



EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION ON STAR-RATED HOTEL PERFORMANCE: EVIDENCE FROM MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra28645>

DOI No: 10.36713/epra28645

ABSTRACT

The hospitality industry increasingly relies on digital technologies to enhance customer engagement, operational efficiency, and organizational competitiveness. Hotel websites have evolved into strategic digital assets influencing customer trust, booking conversion, online visibility, and hotel performance. However, empirical evidence regarding the contribution of website optimization to hotel performance among star-rated hotels in Kenya remains limited, particularly within coastal tourism destinations such as Mombasa County. This study evaluated the impact of website optimization on the performance of star-rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya. Specifically, the study examined the influence of website attractiveness, content adequacy, search engine visibility, and loading speed on customer purchase behaviour, repeat purchases, occupancy rates, profitability, and average daily rates. The study was anchored on the Resource Based View Theory and Commitment Trust Theory. A descriptive correlational research design was adopted targeting 90 marketing personnel drawn from 18 classified star-rated hotels in Mombasa County. A census approach was used, and primary data were collected using structured questionnaires measured on a five point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression analysis using SPSS version 26. The findings revealed that website optimization significantly and positively influences hotel performance. Website attractiveness significantly influenced customer purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.641, p < 0.05$), while content adequacy and search engine visibility significantly influenced occupancy rates and repeat purchases ($\beta = 0.687, p < 0.05$). Website loading speed significantly influenced profitability and average daily rates ($\beta = 0.598, p < 0.05$). The overall regression model explained 55.7% of the variation in hotel performance. The study concludes that website optimization is a strategic digital capability that enhances customer trust, direct bookings, competitiveness, and sustainable hotel performance. The study recommends continuous investment in website management, Search Engine Optimization, digital infrastructure, mobile responsiveness, and customer centred digital experiences.

KEYWORDS: Website Optimization, Hotel Performance, Digital Marketing, Search Engine Optimization, Hospitality Competitiveness, Mombasa County

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The hospitality industry is experiencing rapid digital transformation driven by technological advancement, increased internet penetration, smartphone usage, and changing consumer behaviour. Modern travelers increasingly rely on digital platforms to search for destinations, compare accommodation options, evaluate service quality, read online reviews, and complete bookings (Statista, 2023; Wang, Kim, & Rojas-Méndez, 2023). Consequently, hotel websites have evolved from basic information portals into strategic customer engagement platforms that influence customer trust, booking conversion, online visibility, and organizational competitiveness.

Website optimization refers to improving website functionality, responsiveness, visual attractiveness, content relevance, accessibility, search engine visibility, and user experience to enhance customer satisfaction and organizational outcomes. Optimized websites improve customer interaction through efficient navigation, mobile responsiveness, secure booking systems, and faster loading speed (Rahman, Hassan, & Islam, 2020; Wang & Kim, 2022). Research indicates that hotels with optimized websites experience stronger customer engagement, increased booking conversions, improved customer loyalty, and enhanced brand visibility (Vo, Chovancová, & Tri, 2020; Chang & Chiu, 2023). Rahman et al. (2020) established that website usability and content quality significantly influence customer satisfaction and online purchase intentions, while Han, Lee, and Chua (2023) found that visually attractive and responsive websites positively influence customer trust and booking intentions.



The growth of digital tourism markets has increased the importance of online visibility and digital competitiveness within hospitality industries. Nicolau, Xiang, and Wang (2024) observed that digital customer experiences increasingly influence hotel performance outcomes. Similarly, Van Huy and Thai Thanh (2024) established that customer perceptions regarding hotel website quality significantly affect customer satisfaction among star-rated hotels.

In developing economies, digital transformation within hospitality industries continues accelerating because of increased internet accessibility and mobile technology adoption (UNWTO, 2022). In Kenya, tourism remains a major contributor to employment creation, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development. Government policy frameworks such as Kenya Vision 2030 emphasize ICT integration and technological innovation in strengthening tourism competitiveness (Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, 2024).

Mombasa County remains one of Kenya's leading tourism destinations because of its coastal attractions and hospitality infrastructure. However, despite increased investment in digital marketing, many star-rated hotels continue experiencing challenges related to low direct bookings, inconsistent occupancy rates, customer retention difficulties, and dependence on Online Travel Agencies (Tourism Research Institute, 2024).

Recent African studies indicate growing recognition of digital competitiveness as a determinant of hotel performance. Fikadu, Alemu, Kibru, and Sharma (2025), Aroko, Muturi, and Mbugua (2025), and Maina-Njoka (2025) established that digital marketing and technological orientation significantly influence hotel performance. However, limited studies have specifically examined website optimization dimensions such as website attractiveness, content adequacy, search engine visibility, and loading speed within Kenyan hospitality contexts (Gençsoy, 2023; Arusho, 2023). This study therefore sought to evaluate the impact of website optimization on the performance of star-rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya.

1.2 Problem Statement

Star-rated hotels in Mombasa County continue experiencing performance challenges including inconsistent occupancy rates, low direct booking conversion, reduced customer retention, declining customer loyalty, and growing dependence on third party booking platforms. These challenges persist despite increased investment in digital marketing and website development initiatives (Tourism Research Institute, 2024).

Website optimization has increasingly been recognized as a critical digital marketing strategy capable of improving customer engagement, online visibility, customer trust, booking conversion, and organizational competitiveness. In ideal situations, optimized websites improve direct bookings, reduce customer uncertainty, strengthen customer relationships, and enhance profitability (Rahman et al., 2020; Wang & Kim, 2022).

However, within the Kenyan hospitality industry, and particularly among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County, many hotels continue experiencing challenges associated with poor website functionality, inadequate content quality, weak search engine visibility, slow loading speed, inconsistent mobile responsiveness, and ineffective user experiences. Such limitations may negatively affect customer interaction, booking behaviour, customer retention, and overall hotel performance (Aroko et al., 2025; Maina-Njoka, 2025).

Although previous studies have explored digital marketing and hospitality performance, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the specific contribution of website optimization to the performance of star-rated hotels in Mombasa County. Additionally, many existing studies lack strong theoretical grounding explaining how website optimization contributes to customer trust, digital competitiveness, and organizational performance within hospitality industries.

