014) delved into the impact of social media networks on consumer patronage in Nigeria, specifically examining Jumia and Konga Nigeria Limited. Their aim was to ascertain the influence of social media networks on consumer patronage. Employing a cross-sectional survey design, the study collected primary and secondary data from selected consumers of the two companies. The sample consisted of 200 respondents. Data analysis included ANOVA and chi-square tests. The study identified significant differences in consumer perceptions and highlighted substantial patronage of online retailers. The conclusion emphasized consumers' continued patronage of online retailers, despite varying perceptions of internet usage. The study recommended a strong presence on social media networks to facilitate effective communication with potential customers.

Varkaris and Neuhofer (2017) explored the impact of social media on consumers' decision-making process regarding hotels in Ghana. The study sought to understand the influence of social media on consumers' choices. Employing qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews, both primary and secondary data were utilized. The sample consisted of staff and customers from selected hotels in Ghana, totaling 240 respondents. Regression analysis was applied for data analysis. The research revealed a shifting dynamic in consumer information-seeking behavior, with social media significantly affecting decision-making processes. The study concluded that the effectiveness and consistency of a hotel's social media usage influence consumers' choices and recommended regular and effective use of social media for marketing and promotional activities.

Amalu and Ajake (2015) investigated the impact of public relations on customer repeat patronage of hotels in Calabar, Cross-Rivers state. Employing a survey research design, their study employed primary data and secondary information. The population included staff, management, and customers of selected 3-star hotels in Calabar, with a sample of 280 respondents. Regression analysis was used for data analysis, revealing a significant positive impact of public relations on customer repeat patronage. The study concluded that effective utilization of public relations strategies leads to customer loyalty, emphasizing the importance of regular and effective public relations practices for sustaining patronage.

In a similar vein, Gulbaha and Yildirim (2015) conducted research on the impact of social media channels on customer loyalty to hotels in Istanbul, Turkey. Using a survey research

design, the study focused on selected hotels and tourists in Istanbul. A sample of 260 respondents was drawn from the population, and the results showed that social media channels significantly and positively affect customer loyalty. The study concluded that customer loyalty is influenced by the efficacy of social media channels and recommended the adoption of multiple, effective, and functional social media platforms for business promotion.

Okoye and Chime (2018) investigated the effect of public relations strategies on customer loyalty in the hospitality industry in south-east Nigeria. Employing a survey design, the study focused on staff and management of selected hotels. The sample size was 240 respondents, and data analysis was carried out using regression analysis. The research revealed a significant positive impact of public relations strategies on customer loyalty, underscoring the importance of effective public relations for building and sustaining consumer loyalty. The study recommended the consistent use of public relations strategies in marketing and business operations.

Simpeh et al. (2011) explored the connection between publicity and customer patronage of three-star hotels in Accra, Ghana. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey design, the study encompassed staff, management, and customers of selected hotels. The sample size was 200 respondents, and data analysis included simple percentages, tables, and chi-square tests. The study's findings indicated that publicity significantly and positively affects customer patronage, highlighting the role of effective publicity in attracting and retaining customers. The research recommended active and efficient publicity tools for promoting hotel products.

Alao et al. (2016) evaluated the efficacy of social media platforms as tools for promoting and sustaining repeat patronage of fast-food restaurants in south-west Nigeria. Their study aimed to establish the impact of social media platforms on customer repeat patronage. Employing a survey design, the study engaged both primary and secondary data sources, targeting the staff and customers of selected fast-food restaurants. The sample size was 280 respondents, and data analysis involved chi-square and simple percentages. The study revealed that social media platforms significantly and effectively promote customer repeat patronage. The conclusion emphasized that the effectiveness of social media platforms directly affects customer loyalty, prompting the recommendation for consistent and strategic use of social media by fast-food establishments.

