

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY,  
KUMASI

KNUST SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

ACCELERATING THE GROWTH OF A BUSINESS BY INTEGRATING  
ONLINE MARKETING WITH EXISTING OFFLINE ACTIVITIES: THE  
CASE STUDY OF SELECTED HOTELS IN SUNYANI MUNICIPALITY.

By

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A Dissertation submitted to KNUST School of Business in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the award of Master of Business Administration  
Degree

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**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that I have personally, under the supervision of Mr. BamfoAbeekuBylonof the KNUST, Business School, undertaken the study therein. To the best of my knowledge, it contains neither material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

Elizabeth Antwi-Boasiako( PG4672110) .....

Student's Name

Signature

Date

I declare that I have supervised the student in undertaking the study submitted herein and approve it for assessment.

Mr. BamfoAbeekuBylon .....

Supervisor's Name

Signature

Date

Certified by .....

Mr. BamfoAbeekuBylon

Date

( Head of Department)

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to God the almighty for seeing me through the course. It is also dedicated to my parents for their love and support.



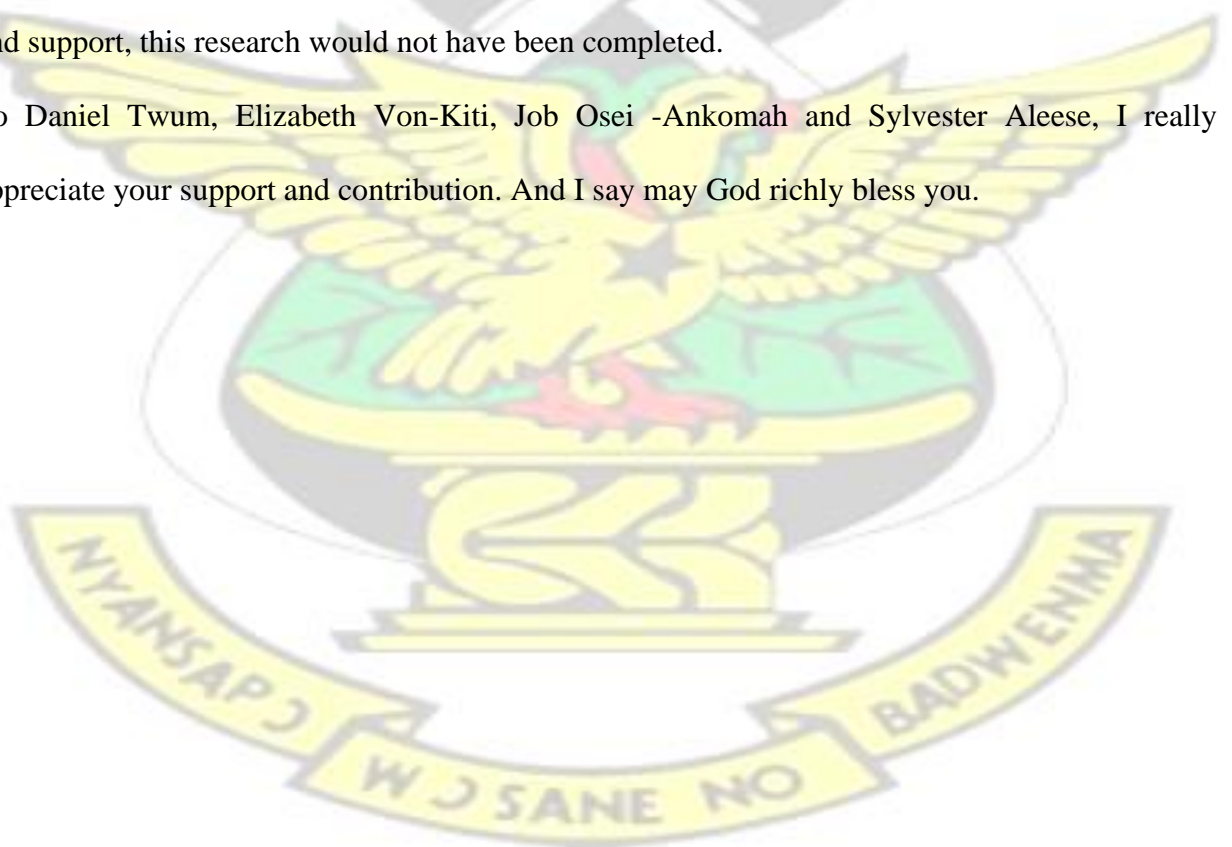
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To Daniel Twum, Elizabeth Von-Kiti, Job Osei -Ankomah and Sylvester Aleese, I really appreciate your support and contribution. And I say may God richly bless you.



