

# Effect of E-marketing on the Brand Image of Hotels in Cape Coast, Ghana

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**Abstract** | Marketing in the tourism and hospitality industry is gradually shifting from the conventional way to a more digitised regime. This became even more conspicuous during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among other things, e-marketing contributes to the brand of hotels and expands their market base. Nonetheless, hotels in the Cape Coast Metropolis appear to be making less out of the opportunities presented by e-marketing activities; possibly due to limited empirical evidence on how e-marketing influences the brand image of hotels. This study, thus, examined the perceived effect of e-marketing on the brand image of hotels in Cape Coast, Ghana. A convenience sampling procedure was employed to include 142 customers in the study. Data were obtained with the aid of well-structured questionnaires and analysed with descriptive and inferential statistical tools such as frequencies, percentages, and regression models. The result of the descriptive analysis showed that emails, SMS, websites and Facebook are perceived as effective marketing and promotional tools. Moreover, results of the regression analysis revealed that emails, SMS, Facebook and website have significantly positive effects on brand image. It was concluded that improved e-marketing activities are drivers of enhanced hotel brand image. It was recommended that the Ghana Hotels Association should put policies in place to encourage hotel managers and owners to focus on making their e-marketing activities and platforms more attractive to improve the brand image of their hotels.

**Keywords** | E-marketing, brand image, hotels, Cape Coast, Ghana

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## 1. Introduction

In today's competitive world of business, technology cannot be underrated as many business organisations find it indispensable in the promotion of their brand images and reaching out to both existing and prospective customers. Štefko, Fedorko and Bačík (2014) averred that competitive advantage is gradually moving away from product or service quality to marketing ability and the propensity to effectually employ marketing tools. Mullatahiri and Ukaj (2019) contended that with active marketing strategies, business firms can even increase the sales of substandard products and services. Considering this, it suffices to state that the success or failure of a business organisation, regardless of form, type and size, lies, to a great extent, in the capability of the organisation to market its services or products.

It is, thus, not surprising that firms within the hospitality industry, such as hotels, guesthouses, restaurants and brasseries, among others, have taken to the use of e-marking tools – termed to include blogs, microsites, question and answers (Q&A)/frequently asked questions (FAQ) portal, e-mail newsletters, short messages service (SMS), Wiki, online publications/eBooks, live chats; social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and mobile applications – as the use of these tools have been argued to contribute to business firms' brand images which revolve around recognition and reputation (Imbert-Bouchard, 2023; Machmud, Saerang, Soegoto, Wenas & Sin, 2019; Štefko et al., 2014;). This has led to a plethora of studies being conducted on the relationship between e-marketing and brand image of business firms (Štefko et al., 2014; Mullatahiri & Ukaj, 2019; Al Showa & Ghadeer, 2020).

For instance, Machmud et al. (2019) documented that institutions in Eastern Indonesia have been able to build their images by implementing e-marketing strategies. Machmud et al. (2019) further intimated that these institutions were able

to promote their brand images through their websites, and were already attached to their clients, making it difficult for new entrants to compete with them. Similarly, Štefko et al. (2014) confirmed a relationship between the images of firms and the web elements of these firms. Mullatahiri and Ukaj (2019) also revealed that e-marketing communication improves brand loyalty, and positively impacts customer satisfaction and the brand image of corporations. Al Showa and Ghadeer (2020) opined that the lack of basic e-marketing mix elements on the websites of firms has led to a great decline in the recognition of these firms. It should be stated that some of the prior studies also reported a negative relationship between the use of e-marketing tools and brand image (Aydin & Özer, 2005; Ahmed, Shaukat, Nawaz, Ahmed & Usman, 2011; Erdoğmuş & Cicek, 2012).

From the foregoing, it could be seen that the findings of prior studies have not been consistent. Also, the focus has been on the aggregated or interactive effects of e-marketing tools on brand image, with little knowledge of how the individual e-marketing tools influence brand image. Moreover, most of the prior studies used data from more developed and industrialised economies, with little attention given to sub-Saharan Africa of which Ghana is part, despite the fact that the subregion has a lot to offer in terms of tourist attractions, and hence, the need to promote its hospitality sector.