Kumar and Malik (2013) conducted a study in Accra, Ghana, focusing on the mass media's impact on the performance of selected hotels and customer satisfaction. Adopting a survey research design, the study targeted staff and customers of the hotels. With a sample size of 180 respondents, the study employed descriptive and inferential statistics for data analysis. The research uncovered that the mass media significantly influences hotel performance, particularly customer satisfaction. The study concluded that effective mass media engagement contributes to favorable customer perceptions and recommended regular engagement of mass media for promoting business operations.

Dennis and York (2015) investigated the effect of mass media intervention on the performance of government-owned hospitality establishments in Kenya. Using a survey research design, the study involved staff, management, and customers of selected government-owned hotels. With a sample of 120 respondents, the research employed regression analysis to analyze the data. The findings indicated that mass media intervention positively impacts business performance. The study concluded that successful government-owned hotels owe part of their success to

mass media involvement, suggesting that other hospitality entities consider engaging the mass media, particularly in the realm of public relations.

Zuka and Zimbah (2016) delved into the role of traditional media in promoting patronage of guest houses in rural communities in South Africa. Adopting a cross-sectional survey design, the study included managers and customers of 20 selected guest houses. The sample size was 200 respondents, and data analysis incorporated descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed a significant and positive impact of traditional media on patronage in rural guest houses. The study's conclusion highlighted the potential of various media forms, including traditional methods, for enhancing business patronage. The research recommended the use of traditional communication channels, such as town criers and local leaders, to promote hospitality businesses in rural settings.

Jomo and Abaku (2017) explored the influence of trado-cultural communication on promoting entertainment centers in local communities in Cape Town, South Africa. The study utilized a cross-sectional survey design, engaging rural dwellers through interviews and questionnaires. With a sample of 150 respondents, the t-test and z-test were used for data analysis. The research found a significant and positive impact of trado-cultural communication, such as festivals and rural celebrations, on the promotion of entertainment centers. The study concluded that trado-cultural media play a vital role in enhancing patronage and recommended the effective utilization of such communication methods to attract and promote local entertainment venues. Jang and Kim (2016) conducted research to assess the effectiveness of media briefings on the development of the hospitality industry in China. Utilizing a survey research design, the study involved media representatives and hospitality operators in China. A sample of 260 respondents was drawn, and ANOVA was employed for data analysis. The findings indicated a positive and significant impact of media briefings on the industry's development. The study concluded that well-executed media briefings contribute to industry growth, and it recommended fostering partnerships between the hospitality sector and the media for mutual benefit.

Handri and Pafadih (2018) conducted research in India to examine the effect of media luncheons as a form of media engagement on the growth of the hospitality sector. Employing a cross-sectional survey design, the study engaged both media representatives and hospitality stakeholders. The sample size was 240 respondents, and data analysis involved t-tests and z-tests. The research demonstrated a significant positive impact of media luncheons on hospitality sector growth. The study's conclusion emphasized the role of media engagement in fostering industry expansion and recommended regular engagement between media and hospitality stakeholders.

In view of the above discussions, the following hypotheses are adopted:

H1: Editorial writing does not yield significant influence on the decision of customers to patronise a hotel.

H2: Social media engagement does not yield significant influence on the decision of customers to patronise a hotel.

H3: Social media advertisement does not yield significant influence on the decision of customers to patronise a hotel.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research approach, utilizing a survey-based descriptive methodology. Data collection involved the use of a structured questionnaire, which was divided into two main sections. The first section concentrated on the variables central to the study, while the second section gathered demographic information from respondents. The study encompassed select Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the South-east region of Nigeria, specifically Aba North LGA (Abia State), Awka South LGA (Anambra State), Abakaliki LGA, Afikpo North LGA (Ebonyi State), Enugu North LGA (Enugu State), and Owerri Municipal LGA (Imo State). These LGAs were chosen due to their urban settings, substantial population, and significant hospitality activities.