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## **ABSTRACT**

Developments in information technology have changed the manner in which competitive advantages are achieved today and with customers becoming increasingly sophisticated and gradually moving towards the internet, it has become necessary for marketers to reach out to this new market segment whilst ensuring that the offline customers are also well catered for. This study therefore aimed at investigating how growth within the hospitality industry can be accelerated by integrating online marketing with existing offline activities. Given the exploratory nature of this study, data was collected quantitatively using questionnaire and qualitatively using interview. In all, fifty (50) customers from five selected hotels within Sunyani Municipality were issued a questionnaire and five managers from these selected hotels were also interviewed. The study revealed that hotels within Sunyanimarket their services offline with few online activities. However, the online marketing comes with tremendous benefits. Based on the findings, the study established that both online and offline marketing activities were important in terms of accelerating business growth as far as hotels in Sunyani are concerned. From this study, the following recommendations were

made: hotels should blend the two marketing activities for the time being and slowly shift attention to online marketing activities considering the enormous benefit the study outlined.

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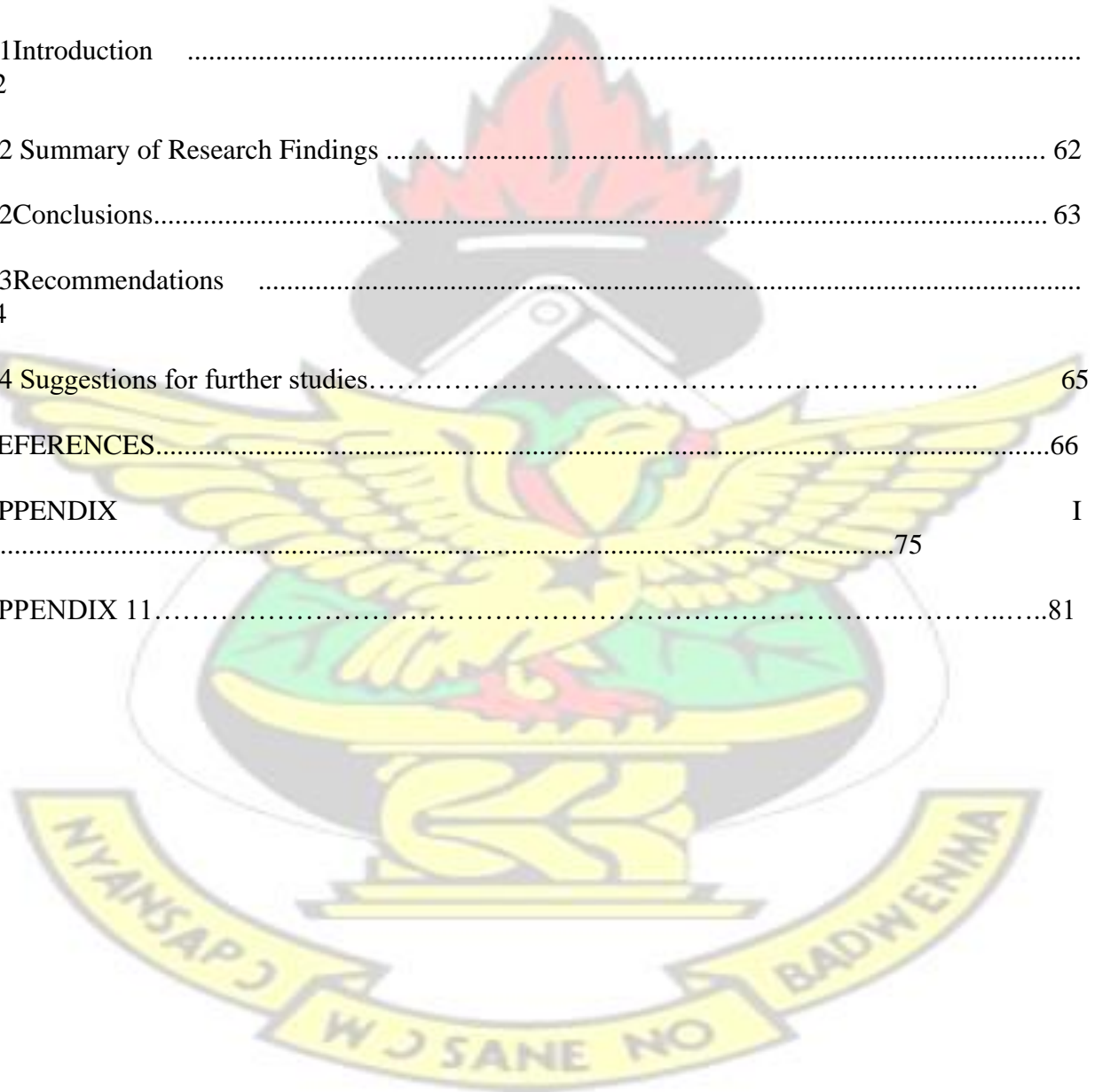
## TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>	v
ABSTRACT .....		v
CONTENTS .....		vii
LIST OF TABLES .....		viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....		x
CHAPTER ONE .....		1
GENERAL INTRODUCTION .....		1
1.1 Background of the Study.....		2
1.2 Statement of problems.....		3
1.3 Research objectives .....		5
1.4 Research Questions .....		5
1.5 Significance of the Study.....		6
1.6 Scope of the Research .....		6
1.7 Overview of Methodology .....		7
1.8 Structure of the Research.....		8
1.9 Limitation of the Research .....		9
CHAPTER TWO.....		10
LITERATURE REVIEW .....		10
2.1 Hospitality services characteristics .....		10
2.2 Marketing strategy in hospitality industry.....		12
2.2.1 Marketing offline in hotels.....		15
2.2.2 Marketing online in hotels.....		16