In Ghana, whilst some hotels – especially the high-budget ones – own websites and manage other platforms to promote their services, some do not have a simple Facebook account to promote their operations. For example, hotels in the Cape Coast Metropolis appear to receive little attention in Ghana and beyond due to their passive online presence, as the majority of them have neither websites nor social media platforms to promote their services. Most of these hotels only rely on traditional marketing methods (Anaman & Dacosta, 2017). Overall, this has affected

ted the customer base of the hotels, leading to a fall in revenues. Saeed, Arous and Ahmed (2018) and El Khazri (2022) argued that the use of e-marketing tools enhances customer loyalty. Kapoor and Kapoor (2021) also contended that the transition from traditional to digital marketing has contributed to the brand recognition of hotels. Labanauskaitė, Fiore and Stašys (2020) were of the view that using e-marketing tools in communication management enhances the performance of the tourism industry. Similarly, Štefko et al. (2015) averred that e-marketing strategies positively influence the performance of hotels, through brand recognition.

Thus, to lift the face and brand image of hotels in the Cape Coast Metropolis, there is the need to employ e-marketing tools such as emails, Facebook, SMS and websites, as suggested by prior researchers (Saeed et al., 2018; Labanauskaitė et al., 2020; El Khazri, 2022). For instance, the use of e-mails by hotels may enable them easily to get in touch with their present and prospective clients and share information related to the hotels' services with them. This may go a long way to create a great impression about these hotels in the minds of the clients; hence, improving the hotels' brand recognition. Similarly, with SMS, the hotels may be able to quickly send bulk messages across to known and unknown prospective clients at affordable prices, and this helps announce the existence of a hotel to people. Ultimately, the hotel may get recognised. Also, the use of Facebook could expose a hotel to people from all walks of life, both within and outside the jurisdiction of the hotel. People will be able to appreciate the presence of the hotel, as well as the services it offers. Additionally, in today's world, people want to know virtually everything about an establishment located far from them even before they decide to visit it, and this seems to make the use of websites indispensable. This implies that for hotels to gain recognition globally, websites where the states of the hotels can be assessed by people regardless of

their locations can be used by the hotels.

Taking the foregoing into account, we argue that emails, Facebook, SMS and websites influence the brand image of hotels. Nevertheless, there is a modicum of empirical studies on the relationship between emails, Facebook, SMS and websites, and brand image. The majority of extant studies focused on either the relationship between aggregated e-marketing and performance (Labanauskaitė et al., 2020; Štefko et al., 2015), aggregated e-marketing and brand loyalty (Saeed et al., 2018; Kapoor & Kapoor, 2021; El Khazri, 2022), or aggregated e-marketing and brand image with little evidence on how the use of the individual e-marketing tools influence brand image, as even the prior studies on the relationship between aggregated e-marketing and brand image have not been consistent (Ahmed et al., 2011; Erdoğan & Cicek, 2012; Machmud et al., 2019; Mullatahiri & Ukaj, 2019). Moreover, most of the related existing studies employed data from more developed nations (Saeed et al., 2018; Labanauskaitė et al., 2020; El Khazri, 2022), with little attention given to less-developed countries in sub-Saharan Africa despite the contributions hotels make to the economic growth of sub-Saharan countries (Anaman & Dacosta, 2017). It was in the light of this gap that we carried out this study to investigate the effects of emails, Facebook, SMS and websites on brand image, as this study makes a number of contributions to theory and practice.

First, the study contributes to the e-marketing literature by expanding existing knowledge on the link from e-marketing (emails, SMS, Facebook and websites) to brand image. Next, by demonstrating components of e-marketing tools as a means that drives hotels to create favourable and satisfying brand image, this study offers new brand image construction insights into how to boost the image of hotels. Similarly, as constituents of e-marketing have been identified as a driver of hotels in the creation of enhanced image and brand recognition where customers are willing to associate with these

hotels, this study demonstrates novel approaches to promoting hotel brand image and recognition. Third, by considering a less-industrialised setting in the study of e-marketing, this study helps widen the scope of empirical analysis of e-marketing and its promotion and economic worth, which has by far been limited to only developed and industrialised economies. Fourth, this study emphasises the importance of and the versatility in the application of e-marketing tools to help promote services of hotels, which may in turn contribute to reducing high operational costs as customer numbers and revenue of hotels, in Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa at large, increase. The rest of the study is organised as follows: theoretical framework, methods, results, and conclusion.