Furthermore, many studies focus on broader digital marketing dimensions without specifically examining website attractiveness, content adequacy, search engine visibility, and loading speed as strategic determinants of hotel performance. This creates contextual, theoretical, and empirical gaps regarding the strategic role of website optimization within hospitality environments in Kenya.

This study therefore sought to bridge these gaps by examining how website optimization influences customer purchase behaviour, repeat purchases, occupancy rates, profitability, and average daily rates among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya.

1.3 General Objective

To evaluate the impact of website optimization on the performance of star-rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya.

1.4 Specific Objectives

- i.) To examine the effect of website attractiveness on customer purchase behaviour among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County.



- ii.) To determine the influence of website content adequacy and search engine visibility on occupancy rates and repeat purchases among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County.
- iii.) To assess the effect of website loading speed on profitability and average daily rates among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

- i.) **H₀₁:** Website attractiveness has no significant effect on customer purchase behaviour among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County.
- ii.) **H₀₂:** Website content adequacy and search engine visibility have no significant influence on occupancy rates and repeat purchases among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County.
- iii.) **H₀₃:** Website loading speed has no significant effect on profitability and average daily rates among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study provides evidence useful for promoting digital transformation, ICT integration, and competitiveness within Kenya's tourism and hospitality sector. The findings offer practical insights to hotel managers on how website optimization influences customer engagement, booking conversion, occupancy rates, profitability, and customer retention. Technology providers and digital agencies may utilize the findings to design responsive and customer centred website solutions for hospitality enterprises. Additionally, the study contributes to hospitality and tourism literature by integrating the Resource Based View Theory and Commitment Trust Theory in explaining how website optimization influences hotel performance within digital tourism environments.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study was anchored on the Resource Based View Theory and Commitment Trust Theory. The theories explain the strategic and relational role of website optimization in influencing hotel performance through customer engagement, trust formation, digital competitiveness, and organizational capability within hospitality industries.

2.1.1 Resource Based View Theory

The Resource Based View Theory advanced by Barney (1991) argues that organizations achieve competitive advantage through effective utilization of valuable and inimitable resources. Barney (2001) further noted that strategic resources improve efficiency, competitiveness, and long term sustainability. Within hospitality industries, website optimization functions as a strategic digital capability that enhances visibility, customer interaction, booking conversion, and operational performance. Website attractiveness, content quality, search engine visibility, and loading speed collectively improve customer engagement and profitability (Aroko et al., 2025). The theory therefore explains how investment in digital infrastructure and customer centred websites improves hotel performance. However, critics argue that the theory gives limited attention to external environmental factors such as market competition and technological disruption (Kraaijenbrink, Spender, & Groen, 2010).

2.1.2 Commitment Trust Theory

The Commitment Trust Theory developed by Morgan and Hunt (1994) explains that successful organizational relationships depend on customer trust and commitment. Within hospitality environments, websites function as relationship management platforms where customers evaluate hotel credibility, professionalism, and reliability. Optimized websites strengthen customer trust through accurate information, responsive interfaces, secure booking systems, and user friendly navigation (Van Huy & Thai Thinh, 2024). Similarly, Han et al. (2023) observed that visually attractive and responsive websites positively influence booking intentions and customer confidence. The theory explains how website optimization influences customer purchase behaviour, repeat purchases, and customer loyalty through trust formation and positive digital experiences. Although the theory has been criticized for emphasizing relational dimensions while giving limited attention to organizational capabilities (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006), it complements the Resource Based View Theory by explaining the customer relationship dimension of website optimization within hospitality industries.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2.1 Website Optimization

Website optimization refers to the process of improving website functionality, responsiveness, visual attractiveness, content quality, loading speed, accessibility, and search engine visibility in order to improve customer experience and organizational outcomes (Rahman et al., 2020).



Within hospitality industries, website optimization enhances online visibility, customer engagement, booking conversion, customer retention, and digital competitiveness. Hotels increasingly utilize optimized websites to provide customers with information regarding accommodation services, pricing, reservations, customer support, and destination experiences (Wang & Kim, 2022).

According to Cheng et al. (2023), website quality significantly shapes customer perceptions regarding hotel reliability, professionalism, and service standards. Similarly, Nicolau et al. (2024) observed that customer digital experiences increasingly influence hotel performance and competitiveness within global tourism markets. Digital transformation and customer centred technological responsiveness increasingly influence customer experience and hospitality competitiveness within tourism industries (Tsotsou, 2022; Van Esch & Stewart Black, 2021).

This study operationalized website optimization using four dimensions: Website attractiveness, Content adequacy, Search engine visibility, loading speed. Website attractiveness refers to the visual appeal, professionalism, layout, graphics, and navigation quality of hotel websites. Content adequacy refers to the availability, relevance, accuracy, clarity, and accessibility of information provided on hotel websites. Search engine visibility refers to the extent to which hotel websites are discoverable through search engines using optimized keywords and Search Engine Optimization strategies. Loading speed refers to the time taken for website pages and features to load and become accessible to users across digital devices.

2.2.2 Hotel Performance

Hotel performance refers to the extent to which hospitality establishments achieve operational, customer, and financial objectives (Oukil, Soltani, & Al-Hajri, 2024). Hospitality performance may be measured using customer satisfaction, occupancy rates, customer retention, repeat purchases, profitability, revenue growth, and average daily rates (Aroko et al., 2025). Within digital tourism environments, hotel performance increasingly depends on customer online experiences, digital visibility, responsiveness, and service accessibility (Nicolau et al., 2024).

This study operationalized hotel performance using: Customer purchase behaviour, Repeat purchases, Occupancy rates, Profitability, Average daily rates. Customer purchase behaviour refers to customer willingness to make bookings and purchase hotel services through online platforms. Repeat purchases refer to the frequency with which customers revisit and continue utilizing hotel services. Occupancy rates refer to the proportion of available rooms occupied within a given period. Profitability refers to the financial gains achieved through hotel operations. Average daily rates refer to the average income generated per occupied room within a specific duration.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Website Attractiveness and Customer Purchase Behaviour

Website attractiveness significantly influences customer perceptions, trust formation, engagement, and purchase intentions within hospitality industries. Han et al. (2023) found that visually attractive websites positively influence customer booking intentions and online trust among hospitality customers. The study established that colour schemes, website layout, image quality, and ease of navigation improve customer satisfaction and engagement.

Similarly, Cheng et al. (2023) established that visual presentation and website information quality significantly influence customer evaluation of hotel quality and reliability. Chang and Chiu (2023) further observed that experiential website design enhances customer perceived value and improves customer interaction within star-rated hotel environments.