The determination of the sample size for this research was facilitated by Stat Trek's Sample Planning Wizard tool (Bartlett, Kortrijk & Higgins, 2001), leading to a total of 510 responses gathered from both hotel staff and customers. Among these, 90 respondents (17.7%) were staff members, while the remaining 420 (82.3%) were customers. To ensure the questionnaire's validity, four academic staff members from the Department of Marketing, Faculty of Business Administration at the University of Nigeria Nsukka, assessed its face validity. Reliability was assessed using a test-retest method, and Spearman's Rank Correlation indicated the research instrument's reliability with a significant p -value < 0.05 . Data analysis was conducted using IBM's SPSS software, with a primary focus on establishing the relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

Data Analysis

The first analysis focussed on the demographic variables of the respondents. As evidenced in the Table 1., majority of the respondents were female (55%), followed by male (45%). In terms of age, majority of the respondents were aged 18-29 years old (38%), followed by those aged 30-40 years old (32%), those aged 40-50 years old (24%) and finally those above 50 years (6%). The marital status shows that majority of the respondents were single (60%), followed by the married (37%), divorced (2%) and finally separated (1%). Finally, the educational qualification shows that majority of the respondents had OND/NCE (35%), followed by those with WAEC/GCE (29%), those with HND/BSC (28%), those with MBA/M.Sc (6%), others (2%) and PhD holders (<1%). Essentially, the demographic variables indicate that the respondents are a good fit for this research as they meet the pre-defined respondents'

Table 1. Demographic Variables

Biography Info	Options	Freq	Percent
Gender	Male	105	45%
	Female	130	55%
	Total	235	100%
Age	18-29years	89	38%
	30-40year	76	32%
	40-50years	56	24%
	50years and above	14	6%
	Total	235	100%
Marital Status	Single	141	60%
	Married	88	37%
	Separated	2	1%

	Divorced	4	2%
	Total	235	100%
Educational Qualifications	WAEC/GCE	68	29%
	OND/NCE	83	35%
	HND/BSC	65	28%
	MBA/M.Sc.	15	6%
	PhD	1	0%
	Others	3	2%
	Total	235	100%

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: Editorial writing does not yield significant influence on the decision of customers to patronise a hotel.

Regression model: $Y = \alpha + \beta X + \mu \dots$ (For all observations $i, = 1, 2 \dots n$)

Where Y = customers' patronage

X = Documentary production

μ = error term of random variable

α = a constant amount

β = effect of X hypothesized to be positive

Hence, the regression (predict) equation will be $Y = 14.112 + 0.667X$

Table 2a: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.639 ^a	.556	.552	57.91131

a. Predictors: (Constant), documentary production

Table 2b: ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	16221.117	1	19110.019	6.103	.004 ^a
	Residual	7711.221	509	3131.060		
	Total	23932.338	510			

a. Predictors: (Constant), documentary production

b. Dependent Variable: membership growth

Table 2c: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	14.112	42.533		1.117	.028

Table 2a: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.639 ^a	.556	.552	57.91131
		.667	.312	.819
				3.710
				.019

Documentary
production

a. Dependent Variable: membership growth

Having analyzed the data from the questionnaire using regression analysis to determine if editorial writing has significant effect on customer patronage of hotels, the **Tables 2 a, b & c** revealed that the regression result shows the existence of significant result on the variables ($R^2_{\text{calc}} = .556$, $F = 6.103 >$ at $p < 0.05$). The significant level was found to be 0.04, and due to this we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate one which states *that editorial writing has significant positive influence on customer patronage of hotels*

Hypothesis Two: Social media engagement does not yield significant influence on the decision of customers to patronise a hotel.