## 2. Theoretical framework

In this study, Hoffman and Novak's model was employed. Hoffman and Novak's model is a conceptual model of flow in interactive computer-mediated environments (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). The model serves to reconcile inconsistencies in previous descriptions and models and proposes the ground for practical testing. The model focuses on online customer experience and draws its flows from previous models of flow conceptualised in the context of human-computer interaction (Novak, Hoffman & Yung, 2000). The model, however, is unique in several ways. Firstly, it has been particularly formulated to represent the experience of the customer in collaborative online environments, placing attention on commercial web environment. Secondly, Hoffman and Novak's model provides more thorough operational definitions of key constructs than previously existing models, and as well establishes reliability and validity in a comprehensive measurement framework (Novak et al., 2000). Lastly, unlike prior models of flow, the model displays an explicit structure for direct and indirect in-

fluences on flow, and gives a mechanism for determining whether and how model constructs relate to external marketing variables such as product information search and online shopping behaviours that are pertinent to the commercial online environment (Novak et al., 2000).

The foregoing advances have been achieved by carefully conceptualising existing constructs in terms of web use and introducing new constructs uniquely related to the consumer's web usage experience. Linking this model to the present study, an interactive online environment which revolves around the use of media such as Facebook, websites, emails and SMS to engage present and prospective clients of hotels in the Cape Coast Metropolis could ultimately project the brand image of the hotels. Applying Hoffman and Novak's model, hotels in the Cape Coast Metropolis could have their brand image enhanced by establishing, controlling and managing websites, and ensuring presence on other media such as Facebook, using emails and SMS to engage clients. To appreciate e-marketing tools (website, Facebook, email, and SMS) and brand image, these concepts were elaborated further.

Armstrong, Kotler and Da Silva (2006) defined e-marketing as a collective body of efforts and activities to market products or services, and as well build relationships with customers on the internet. Generally, e-marketing is marketing that uses any of the available electronic means, including television, radio, electronic messaging (SMS, emails, etc.), social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.), and electronic road signs. Ghadeer (2017) refers to e-marketing as internet-based marketing because this network is the latest and most advanced digital platform. More recently, business firms have shifted from using traditional marketing methods to more digital methods in order to compete for common groups of clients, and websites have become pivotal to marketing business firms and their services (Weideman, 2013).

Information technology has revolutionised all

aspects of doing business and the dynamics of marketing. Business, marketing and information technology interdependently structure and optimise one another's competitive advantage (Lee-flang, Wittink, Wedel & Naert, 2013) by creating more value and benefits for customers in more cost-effective way (Makarem et al., 2009; Bala & Verma, 2018). E-marketing utilises information technology and the internet for marketing processes of defining the needs and demands, creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, partners, and the community (Bala & Verma, 2018). Information technology and the internet have increased the efficiency and effectiveness of traditional marketing functions including ways of communicating and maintaining relationships with customers (Khan & Islam, 2017) and other stakeholders. Internet, mobile phones, digital TV, email, social media and other communication channels put the customers in the centre (Skorbich & Kot, 2018), balance the control over the brand images and shift the bargaining powers from companies to customers (Rajasekar & Raee, 2013). The internet and social media have turned consumers into "prosumers", where consumers are no longer passive receivers of information but interact, create news, share ideas and entertainment as well as consume them (Skorbich & Kot, 2018).

It should be stated that businesses are facing difficulties in retaining control over brand image, since they are competing with collective power of consumers (Skorbich & Kot, 2018). To overcome these difficulties, there is the need for these businesses to use websites and emails (owned media), adds in other websites (paid media) and other social media to tell their story, whilst monitoring internet for communications about their brand (earned media), and respond accordingly (Lovett & Staelin, 2016) to gain customer trust and create brand loyalty. Lawrence et al. (2013) intimated that consumer-generated advertisement (earned media) enhances consumers' engagement

with brand, increase consumers' trust, thus leading to brand loyalty. In a very dynamic environment where information technology and internet have become the main platforms of doing business, it is vital to assess the relations e-marketing tools have with brand image. The e-marketing tools revolve around the use of email, website, Facebook, and short message services (SMS) (Lovett & Staelin, 2016; Skorbich & Kot, 2018).