Within African hospitality environments, Gioko, Wambugu, and Karimi (2021) found that digital presentation and website professionalism significantly improve customer interaction and online booking performance among Kenyan hotels. Similarly, Maina-Njoka (2025) observed that customer centered digital presentation significantly strengthens hotel brand performance and customer retention within Kenyan hospitality industries.

Despite these findings, many studies broadly examine digital marketing and online branding without specifically isolating website attractiveness as a predictor of customer purchase behaviour. Additionally, limited studies focus on star-rated hotels within coastal tourism destinations such as Mombasa County.

2.3.2 Website Content Adequacy, Search Engine Visibility, Occupancy Rates, and Repeat Purchases

Website content adequacy and search engine visibility significantly influence online accessibility, customer retention, occupancy rates, and repeat purchases. Sharma, Sharma, and Chaudhary (2020) established that digital visibility and online accessibility significantly improve tourism competitiveness and customer acquisition. Similarly, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) observed that Search Engine Optimization improves website traffic, online visibility, and booking conversion within hospitality industries.



Websites containing accurate, updated, and accessible information improve customer trust and booking decisions because customers are able to compare services, pricing, accommodation features, and destination experiences efficiently (Rahman et al., 2020). Van Huy and Thai Thinh (2024) further established that hotel website quality positively influences customer satisfaction and repeat booking intentions through improved information accessibility and online interaction quality.

However, many studies focus on social media marketing and Online Travel Agencies without critically examining how website content quality and search engine visibility independently influence hotel occupancy and repeat purchases.

Limited empirical evidence also exists regarding the contribution of Search Engine Optimization to hospitality performance within developing tourism economies such as Kenya.

2.3.3 Website Loading Speed, Profitability, and Average Daily Rates

Website loading speed is a critical determinant of customer experience, booking conversion, and profitability within hospitality industries. Google (2021) established that websites with slow loading speeds experience increased bounce rates and reduced customer engagement. Customers are more likely to abandon websites that take longer to load, especially within mobile browsing environments. Similarly, Rahman et al. (2020) observed that fast and responsive websites improve customer satisfaction, online booking completion, and revenue generation. Nicolau et al. (2024) further noted that customer digital experiences and technological responsiveness increasingly influence hotel revenue performance and customer retention. Within hospitality industries, loading speed affects customer booking completion rates, occupancy levels, customer retention, and average daily rates because responsive websites improve user experience and accessibility (Oukil et al., 2024).

Despite growing recognition of website responsiveness, many studies examine general website quality without specifically linking loading speed to profitability and average daily rates within hotel industries.

2.4 Critique of Existing Literature and Research Gap

Existing literature demonstrates that website optimization significantly influences hospitality performance through customer engagement, booking conversion, trust formation, and digital competitiveness. However, several gaps remain evident.

First, many studies focus broadly on digital marketing, social media marketing, or Online Travel Agencies without specifically isolating website optimization dimensions such as attractiveness, loading speed, content adequacy, and search engine visibility (Gençsoy, 2023). Second, many previous studies examine customer satisfaction and online engagement without directly linking website optimization to measurable hotel performance indicators such as occupancy rates, profitability, repeat purchases, and average daily rates.

Third, limited studies within African hospitality environments integrate both strategic and relational theoretical perspectives in explaining website optimization and hotel performance.

Fourth, limited empirical evidence exists regarding website optimization among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County despite the region's significance as a major tourism destination.

This study therefore sought to address theoretical, contextual, and empirical gaps by examining the influence of website optimization on hotel performance among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County using the Resource Based View Theory and Commitment Trust Theory.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between website optimization and hotel performance among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County. The framework conceptualizes website optimization as the independent variable measured through website attractiveness, content adequacy, search engine visibility, and loading speed. These dimensions influence hotel performance measured through customer purchase behaviour, repeat purchases, occupancy rates, profitability, and average daily rates.

The framework is anchored on the Resource Based View Theory and Commitment Trust Theory, which explain that optimized websites enhance customer trust, digital competitiveness, customer engagement, and organizational performance within hospitality industries (Barney, 1991; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Han et al., 2023; Van Huy & Thai Thinh, 2024). As shown in Figure 1. The framework assumes that improvements in website optimization positively influence hotel performance outcomes among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County.

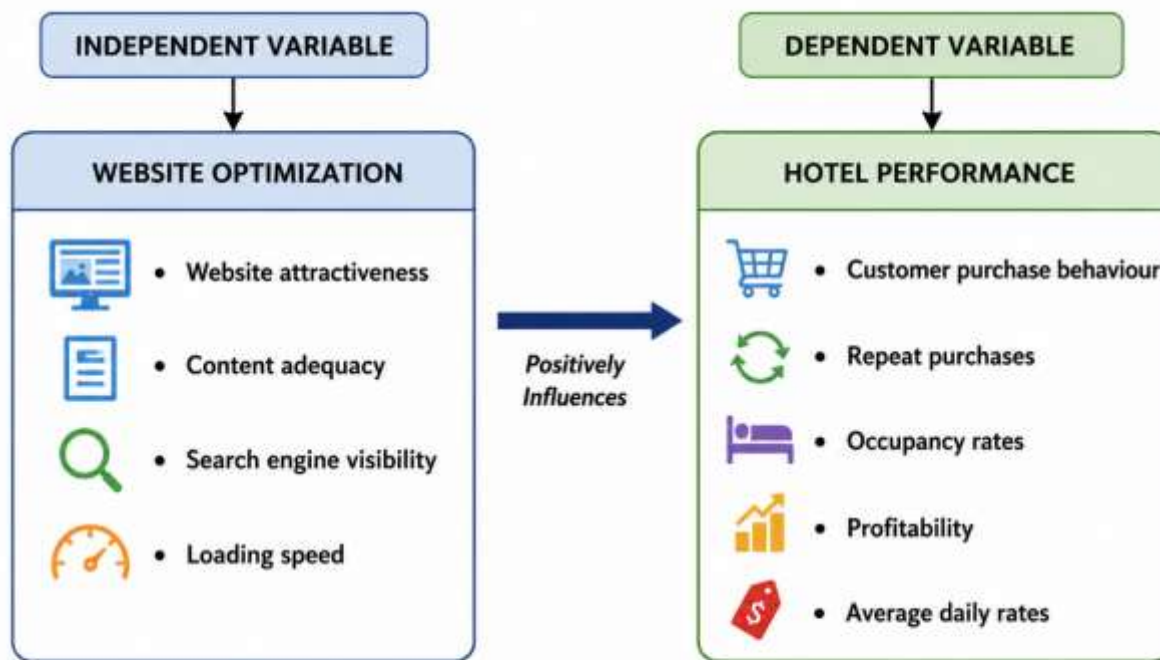


Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship Between Website Optimization and Hotel Performance*