Regression model: $Y = \alpha + \beta X + \mu \dots$ (For all observations $i, = 1, 2 \dots n$)

Where Y = customer patronage of hotels

X = editorial writing

μ = error term of random variable

α = a constant amount

β = effect of X hypothesized to be positive

Hence, the regression (predict) equation will be $Y = 116.031 + 1.964X$

Table 3a: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.513 ^a	.431	.442	30.46883

a. Predictors: (Constant), editorial writing

Table 3: ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20670.151	1	20670.151	22.265	.002 ^a
	Residual	2785.049	509	928.350		
	Total	23455.200	510			

a. Predictors: (Constant), editorial writing

b. Dependent Variable: customer patronage of hotels

Table 3c: Coefficients^a

Table 3a: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.513 ^a	.431	.442	30.46883

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	116.031	47.849		2.425	.004
	editorial writing	1.964	.416	.939	4.719	.004

a. Dependent Variable: customer patronage of hotels

Having analyzed the data from the questionnaire using regression analysis to ascertain if social media engagement has significant effect on customer patronage of hotels, the **Tables 3 a, b & c** revealed that the regression result shows the existence of significant result on the variables ($R^2_{calc} = .431$, $F = 22.265$ at $p < 0.05$). The significant level was found to be 0.02, and due to this we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate one which states *social media engagement has significant positive influence on customer patronage of hotels*.

Hypothesis Three: Social media advertisement does not yield significant influence on the decision of customers to patronize a hotel.

Table 4: Correlations

			Social media advertisement	Customer patronage
Correlation	Social media advertisement	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.672
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.014
		N	510	510
	Customer patronage	Correlation Coefficient	.672	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	.
		N	510	510

Having analyzed the data from the questionnaire using correlation analysis to examine if there is a significant relationship between social media advertisement and customer patronage of hotels, the **Table 4** revealed that the correlation result shows the existence of significant result on the variables ($r_{calc} = 0.672$ at $p < 0.05$). The significant level was found to be 0.014, and due to this we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate one which states *there is a significant positive relationship between social media advertisement and customer patronage of hotels*.

Discussion

The findings from the above analysis have proven the stated hypotheses. First, it was discovered that there is a positive and significant relationship between editorial writings and

patronage of hotels ($R^2_{\text{calc}} = .556$, $F = 6.103$ at $p < 0.05$). That is to say, when hotels engage in editorial writing of their services (leading to increased exposure), the customers will be more likely to patronize such hotel. This result is in line with that of Mabweazara, Muneri and Ndlovu (2020) who investigated the effect of news release on clients' patronage of properties in Nairobi, Kenya. The result showed that news release significantly affects client patronage of properties.

The second hypothesis analysis also revealed positive and significant relationship between social media engagement and patronage of hotels ($R^2_{\text{calc}} = .431$, $F = 22.265$ at $p < 0.05$). that is to say, when a hotel maintains strong social media presence, through which it uses to engage its customers actively, the customer will be more likely to gain interest and patronize the said hotel. This result is in line with that of Varkaris and Neuhofer (2017) who conducted research on the influence of social media on the consumers' hotel decision journey in Ghana. The finding reveals that the way consumers search hotel information have changed, as social media now play a significant role in influencing customers' decision-making process.

Finally, it was also found that there is a positive and significant relationship between social media advertisement and patronage of hotels ($r_{\text{calc}} = 0.672$ at $p < 0.05$). This result is in line with Jang and Kim (2016) who conducted research to evaluate the effectiveness of media briefing on development of the hospitality industry in China. The study result showed that media briefing has a significant positive effect on development of the hospitality industry in China.

Conclusion

Based on the discussions above, it is concluded that in order to enhance patronage, hotels should seek to integral editorial writing, social media engagement, and social media advertisement in their promotional strategies. This is because these three variables have been found to positively influence patronage.

Limitations and Future Research Direction

This research is limited in two ways. First, only three independent variables (editorial writing, social media engagement and social media advertisement) while considered among the multitude of variables that could possibly influence customers' patronage in the hotel sector. Secondly, the study was conducted in South East Nigeria. Therefore, this study limits understanding of how other factors can influence patronage in the hotels sector, as well as the possible application of the findings from this study in order parts of Nigeria.

One that note, it is recommended that future studies should seek to cover more variables not considered in this research, as well as extend the scope to cover other parts of the country. This will aid in validating the findings from this research as well as laying the foundation for development of new models and theories within the scope of this study.

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