E-mail communication from brands has a strong effect on stimulating visits to businesses and a positive effect on brand loyalty (Erdogmus & Çiçek, 2012). Nevertheless, the effects of e-mail marketing on brand loyalty should take into consideration factors such as customer's satisfaction with brands, brand image and perceived usefulness of emails. Studies have shown that social media campaigns, followed by the popularity of content, social media platforms and applications are significant drivers of brand loyalty (Correa, Valencia-Arias, Garcés-Giraldo, Rodríguez, López & Benjumea-Arias, 2023; Erdogmus & Çiçek, 2012; Geçti & Gumus, 2014).

A website is defined as a group of interconnected pages, texts, images, and video clips that operate according to a coherent and interactive structure, which aims to display and describe information about a party or an organisation in a manner that is not limited by time or place, and through a unique address that distinguishes it from the rest of the sites on the internet (Singla & Aggarwal, 2017). Assuming that a hotel constitutes a brand of marketing, the hotel's website appears as an important part of this marketing process (Singla & Aggarwal, 2017). A business firm's website is a group of files that occupy a space that the firm has reserved within a server (usually affiliated with the firm) to create integrated content that contains information, offers activities, and provides services to the firm's audience – customers, owners, and other external stakeholders (Liu et al., 2014).

Facebook, on the other hand, is a social networking website where users can post com-

ments, share photographs and post links to news or other interesting content on the web, chat live, and watch short-form videos. Users may even make orders for goods and services, as well as make purchases, if that is what they want to do. Hotels, just like other firms, have taken to the use of Facebook to connect to the world. Facebook helps construct a positive image of businesses, promotes the image of organisations, ensures live question and answer interactions, and the publication of institutional newsletters (Švandová, 2013; Štefko et al., 2015), among others.

Short messages service (SMS) is a system that allows mobile phone users to send and receive messages. It uses standardised communication protocols that let mobile devices exchange short text messages. An intermediary service can also facilitate a text-to-voice conversion to be sent to landlines (Štefko, 2014). SMS is now crucial in communication as it helps organisations to easily share information with a large group of people scattered across a wide range of geographical areas. For instance, most businesses communicate with customers through SMS, and it has been deemed an effective and efficient way of communication (Švandová, 2013).

Next, brands are ideas, perceptions, expectations and beliefs in the minds of existing and potential clients (Štefko, 2014) that influence customers' purchasing behaviour (Hafez & Akther, 2017). Customers are more likely to deal with known and trusted brands. Thus, building strong brands has become key priority of most business firms, as it facilitates stronger customer-brand relationships (Keller, 2009) and differentiates a brand from the competition. Effective marketing communication can play crucial role in creating experiences, building communities online and offline, establishing brand awareness and brand image – in other words, building strong brands. While brand awareness relates to consumers' ability to recognise a brand, the brand image reflects consumers' perceptions and preferences for a brand which drives

sales and creates brand loyalty (Keller, 2009).

Aydin and Özer (2005) and Hafez and Akther (2017) indicated that brand image positively correlates with customer loyalty to brands and is one of the main determinants of customer loyalty. Khizin-dar, Al-Azzam and Khanfar (2015) reported that when a customer buys a product or service, it leads them to become faithful to the product. Aydin and Özer (2005) also demonstrated a positive correlation between brand image and customer loyalty in sectors such as telecommunication and retailing. The significant direct effect of brand image on brand loyalty was again confirmed by Khizin-dar et al. (2015) who pointed out that a positive brand image contributes to building a business's reputation. Ahmed et al. (2011) indicated that reputation partially contributes to the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty, which in turn enhances institutional brand image.