Source: Researcher's Conceptualization (2025)

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive correlational research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to describe existing website optimization practices while examining the relationship between website optimization and hotel performance among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), descriptive correlational designs are suitable where the objective is to establish relationships among variables without manipulating the study environment. The design enabled the study to examine how website attractiveness, content adequacy, search engine visibility, and loading speed influence customer purchase behaviour, repeat purchases, occupancy rates, profitability, and average daily rates.

The descriptive aspect of the design facilitated collection of detailed information regarding current website optimization practices within hospitality establishments, while the correlational component enabled examination of statistical relationships between website optimization and hotel performance variables.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Mombasa County, Kenya. Mombasa County is one of Kenya's leading tourism destinations because of its coastal attractions, conference tourism, hospitality infrastructure, and international tourist appeal. The county hosts numerous classified hotels serving both domestic and international tourists.

Mombasa County was selected because of the high concentration of star-rated hotels and increasing adoption of digital marketing strategies within the hospitality sector. Despite increased investment in digital technologies, many hotels within the county continue experiencing challenges associated with occupancy rates, direct bookings, customer retention, and digital competitiveness (Tourism Research Institute, 2024).

The study area therefore provided an appropriate context for examining the influence of website optimization on hotel performance.



3.3 Target Population

The target population comprised marketing personnel from 18 classified star-rated hotels in Mombasa County as registered by the Tourism Regulatory Authority (2024). A reconnaissance survey established that each hotel had approximately five relevant respondents including general managers, marketing managers, ICT personnel, reservation officers, and marketing staff directly involved in digital marketing and website management activities. The total target population therefore consisted of 90 respondents.

Table 3.1 Target Population Distribution

Category of Respondents	Frequency
General Managers	18
Marketing Managers	18
ICT Personnel	18
Reservation Officers	18
Marketing Staff	18
Total	90

Source: Reconnaissance Survey (2025)

3.4 Sample Population and Sampling Technique

The study adopted a census approach involving all the 90 respondents from the 18 classified star-rated hotels in Mombasa County. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2019), a census approach is appropriate where the study population is relatively small and manageable. The approach enhances representativeness and minimizes sampling error because all eligible respondents participate in the study. The census technique was therefore considered appropriate because it enabled comprehensive collection of views from all respondents involved in website management and digital marketing activities within the selected hotels.

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires containing closed ended questions measured on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 representing strongly disagree to 5 representing strongly agree. The questionnaire was divided into sections corresponding to the study variables: Website attractiveness, Content adequacy, Search engine visibility, Loading speed, Customer purchase behaviour, Repeat purchases, Occupancy rates, Profitability, Average daily rates

The instrument was considered appropriate because it facilitated standardized data collection, improved consistency of responses, and enabled quantitative statistical analysis. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), structured questionnaires are appropriate where researchers seek to collect quantitative data from large respondent groups efficiently and objectively.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

3.6.1 Validity of the Instrument

Validity refers to the extent to which a research instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure (Kothari, 2018). Content validity was enhanced through expert review by specialists in hospitality management, digital marketing, and research methodology. The experts evaluated the questionnaire items for clarity, relevance, consistency, and alignment with the study objectives and theoretical framework.

A pilot study was also conducted among respondents from selected hotels outside the final study sample to assess the adequacy, clarity, and relevance of the questionnaire items. Feedback obtained from the pilot study was used to refine the instrument before final data collection. Construct validity was enhanced through alignment between study objectives, variables, questionnaire items, hypotheses, and theoretical foundations.

3.6.2 Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of research instruments in measuring study variables (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2019). Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. According to Gliem and Gliem (2003), a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.70 and above indicates acceptable internal consistency.

The pilot reliability results indicated acceptable internal consistency across all study constructs.

**Table 3.2 Reliability Test Results**

Study Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Website Attractiveness	4	0.812
Content Adequacy	4	0.845
Search Engine Visibility	4	0.801
Loading Speed	4	0.786
Hotel Performance	5	0.873
Overall Reliability	21	0.823

Source: Pilot Study Data (2025)

The overall reliability coefficient of 0.823 indicated that the questionnaire items were sufficiently reliable for data collection and analysis.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher obtained authorization letters from relevant university authorities before commencing data collection. Permission to collect data was also obtained from the management of the selected hotels.

Questionnaires were administered physically and electronically to respondents within the selected star-rated hotels. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that the information provided would be treated confidentially and used strictly for academic purposes.

The researcher further ensured that respondents participated voluntarily and that anonymity was maintained throughout the study process.

3.8 Data Analysis

Collected data were checked for completeness, consistency, and accuracy before coding and analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize the findings regarding website optimization and hotel performance variables. Inferential statistics including Pearson correlation analysis and multiple linear regression analysis were used to determine the relationship between website optimization and hotel performance. The regression model adopted in the study was:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y = Hotel Performance

α = Constant

β_1 = Regression coefficient

X_1 = Website Optimization

ϵ = Error term

Diagnostic tests including normality, multicollinearity, autocorrelation, and homoscedasticity tests were conducted to ensure suitability of the regression model for statistical analysis (Field, 2018).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical principles throughout the research process. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study before participating. Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were maintained by ensuring that no personal identifiers were included in the questionnaires. Respondents were also assured that the information collected would only be used for academic purposes. The researcher further ensured honesty, transparency, and objectivity during data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of findings.

3.10 Limitations of the Study

The study focused only on star-rated hotels in Mombasa County, limiting generalization of findings to other hospitality establishments and geographical regions. Additionally, the study relied largely on self-reported quantitative data, which may be affected by response bias and subjective interpretation by respondents. The cross sectional design also limited the ability to assess long term changes in website optimization effectiveness and hotel performance over time. Despite these limitations, the study generated useful findings regarding the relationship between website optimization and hotel performance among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

The study targeted 90 respondents drawn from star-rated hotels in Mombasa County. Out of the 90 questionnaires distributed, 87 were successfully completed and returned, representing a response rate of 96.7%.