2.2.3 Integrating offline and online marketing.....	21
2.3The impact of ICT on hospitality industry.....	23
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	
.....	27
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b> .....	27
3.1 Introduction .....	27
3.2Research paradigm. ....	27
3.3 Purpose of the study.....	32
3.4 Population and sampling .....	35
3.4.1 Sampling method.....	36
3.5 Data collection method.....	39
3.5.1 Questionnaire.....	39
3.5.2 Interviews.....	40
3.6 Data analysis method.....	41
3.7 Quality of research.....	42
3.8 Research ethics and limitation.....	44
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	45
<b>DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION RESULTS</b> .....	45
4.1 Introduction.....	45
4.2Background characteristics of respondents.....	45
4.3 Services rendered by selected hotels in Sunyani .....	49

4.4 How the selected hotels market their services.....	50
4.5 The online and offline marketing activities of the selected hotels in Sunyani.....	52
4.6 The effect of E-Marketing on business performance in Sunyani.....	57
4.7 How the marketing activities of the selected hotels affect their performance.....	59
CHAPTER FIVE.....	62
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	62
5.1Introduction .....	62
5.2 Summary of Research Findings .....	62
5.2Conclusions.....	63
5.3Recommendations .....	64
5.4 Suggestions for further studies.....	65
REFERENCES.....	66
APPENDIX .....	I
.....	75
APPENDIX 11.....	81



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Customers' responses on the services provided by hotels inSunyani.....	49
Table 4.2: How the selected hotels market their services.....	51
Table 4.3: Customers' responses on effect of e-marketing.....	57