Empirically, Štefko et al. (2015) determined the role of e-marketing tools in constructing the image of University of Prešov in Prešov. The quantitative research approach with the survey design was used. The study drew on primary data ascertained through surveying 400 students of the University, using the questionnaire. The questionnaire concentrated on selected website elements such as design, clarity, content quality, inclusion of social elements, and on selected e-marketing tools such as a Blog, Microsite, Q&A / FAQ portal, E-mail newsletter, Wiki, Online publications/eBooks, Live chat, and Mobile application. The results showed that there is a significant correlation between the perception of the overall image of the university and the evaluation of individual elements of the university website. However, the hypothesis that there is a significant correlation between the students' attitude towards the necessity to use new e-marketing tools and the expressed evaluation of the university's image could not be confirmed. The authors concluded that websites and other e-marketing tools enhance the image of universities. Nonetheless, these authors were unable to confirm

how e-marketing tools function in other organisations and how they influence brand loyalty.

Thus, Mullatahiri and Ukaj (2019) studied the effect of e-marketing communications on brand loyalty of mobile telephone operators in Kosovo. The study was quantitative in nature, and employed an explanatory design. The total sample for the study was 423 mobile telephone operators, selected using the convenience sampling technique. Data were collected using online surveys. The main constructs were e-marketing communications, brand image, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty, and these were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale. For the data analysis, bivariate correlation, simple linear and multiple regression analysis using stepwise method were employed. The result showed a positive and significant effect of e-marketing communications on brand loyalty. It also showed a significant effect of e-marketing communications on both brand image and customer satisfaction, which subsequently have significant impact on brand loyalty. The authors concluded that e-marketing communication is key factor in building well perceived brand image, fostering customer satisfaction, and ensuring customer commitment and loyalty towards brands of mobile operators in Kosovo.

In another study, Machmud et al. (2019) looked at the effect of e-marketing and information system on university image. The study was quantitative, and used an explanatory research design. Four universities were involved in the study, and the sample of the study was made up of students who had at least three semesters of study at the same university. A questionnaire was used for data collection. The construct e-marketing was operationalised as the utilisation of the official website and social media (i.e., Facebook, etc.) of the university, and the dimensions were accessibility, timeliness, accuracy and credibility. The information system was conceptualised to include system quality, information quality and service quality. University image was described as functionality, sym-

bols and experience. All constructs were measured on the 5-point Liker-type scale. For data analysis, the Gesca PLS analysis tool was employed. The results of the study revealed that e-marketing and information systems have a significant effect on improving university image in the eyes of students. It was thus concluded that the information system could help improve the image of the university because the information system had the ability to convey a variety of positive information from the university which led to positive changes in its image.

Al Showa and Ghadeer (2020), on the other hand, explored the role of e-marketing in improving the ranking of higher education institutions, with specific focus on Syrian Universities. The study specifically determined the position of Syrian Universities in the world rankings and examined the role of e-marketing in improving the ranking of Syrian universities, in light of the Standards of world ranking systems and their reflection on the elements of the e-marketing mix. The descriptive research approach was used. Data was collected from world rankings sites, and from a sample of 396 respondents, using a questionnaire. Means, standard deviations, and one-sample t-test were used to analyse the data collected. The results indicated that the great decline in the ranking of Syrian universities was due to a lack of basic e-marketing mix elements on the websites of these universities on the internet, and their lack of interest in the most important and central criterion within these world rankings which is the standard of scientific research. It was thus recommended that the scientific research of faculty members and students be translated into English, ensured continuous publication, and pay attention to websites' design and security.

Few other studies specifically focused on hotels. For instance, El Khazri (2022) measured the impact of mix-marketing on customer loyalty in Moroccan hotels and showed the moderating role that social media can play in this relationship. Un-

like the foregoing studies which have reported significant relationships, this study showed that e-marketing does not significantly influence, through its mix (product, price, promotion and place), customer loyalty, whether it is attitudinal or behavioral, combined or separated. Nonetheless, social media played a moderating role in the relationship between e-marketing and attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. In light of these findings, the author suggested that the hotels review their e-marketing strategies, including all of its components. Also, they must take advantage of the opportunities offered by social media to strengthen customer loyalty and renew the brand image in the mind of customers.