Table 4.1 Response Rate

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Returned Questionnaires	87	96.7
Unreturned Questionnaires	3	3.3
Total	90	100

Source: Research Data (2025)

According to Fosnacht, Sarraf, Howe, and Peck (2017), response rates above 50% are considered excellent for academic research. The high response rate therefore enhanced the reliability, adequacy, and credibility of the study findings.

4.2 Effect of Website Attractiveness on Customer Purchase Behaviour Among Star-Rated Hotels in Mombasa County (Objective One)

This objective sought to examine the effect of website attractiveness on customer purchase behaviour among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement regarding various indicators of website attractiveness using a five point Likert scale. Figure 4.1 shows the results.

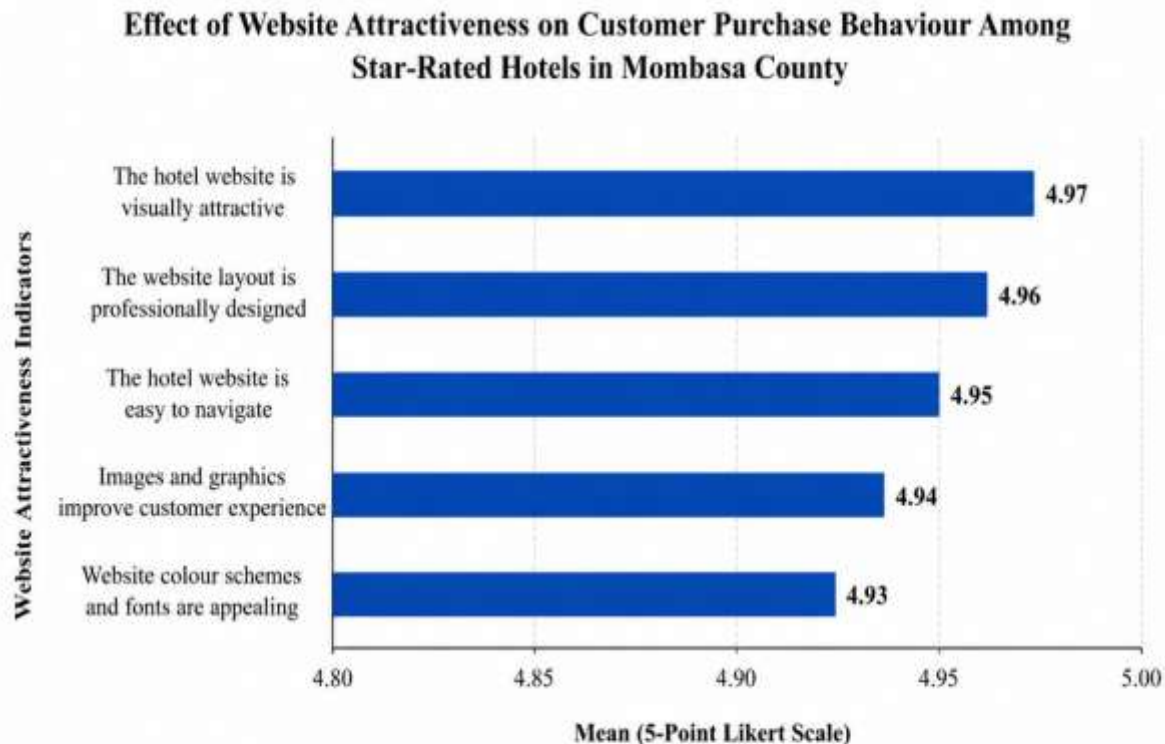


Figure 4.1. Effect of website attractiveness on customer purchase behaviour among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County.

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Source. Research Data (2025)

Composite Mean = 4.95 Composite Standard Deviation = 0.247

The findings revealed that respondents strongly agreed that visually attractive websites positively influence customer purchase behaviour. The high composite mean score indicates that hotel managers and marketing staff perceive website aesthetics as a critical determinant of customer engagement and booking decisions.



The findings imply that customers increasingly evaluate hospitality quality through digital presentation before physically interacting with hotel facilities. Attractive websites create positive first impressions, reduce uncertainty, and strengthen customer confidence during online booking processes. In highly competitive tourism destinations such as Mombasa County, hotels with professionally designed websites are therefore more likely to influence customer purchase decisions and increase direct booking conversion.

The results further suggest that website attractiveness influences psychological and emotional dimensions of customer behaviour. Customers are likely to associate visually appealing websites with professionalism, reliability, quality service delivery, and organizational credibility.

Pearson correlation analysis established a positive and statistically significant relationship between website attractiveness and customer purchase behaviour ($r = 0.701$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4.3 Correlation Between Website Attractiveness and Customer Purchase Behaviour

Variable	Website Attractiveness	Customer Purchase Behaviour
Website Attractiveness	1.000	0.701
Customer Purchase Behaviour	0.701	1.000

Source: Research Data (2025)

The findings indicate that improvements in website attractiveness are associated with improvements in customer purchase behaviour. Regression analysis further established that website attractiveness significantly influences customer purchase behaviour.

Table 4.4 Regression Results for Objective One

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.517	0.221		2.339	0.022
Website Attractiveness	0.641	0.073	0.701	8.781	0.000

Dependent Variable: Customer Purchase Behaviour

Source: Research Data (2025)

The regression coefficient indicated that a one unit increase in website attractiveness leads to a 0.641 unit increase in customer purchase behaviour.

4.2.1 Hypothesis Testing

H₀₁: Website attractiveness has no significant effect on customer purchase behaviour among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County

The regression results revealed a statistically significant relationship between website attractiveness and customer purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.641$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings suggest that visually attractive websites positively influence customer perceptions, trust, booking intentions, and digital interaction experiences. Hotels with attractive websites are therefore more likely to strengthen customer engagement and improve online booking conversion.

The findings support Han et al. (2023), who established that website aesthetics significantly influence customer trust and online purchase intentions. Similarly, Cheng et al. (2023) observed that website visual quality significantly shapes customer perceptions regarding hotel reliability and service quality.

The findings also reinforce Commitment Trust Theory by demonstrating that professional and attractive digital environments strengthen customer trust and booking confidence.