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1: Gender distribution of respondents.....	45
Figure 4.2: Distribution of educational background of respondents.....	46
Figure 4.3: Distribution of respondents' occupation.....	47
Figure 4.4: Age distribution of respondents.....	47
Figure 4.5: Marital status distribution of respondents.....	48
Figure 4.6: Respondents' views on how often they have seen hotels in Sunyani market online.....	52
Figure 4.7: Respondents' views on accessing hotels in Sunyani via online.....	53
Figure 4.8: The media through which customers accessed hotels from the internet.....	54
Figure 4.9: Responses on the cost of accessing hotels on the internet.....	54
Figure 4.10: Responses on how often customers see hotels market offline.....	55
Figure 4.11: Responses on media through which hotels market offline in Sunyani.....	56
Figure 4.12: Responses from customers on the last time they patronized the hotels.....	59
Figure 4.13: Responses of customers on the frequency with which they patronized the hotels.....	60
Figure 4.14: Customers' responses on the effect of e-marketing services.....	61

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Different offline tools such as face to face communication, TV, radio and magazines etc. have been used for a long time to communicate with customers within the hospitality industry. In recent years, the trend is gradually changing as a number of businesses have started using the internet and other electronic media in conducting their marketing efforts, giving the chance for Electronic Marketing (as a new marketing phenomenon and philosophy) to grow in a very dramatic and dynamic way( El-Gohary et al, 2010). Internet has affected marketing process by providing opportunities that were not available in the traditional marketing tools. The popularity of the Internet is growing, and with audiences gravitating towards the Web, it has become vital for marketers to seize the opportunity and to compete in this new digital battle field(Rappaport, 2007).

There are three full Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in Ghana, each with their own independent internal Internet links. The first and the major ISP in the country is Network Computer Systems (NCS) which is also involved in consulting services, network installation,maintenance and training services. A few years ago NCS started an Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) network service. This service has been implemented through collaboration with General Electric Information Services and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). EDI therefore enables inter-business electronic exchange of documents in a standard format.

Apart from NCS, there are two other commercial full Internet providers in Accra. These are Internet Ghana and Africa Online. Internet Ghana is a Ghanaian Company providing

Internet Services. Incorporated in June 1996, Internet Ghana operates a full digital link to the Internet, connecting to the world renowned Internet MCI's super. Marketers within the country have now adopted the use of this internet and other electronic media in marketing their products and services and the case of the hospitality industry is no exception.

E-Marketing according to Smith and Chaffey (2005) is achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies. It includes tools like internet, intranets, extranets and mobile phones. But the internet is assumed to be an important channel for marketing and distribution of products and services. This is, among other things, due to the cost effectiveness of the Internet and the convenience for customers. With the internet, marketers can reach out to a broad customer base, locate target customers, identify their needs and communicate with them at a relatively low cost.

The hotel industry is well positioned to capture the full potential of internet marketing while avoiding many of its risks. Currently in Ghana, a lot of hotels have introduced the Wi-Fi that can be accessed by customer and sometimes lodgings are booked through the Internet. But in the quest for cheaper marketing alternative, most hotels continue to use conventional marketing tools such as newspaper, magazines, radio and television advertisements, unaware of the advantages that the online marketing offers. Online marketing can reduce costs, attract affluent customers and lessen dependency on more traditional and expensive distribution channels. (www.ukessay.com)

Since the Web allows access to various forms of information on different services, the hotel managements must encourage the potential customers to use the Web site as both an information tool as well as a purchase option. This combination of information search and

purchase process is an advantage over traditional offline marketing. Despite the importance of online marketing, this marketing strategy is faced with a number of challenges including resource for payment of the internet charges especially in situation of pay per click. Another notable disadvantage of transacting business online is that, it may be difficult to evaluate the legitimacy of the transaction and hotels are particular vulnerable to fraudsters using stolen credit cards to do online transaction. It is in the light of this that marketers should not concentrate solely on the online marketing but should integrate online marketing with the offline activities.

In discussing online business models of established companies, Nel et al. (1999) suggest that established companies tend to expand their business online as a supportive service to their existing offline business. Based on this theory, the hospitality industry can establish web sites to support their traditional offline marketing activities. Even media companies have introduced many cross-platform advertising packages that use both online and offline versions of the media to make the medium more attractive to advertisers. It is against this background that businesses especially hospitality industry must take advantage and accelerate the growth of their businesses by integrating online marketing with existing offline activities.