Ho, Chen, Wang, Yeh and Huan (2022) explored the impact of social media platform image on customers' visit intention in a hotel context, using hotel image, motivation, and anticipated service quality as mediators. The study used a convenience sampling method that targeted respondents who are willing to book a hotel using a social media platform such as Facebook and a hotel reservation website (Agoda, Airbnb, Booking.com, Hotels.com and Trivago) that have forums that allow customers to share their experiences. The survey was conducted through various social media platforms, with 349 responses collected. The results showed that social media platform image contributes to motivation largely through hotel image, motivation partly mediates the relationship between image and anticipated service quality and motivation contributes to visit intention mostly through direct impact and a small part through anticipated service quality. The findings also indicated that social media platform image is less potent in terms of contributing to the later constructs if hotel image is low.

From the review thus far, it could be seen that no study has yet explored the effect of e-marketing on the brand image of hotels in Ghana. Moreover, none of the studies has so far placed specific attention on use of SMS, emails, Facebook and web-

site, and how these influence the brand image of hotels. The present study, therefore, seeks to fill these gaps by focusing on hotels in the Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana. Again, it should be stated that the majority of the prior studies suggested a link between e-marketing and brand image. Based on this and the assertions of Hoffman and Novak's model, we hypothesised that:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between the use of emails and the brand image of hotels.

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between the use of SMS and the brand image of hotels.

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between the use of Facebook and the brand image of hotels.

H4: There is a significant positive relationship between the website and the brand image of hotels.

In light of the above, the conceptual framework in Figure 1 was developed to guide this study.

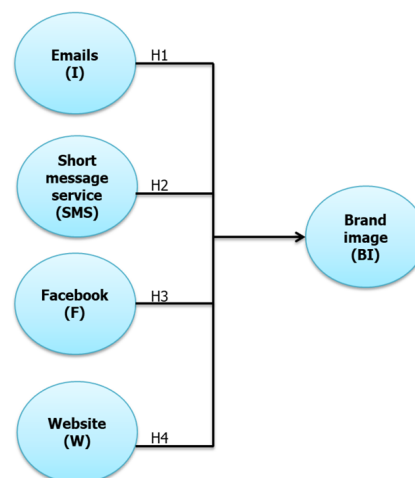


Figure 1 | Conceptual framework  
Authors' construction (2022)



### 3. Methods

This study was quantitative in nature and employed an explanatory research design, as most prior related studies on e-marketing and brand image employed this design (Al Showa & Ghadeer, 2020; Ho et al., 2022; El Khazri, 2022). The target population was the visitors who patronise the services of hotels within the Cape Coast Metropolis. In total, 46 registered hotels were identified. Out of the 46, 80% agreed to partake in the study. Due to the fact that hotel visitors are not an organised group of people who could be informed ahead of time, as far as this study was concerned, the convenience sampling method was employed to include only those who were available and willing to lend information at the time of the study. Consequently, 142 visitors made up the sample for the study. Data was then collected from these 142 visitors through the administration of well-structured questionnaires. The questionnaire was divided into three parts, viz., demographic information; e-marketing which had four subsections on the use of SMS, emails, Facebook and website, respectively; and brand image. The items on e-marketing tools and brand image were anchored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from least agreement to highest agreement. The items on e-marketing tools and brand image were adapted from Bala and Verma (2018) and Mullatahiri and Ukaj (2019), and Machmud et al. (2019), respectively.

Regarding the data collection from the 142 visitors, few procedures were undertaken. First, the managers of the 37 hotels (i.e., 80% of 46) were informed about the main purpose of the study, after they had agreed to partake. This was to seek the managers' utmost consents. Second, to expedite the data collection process, the receptionists at each hotel were taken through the items and instructions of the questionnaire. This was to enable them assist with data collection from the visitors. Consequently, 35 questionnaires were left

with each reception. Fourteen days were allowed for the data collection activities. Within the 14 days, we randomly visited each of the receptions to monitor progress. We also left our personal contacts with the receptionists in charge of the questionnaire administration so that they could contact us in case of challenges. Lastly, we went to pick the completed questionnaires after the fourteen days. We realised that, altogether, 142 questionnaires had been fully completed by 142 individual visitors who showed willingness to partake in the study. The entire process, from contacting the hotels to data collection, lasted one month – from 13th September, 2022 to 12 October, 2022.