4.3 Influence of Website Content Adequacy and Search Engine Visibility on Occupancy Rates and Repeat Purchases (Objective Two)

This objective sought to determine the influence of website content adequacy and search engine visibility on occupancy rates and repeat purchases among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County. Respondents were asked to evaluate indicators relating to content adequacy and search engine visibility. Figure 4.2 illustrates the findings.

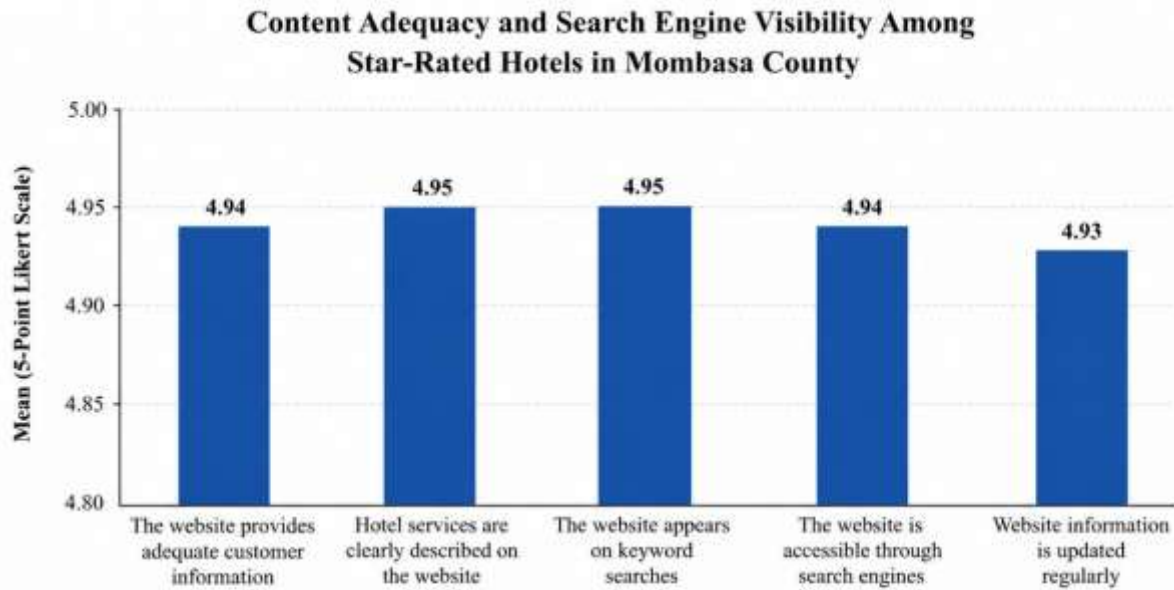


Figure 4.2. Content adequacy and search engine visibility among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County.

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Source. Research Data (2025)

Composite Mean = 4.94

Composite Standard Deviation = 0.248

The findings indicate that respondents strongly agreed that content adequacy and search engine visibility significantly contribute to occupancy rates and repeat purchases. The findings imply that customers increasingly depend on online information when evaluating accommodation options, pricing, amenities, and service quality. Hotels that provide clear, updated, and accessible information are therefore more likely to improve customer trust, booking confidence, and customer retention.

The results further demonstrate that digital visibility has become a major determinant of hospitality competitiveness. Regardless of the quality of hotel facilities or services, customers may fail to engage with hotels that are not easily discoverable through online searches. This suggests that Search Engine Optimization increasingly influences market accessibility and customer acquisition within modern tourism environments.

Correlation analysis established a strong positive relationship between website content adequacy, search engine visibility, occupancy rates, and repeat purchases ($r = 0.728$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4.6 Correlation Results for Objective Two

Variable	Content Adequacy and SEO	Occupancy and Repeat Purchases
Content Adequacy and SEO	1.000	0.728
Occupancy and Repeat Purchases	0.728	1.000

Source: Research Data (2025)

Regression analysis further established a statistically significant relationship between content adequacy, search engine visibility, occupancy rates, and repeat purchases.

Table 4.7 Regression Results for Objective Two

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.486	0.214		2.271	0.026
Content Adequacy and SEO	0.687	0.069	0.728	9.957	0.000

Dependent Variable: Occupancy Rates and Repeat Purchases

Source: Research Data (2025)

The regression coefficient indicates that a one unit improvement in content adequacy and search engine visibility results in a 0.687 unit increase in occupancy rates and repeat purchases.

4.3.1 Hypothesis Testing

H₀₂: Website content adequacy and search engine visibility have no significant influence on occupancy rates and repeat purchases among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County.

The regression analysis established a statistically significant relationship between website content adequacy, search engine visibility, occupancy rates, and repeat purchases ($\beta = 0.687$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings imply that customers are more likely to revisit and book hotels whose websites provide sufficient information and are easily accessible through online searches.

The findings further demonstrate that website content functions as both an informational and persuasive communication tool. Customers rely on website information to compare alternatives, evaluate hotel quality, and reduce uncertainty before making booking decisions. The findings support Sharma et al. (2020), who established that digital visibility significantly improves tourism competitiveness and customer acquisition. Similarly, Van Huy and Thai Thinh (2024) found that hotel website quality positively influences customer satisfaction and repeat booking intentions. The results also suggest that hotels with optimized website content and stronger search engine visibility are better positioned to reduce dependence on Online Travel Agencies and strengthen direct booking channels.

4.4 Effect of Website Loading Speed on Profitability and Average Daily Rates (Objective Three)

This objective sought to assess the effect of website loading speed on profitability and average daily rates among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement regarding website loading speed and its contribution to operational outcomes. Figure 4.3 depicts the results.



Figure 4.3. Website loading speed indicators among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County.

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Source: Research Data (2025)

The findings revealed that respondents strongly agreed that loading speed significantly affects profitability and average daily rates. The findings imply that website responsiveness directly influences customer experience, booking completion, and revenue generation. Customers increasingly expect immediate access to information and services within digital environments. Slow loading websites create frustration, increase bounce rates, and reduce booking conversion opportunities.

The findings further demonstrate that technical website performance increasingly influences customer perceptions regarding organizational efficiency and service quality. Customers are likely to associate slow websites with inefficiency, poor service standards, and unreliability.