### **1.2 Statement of problem**

According to Boella (2000) the hospitality industry is considered to be the world's fastest growing industry. Hotels now have too many available hotel rooms relative to the guests desiring to rent them. The resulting competition, which often involves price cutting in efforts to provide greater value to guests, reduces further the profits generated. The

Internet has also changed the face of purchasing and customer behaviour over the last decade. There is therefore the need to bring in a strategy that can help address all these problems. Huynh (2011) is of the view that if road side billboards, radio/TV commercials, press releases and street activation are mainstream marketing channels today; then social media marketing, code optimization, targeted advertising, online behavioral data mining and brand app's will be the future. Traditional concepts of marketing must therefore be reviewed and businesses must be ready to fully embrace the online marketplace. The hospitality industry is no different and evidently, has much to gain from this new medium with online sales figures climbing annually (Carroll & Sileo, 2007).

The competition between online marketing and offline marketing is similar to the competition in retailing and service industries -- the rivalry between brick-and-mortar stores who have web sites and those e-trailers who have only online presence (Hensmans et al, 2001). It has been argued that brick-and-mortar companies have an edge over the pure online companies in winning consumers through the synergy of online and offline presence. As a result, if hotels can adopt this and integrate the online marketing with off line activities, then the growth can be accelerated. By aligning goals with multiple channels, explicit coordination and control, and joint development of the capability of the information technology of the online division and the offline division, industries especially those in the hospitality can achieve synergy benefits such as cost savings, differentiation through value-added services, improved trust, and market extension (Steinfeld, 2002).

It is in the light of these that it is worth investigating into how hotels can accelerate their growth by integrating online marketing with existing offline activities.

### 1.3 Research Objectives

The main purpose of the study is to investigate into how growth can be accelerated by integrating online and offline marketing within the hospitality industry.

The specific objectives for this study are:

1. To investigate how services in the selected hotels are marketed in Sunyani Municipality.
2. To identify the online and offline activities in the selected hotels in Sunyani Municipality.
3. To evaluate the current online marketing by the selected hotels in Sunyani Municipality.
4. To analyze the relationship between the integration of offline and online marketing on the performance of the selected hotels in Sunyani Municipality.

### 1.4 Research Questions

From the objectives stated, the following research questions can be deduced.

1. What types of services are rendered by the selected hotels within the Sunyani Municipality?
2. How do the selected hotels market their services in Sunyani Municipality?
3. What are the online and offline activities in the selected hotels in the Municipality?
4. What is the effect of E-Marketing on the business performance in the Municipality?
5. How do the marketing activities in the selected hotels affect the performance of the hotels in the Municipality?
6. What is the relationship between the hotel's performance and the integration of the two marketing strategies in the selected hotels in Sunyani?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This research is of significance to the domain of educational technology as it extends the knowledge base that currently exists in that field. The concept of e-marketing is relatively new to the majority of industry especially in the hospitality industry. The handful industries that have chosen to embrace the concept and implemented the technology have welcomed the tremendous benefits it has to offer. Therefore, research which explores this technology will help to raise awareness among those who are unacquainted with its potential applications and benefits within their industry.

To illustrate the potential effect of the integrating of the traditional and e-marketing, the research investigates hotels currently using the technology and those that are yet to use it. The findings from the study have the capacity to impact upon the decision to use it or not and how the two concepts can be integrated effectively to yield the right result.

Internet provides an opportunity for market testing and optimization. Increasing digitalization will make it progressively easier to experimentally alter particular aspects of a business and quickly observe how customers respond (Wyner, 2000). Therefore it will help marketers to effectively managed customers complains through findings that may arrived from the study.

### **1.6 Scope of the Research**

The study was restricted to sunyani in the Brong- Ahafo Region. Sunyani municipality was selected because the town has a number of different categories of hotels ranging from 1- star to 3- star hotels and as such all the needed information were easily obtained.

Research project takes several months in designing and execution and by the time its recommendation are available to management, they are useless. A research project should, therefore be planned in such a way that its recommendation are available at the time the marketing manager needs them for decision making. As such the research was limited to six months thus from December 2011 to June 2012.