The data collected was processed into a form suitable for analysis. Descriptive analysis, using frequencies and percentages, was conducted to provide statistics of the demographic information of the respondents. This was followed by a reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha. Next, means and standard deviations were used to assess the level of use of e-marketing tools and how the brand image of the hotels was perceived. Finally, a regression technique was used to determine the link between e-marketing and brand image, as well as test the four hypotheses formulated.

### 4. Results

Out of the 142 questionnaires administered, we were able to retrieve all, and these were fully completed by the respondents; thus, making them suitable for further analysis. Of the 142, 99 (69.7%) were males whilst 43 (30.3%) were females; 25% of the respondents were within the age bracket 26-35years, 54.3% were between 36-45years, and 20.7% were within the age group 46 and above years. All the respondents claimed they had ever engaged with a hotel through an e-marketing tool. From the reliability analysis, it was revealed that six items made up the use of SMS and a Cron-

bach's Alpha of 0.82 was recorded, Facebook had five items and a reliability score of 0.74, emails had seven defining items and a reliability coefficient of 0.81, and website five highly loaded items and a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.94. These scores are acceptable and indicate that the scales used were reliable and consistent (Theresia & Sadalia, 2018).

The descriptive analysis indicated high average score of each variable. The mean score for SMS was  $(4.01 \pm 0.72SD)$ , indicating that the hotel visitors deemed SMS as an effective medium for promotion. The mean value for Facebook was  $(3.91 \pm 0.97SD)$ , showing that Facebook helps connect clients with hotels. A mean score of  $(3.55 \pm 0.79SD)$  was recorded for emails, implying that the use of emails is an effective way of marketing the services of hotels. The website showed a mean score of  $(3.90 \pm 0.9SD)$ , indicating that website attracts clients to hotels. Finally, the brand image showed a mean score of  $(4.01 \pm 0.62SD)$ , showing that the brand image of hotels in the Cape Coast Metropolis is highly rated recognised among customers.

A simple linear regression was conducted to test the model fit for the individual e-marketing

tools of emails, SMS, Facebook and website as predictors of brand image. Next, multiple regression was performed to adjust the model for all the independent variables, as shown by model 5 in table 1. The results in table 1 reveal that models 1 to 5 significantly predict the brand image of hotels. Specifically, model 1 showed  $F(1, 141) = 156.326$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , and  $R^2$  of 0.529, indicating that the use of emails alone explains 52.9% of variances in brand image of hotels in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Model 2 produced  $F(1, 141) = 39.022$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , and  $R^2$  of 21.9%, implying that the use of SMS explains, without the influence of other variables, 52.9% of variances in the brand image of hotels in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Similarly, in model 3, it was revealed that Facebook accounts for 24.5% of total variations in the brand image of hotels in Cape Coast Metropolis. Also, model 4 indicated that the website explains 34.7% of variations in the brand image of hotels in Cape Coast. Also, the adjusted model, model 5, significantly predicted hotel brand image, explaining 57.5% of variances in brand image hotels in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Table 1 | Model fit test

Model	Predictors	Outcome variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F value	Sig.
1	Emails	Brand image	0.728	0.529	0.526	156.326	0.000
2	SMS		0.468	0.219	0.214	39.022	0.000
3	Facebook		0.495	0.245	0.239	45.086	0.000
4	Website		0.589	0.347	0.342	73.772	0.000
5	Emails, SMS, Facebook, & Website		0.758	0.575	0.559	36.456	0.000

Regression is significant at the 0.01  
Source: Own elaboration

To test the hypotheses and assess how each of emails, SMS, Facebook and website influences brand image, we computed regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ) and t values at the 0.05 significance level. If the computed significance level of t value is lower than the set level of 0.05, it implies that  $\beta \neq 0$ ; hence, the result is statistically significant (Nimon & Oswald, 2013). It can be seen in table 2 that

all the e-marketing tools have a statistically significant positive effect on brand image of hotels. Specifically, it was revealed that emails positively influence brand image ( $\beta = 0.771$ ,  $t(1,141) = 12.503$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), implying that an increased use of emails would enhance brand image of hotels within the Cape Coast; SMS correlated significantly positively with brand image ( $\beta = 0.401$ ,  $t(1,141) = 6.247$ ,