Correlation analysis established a strong positive relationship between website loading speed and operational performance indicators ($r = 0.693$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4.9 Correlation Results for Objective Three

Variable	Website Loading Speed	Profitability and ADR
Website Loading Speed	1.000	0.693
Profitability and ADR	0.693	1.000

Source: Research Data (2025)

Regression analysis further established that website loading speed significantly influences profitability and average daily rates.

Table 4.10 Regression Results for Objective Three

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.503	0.233		2.159	0.034
Website Loading Speed	0.598	0.071	0.693	8.423	0.000

Dependent Variable: Profitability and Average Daily Rates

Source: Research Data (2025)

The findings indicate that a one unit increase in website loading speed leads to a 0.598 unit increase in profitability and average daily rates.

4.4.1 Hypothesis Testing

H₀₃: Website loading speed has no significant effect on profitability and average daily rates among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County.

The regression analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between website loading speed and profitability and average daily rates ($\beta = 0.598$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings imply that faster websites improve customer experience, reduce bounce rates, increase booking conversion, and strengthen customer satisfaction.

The findings support Rahman et al. (2020), who established that responsive websites improve customer satisfaction and booking completion rates. Similarly, Nicolau et al. (2024) observed that digital responsiveness increasingly influences hotel revenue performance and customer retention. The results further suggest that hotels investing in faster and more responsive digital systems are likely to strengthen customer engagement, improve operational efficiency, and enhance long term profitability.

4.5 Overall Model Fitness and Diagnostic Tests

Regression analysis was conducted to determine the overall predictive relationship between website optimization and hotel performance.

Table 4.11 Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.749	0.562	0.557	0.54292

Predictors: (Constant), Website Optimization

Dependent Variable: Hotel Performance

Source: Research Data (2025)

The adjusted R square value of 0.557 indicates that website optimization explained 55.7% of the variation in hotel performance. The remaining 44.3% may be explained by other organizational, technological, and environmental factors not included in the study model.

Table 4.12 Analysis of Variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	32.114	1	32.114	108.949	0.000
Residual	25.055	85	0.295		
Total	57.170	86			

Source: Research Data (2025)

The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 108.949$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that website optimization significantly predicts hotel performance among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County. The regression equation obtained from the analysis was as shown in Figure 4.4.

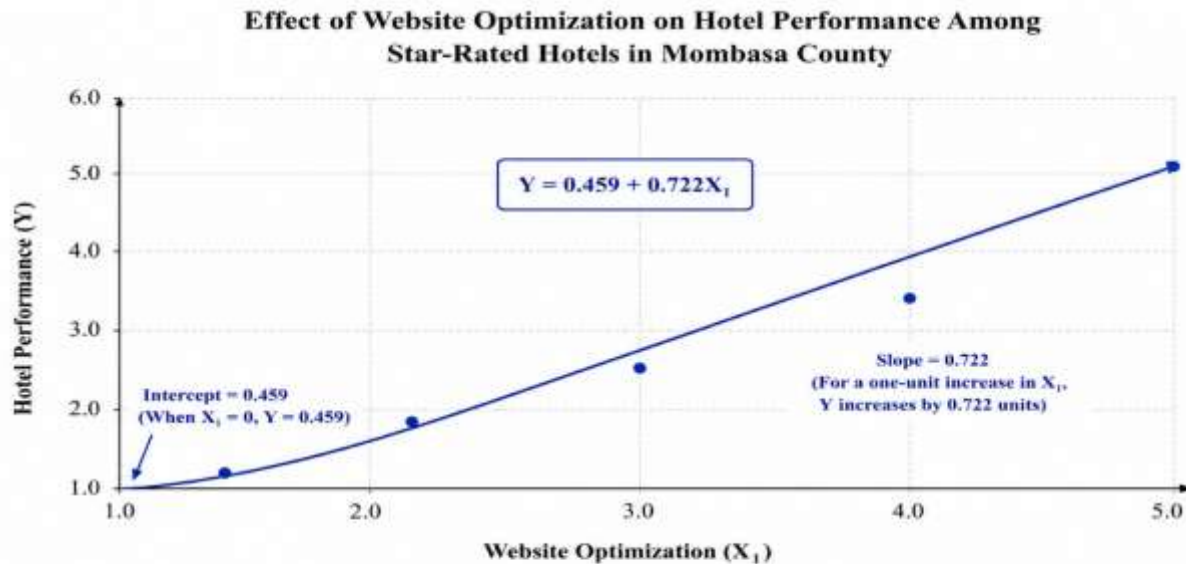


Figure 4.4. Linear relationship between website optimization and hotel performance.

Note. Y = Hotel Performance; X_1 = Website Optimization.

Source: Research Data (2025)

The positive regression coefficient demonstrates that improvements in website optimization significantly improve hotel performance outcomes.

Diagnostic tests confirmed that the regression model satisfied assumptions relating to normality, multicollinearity, autocorrelation, and homoscedasticity.

Table 4.13 Diagnostic Test Results

Diagnostic Test	Result	Interpretation
Shapiro Wilk Test	$p = 0.071$	Data normally distributed
Variance Inflation Factor	1.243 - 7.935	No severe multicollinearity
Durbin Watson Statistic	1.810	No autocorrelation
Homoscedasticity Test	Satisfied	Equal variance assumption met

Source: Research Data (2025)

The diagnostic results confirmed the suitability, validity, and reliability of the regression model for statistical analysis and interpretation.

5.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overall Summary of Findings

The study examined the effect of website optimization on the performance of star-rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya. Specifically, the study evaluated the influence of website attractiveness, content adequacy, search engine visibility, and loading speed on customer purchase behaviour, repeat purchases, occupancy rates, profitability, and average daily rates.

The findings revealed that website optimization significantly and positively influences hotel performance among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County. The study established that respondents strongly agreed that optimized websites improve customer engagement, booking conversion, customer trust, operational efficiency, and organizational competitiveness.

The first objective examined the effect of website attractiveness on customer purchase behaviour. The findings revealed that visually attractive websites, professional layouts, appealing graphics, and easy navigation significantly influence customer purchase decisions. The study established a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between website attractiveness and customer purchase behaviour ($r = 0.701$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis further revealed that website attractiveness significantly predicts customer purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.641$, $p < 0.05$). The findings imply that customers increasingly evaluate hotel quality and reliability through digital presentation before making booking decisions.