$p < 0.01$ ), indicating that increased use of SMS would promote brand image of hotels within the Cape Coast Metropolis; Facebook showed a statistically significant positive effect on brand image of hotels ( $\beta = 0.601$ ,  $t(1,141) = 6.715$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), me-

aning improved use of Facebook by hotels would enhance their brand image. It was also revealed that website positively influences brand image of hotels ( $\beta = 0.674$ ,  $t(1,141) = 8.589$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 2 | E-marketing tools and brand image

Path	$\beta$	t value	Sig.	Conclusion on hypothesis test
Emails → Brand image	0.771	12.503	0.000	H1: Supported or failed to reject
SMS → Brand image	0.401	6.247	0.000	H2: Supported or failed to reject
Facebook → Brand image	0.601	6.715	0.000	H3: Supported or failed to reject
Website → Brand image	0.674	8.589	0.000	H4: Supported or failed to reject

Regression is significant at the 0.01  
Source: Own elaboration

Overall, the results of this study have indicated that e-marketing tools of emails, SMS, Facebook and website promote brand image of hotels. Whilst, some to an extent, these results are interesting, one would have doubted the possibility of Facebook, being a social media platform, contributing to the promotion of brand image of hotels. This is because the perception has been that people visit Facebook not to search for places such as hotels to spend time or for events but to go by their personal real-time activities (Ho et al., 2022). This study has, however, shown that a good use of Facebook platforms by hotels in the Cape Coast Metropolis for the purpose of promoting their services would enhance their recognition and consequently drive their brand image. The use of emails and SMS helps hotels to keep in touch with their customers. For instance, some hotels send "Thank you" messages, through emails or SMS, to their visitors after they had left the facility, and this helps keep memories alive with the visitors; hence, making them have the will to revisit these hotels. Ultimately, a positive image is created about these hotels in the minds of the visitors.

With respect to Facebook and websites, hotels are able to show their environments and exhibit products they have on offer, due to the abilities of these platforms to support videos and pictures. This makes existing customers and potential ones feel as though they are always in the hotel environ-

ment. An indelible memory is created with well-organised and lively websites, as well as Facebook platforms. Consequently, customers tend to associate some level of positive image with the hotels. These findings correlate with those of Mullatahiri and Ukaj (2019), Štefko et al. (2015), and Singla and Aggarwal (2017) who also reported a positive correlation between e-marketing and brand image. Besides, this study supports Hoffman and Novak's model that the use of digital tools by a firm leads to a flow that enhances the firm's recognition.

## 5. Conclusion

The study sought to find out the effects of the use of emails, SMS, Facebook and website on the brand image of hotels. It was revealed that the use emails significantly improves the brand image of hotels in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Similarly, the use of SMS has a noteworthy enhancing effect on the brand image of the hotels. Again, Facebook enhances the brand image of hotels. The website was also shown to have promoted the brand image of hotels in Cape Coast. These imply that e-marketing tools are needed to enhance brand image of hotels; thus, to promote the brand image of hotels, emails, SMS, Facebook and website should be employed by hotels in the Cape Co-

ast Metropolis.

This study has provided empirical evidence on how social media platforms, website and messaging tools can be reconfigured into a more effective hotel promotion channel. This research has also provided practical implications for marketers within the hotel industry, and established the inter-connections between e-marketing tools and brand image. Additionally, this study has offered insight to hotel managers for using social media platforms, not only Facebook, to attract potential visitors as social media platforms have become crucial contributors to customers' decision-making process of booking and/or visiting a hotel. Considering these, it is recommended that Ghana Hotels Association should put policies in place to encourage hotel managers and owners to focus on making their e-marketing activities and platforms more attractive in order to improve on the brand image of their hotels.

However, the study has some weaknesses that may affect generalisation of the findings. One, the study was limited to only the hotels within the Cape Coast Metropolis; implying that the results may be more applicable to these hotels than those in other regions. Thus, it is suggested that future studies include some selected hotels across Ghana. Also, though the sample size was enough for inferential statistics (Mullatahiri & Ukaj, 2019), this could be improved, in terms of generalisability and reliability, if the study was carried out over an extended period. Therefore, it is recommended that further studies employing convenience sampling techniques spend more time on the field in order to get an appreciable number of hotel visitors to participate in the study.

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