The second objective assessed the influence of website content adequacy and search engine visibility on occupancy rates and repeat purchases. The findings established that hotels providing clear, updated, and accessible website information while maintaining strong



online visibility are more likely to improve occupancy rates and customer retention. Correlation analysis established a strong positive relationship between website content adequacy, search engine visibility, occupancy rates, and repeat purchases ($r = 0.728$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis further revealed a statistically significant influence of content adequacy and search engine visibility on occupancy rates and repeat purchases ($\beta = 0.687$, $p < 0.05$). The findings suggest that digital visibility and informative website content significantly strengthen customer accessibility, trust, and repeat booking behaviour.

The third objective examined the effect of website loading speed on profitability and average daily rates. The findings revealed that responsive and fast loading websites significantly improve customer experience, booking completion, and operational performance. Correlation analysis established a strong positive relationship between website loading speed and profitability and average daily rates ($r = 0.693$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis further established that website loading speed significantly predicts profitability and average daily rates ($\beta = 0.598$, $p < 0.05$). The findings imply that technical website responsiveness increasingly influences customer satisfaction, digital competitiveness, and financial performance within hospitality industries.

The overall regression model established that website optimization explained 55.7% of the variation in hotel performance among star-rated hotels in Mombasa County. The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 108.949$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that website optimization is a significant predictor of hotel performance.

The study therefore established that website optimization is not merely a technological or marketing function but a strategic organizational capability capable of improving customer trust, customer retention, occupancy rates, profitability, and long term competitiveness within hospitality industries.

5.2 Conclusion

The study evaluated the impact of website optimization on the performance of star-rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya. The findings established that website optimization significantly and positively influences customer purchase behaviour, repeat purchases, occupancy rates, profitability, and average daily rates.

The study specifically established that website attractiveness significantly influences customer purchase behaviour. Visually attractive, professionally designed, and easy to navigate websites improve customer trust, booking confidence, and online engagement. The findings demonstrate that customers increasingly evaluate hotel quality and credibility through digital presentation before physically interacting with hotel services.

The study further established that website content adequacy and search engine visibility significantly influence occupancy rates and repeat purchases. Hotels that provide clear, updated, and accessible information while maintaining strong online visibility are more likely to attract customers, strengthen customer retention, and improve direct booking conversion.

Additionally, the study established that website loading speed significantly influences profitability and average daily rates. Responsive and fast loading websites improve customer experience, reduce bounce rates, strengthen booking completion rates, and enhance operational performance.

The overall findings demonstrate that website optimization is no longer merely a technological or marketing activity but rather a strategic organizational capability capable of influencing competitiveness, customer trust, operational efficiency, and long term hospitality performance.

The findings further reinforce the Resource Based View Theory by demonstrating that website optimization functions as a valuable organizational resource capable of generating competitive advantage. Similarly, the findings support Commitment Trust Theory by demonstrating that optimized websites strengthen customer trust, confidence, and long term customer relationships within digital hospitality environments.

The study therefore concludes that hotels investing in website optimization are more likely to strengthen digital competitiveness, improve customer engagement, enhance direct bookings, and achieve sustainable organizational performance within increasingly digital tourism markets.



5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations for Hotel Managers and Practitioners

Hotel managers should continuously invest in professional website design, mobile responsiveness, and user friendly digital interfaces in order to improve customer engagement and booking conversion.

Hospitality establishments should regularly update website content to ensure accuracy, relevance, accessibility, and customer convenience. Updated information regarding accommodation services, pricing, facilities, reservations, and destination experiences improves customer confidence and booking decisions.

Hotels should strengthen Search Engine Optimization strategies to improve online visibility and accessibility through keyword searches and digital marketing platforms. Improved digital visibility may enhance direct bookings and reduce dependence on Online Travel Agencies.

Hotel managers should further invest in faster hosting systems, optimized web architecture, and regular technical maintenance to improve loading speed and digital responsiveness.

Hospitality organizations should also integrate website analytics and customer behaviour monitoring systems to continuously evaluate customer interaction patterns and improve digital customer experiences.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Policy Makers and Industry Stakeholders

Tourism policy makers and hospitality regulators should promote digital transformation initiatives aimed at strengthening technological competitiveness within hospitality industries.

Government agencies and tourism stakeholders should support ICT infrastructure development, digital literacy training, and website management capacity building programs among hospitality enterprises.

Tourism regulatory bodies should further encourage adoption of digital competitiveness standards and customer centred digital service delivery within hospitality establishments.

Industry stakeholders should collaborate with technology firms and digital marketing agencies to strengthen innovation, digital accessibility, and customer experience management within tourism destinations.

5.3.3 Recommendations for Technology Providers and Digital Agencies

Technology firms and digital marketing agencies should develop responsive, secure, and customer centred website optimization solutions tailored to hospitality environments.

Website developers should prioritize mobile responsiveness, loading speed optimization, secure booking systems, and customer experience enhancement in designing hospitality websites.

Digital agencies should further support hotels in implementing Search Engine Optimization strategies, customer analytics systems, and performance monitoring tools to strengthen digital competitiveness and customer engagement.

5.4 Contribution of the Study

The study contributes to hospitality and tourism literature by extending understanding regarding the strategic role of website optimization within hotel performance management.

The study contributes theoretically by integrating the Resource Based View Theory and Commitment Trust Theory in explaining how website optimization influences organizational competitiveness and customer trust within hospitality industries.

Methodologically, the study contributes by utilizing objective aligned regression analysis linking specific website optimization dimensions with measurable hotel performance indicators.

Practically, the study provides empirical evidence useful for hospitality managers, tourism stakeholders, digital agencies, and policy makers regarding the importance of website optimization within modern tourism environments.



The study also contributes contextual knowledge regarding digital competitiveness among star-rated hotels within coastal tourism destinations in Kenya.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies should examine mediating variables such as customer satisfaction, online reputation, customer trust, and customer experience in explaining the relationship between website optimization and hotel performance.

Researchers should further examine moderating variables such as hotel size, organizational culture, technological orientation, and customer demographics.

Future studies should also utilize longitudinal research designs to assess long term changes in website optimization effectiveness and hotel performance.

Additionally, qualitative approaches such as interviews and case studies may provide deeper understanding regarding managerial experiences, customer perceptions, and digital transformation challenges within hospitality industries.

Comparative studies involving different tourism destinations, hospitality categories, and countries within Africa may further strengthen contextual understanding regarding website optimization and digital competitiveness within tourism industries.

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