It was important to limit the study to five selected hotels in sunyani and not all hotels in the municipal since there are thirty-five Hotels as of the time of conducting the study. The reasons for limiting the study to five hotels were informed by the reason that it would have been logistically unwise to conduct nationwide study given the exploratory nature of this study. Again the following hotels were selected: Eusbett hotel, Ebenezer hotel, Pena Quests house, point four and Glamosay hotels. Eusbett and Glamosay were chosen for the study because they had all the modern facilities including Wi-Fi and render different services. Pena, Ebenezer and point four are one of the few old hotels in the system and lack most of the modern facilities but they have been in operation and knowledge about how they market their services would be necessary for the studies.

### **1.7 Overview of Methodology**

Given the exploratory nature of the research, a substantial portion of quantitative research was conducted to better understand the impact of the traditional marketing and internet marketing on the performance of the selected hotels. The data collection instruments were questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was self-administered to fifty different customers from selected hostels in sunyani municipality.

Interviews were conducted to identify the critical issues needed by interviewing one key decision makers in each of the selected hotels. In all five (5) managers from selected hotels

were interviewed. Thus, the research was a mixed study. Mixed methods research is where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study.

Collecting multiple data using different strategies, approaches, and methods is a way that the resulting mixture or combination is likely to result in complementary strengths and no overlapping weaknesses (Brewer & Hunter, 1989).

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using the SPSS to find the effect of integrating the two marketing strategies on the business performance.

### **1.8 Limitation of Research**

Due to the time limit and inaccessibility to all needed sources, the research for this thesis had to be limited. Therefore this study was based on the hospitality industry in Sunyani municipality. The managers of the chosen hotels were working in Sunyani and their answers are related to the Sunyani market as well. This study also focused mainly on the business to individual consumers rather than business to business. Also because of the different cultures, economies and regulations in different parts of the world, the results from this thesis will mainly be valid in Ghana.

### **1.9 Structure of the Thesis/ Study**

This research has been organized into five chapters. Chapter one covers the general introduction. It highlights on the background of the study, statement of the research problem, the objectives of the study and the research questions, justification of the study, brief overview of the research methodology, scope of the study, organization of the study and finally the limitations.

Chapter two covers a detailed review of relevant literature. This is mostly findings and contributions made on related works to this study.

Chapter three deals with the research methodology and design. This chapter laid out all issues concerned with the methods adopted in conducting the study including the data collection procedure.

Data presentation and analysis of the research finding was the subject matter of chapter four. This chapter contains the presentation of the processed data through the use of the relevant statistical tools. The data presented is analyzed to give them meaning and relevance.

Lastly, chapter five comprises of the summary, conclusion, and recommendations.



## CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Hospitality services characteristics

Lovelock and Foster (1991) describe service as intangible and experiential whilst Kotler (1996) defined service as an act or performance that one can offer to another that is essential,

intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. From the above definition, service is said to be intangible, experienced, heterogeneous, perishable and cannot be inventoried for future use.

The hospitality industry varies from other industries significantly due to the perishable and intangible nature of its service/product (Bastakis, et al, 2004). Although services in the hospitality often include important tangible element such as hotel beds, restaurant meals, menu chart and tables and chairs, intangible element including labour and expertise of service personnel dominate the creation of value in service performance. Hoteliers must therefore employ physical metaphors to demonstrate the competencies of service delivered. However, small to medium-sized businesses in the hospitality industry face more barriers and limitations than larger ones. As such, service providers must be innovative enough to provide innovation in services rendered.

Innovation according to Kelly and Storey (2000) leads to financial performance. Therefore innovation in services is paramount to the performance and hence the development of the industry. It mostly involves small and incremental changes in processes and procedures.

Hospitality firms, such as hotels, are an ideal example of a market which could benefit from the implementation of service innovation. First from a customer's perspective, the hospitality market is perpetually inundated by many similar, often easily substituted service offering. This can cause difficulties for hotel managers as they attempt to differentiate an individual hotel from its competitors (Reid & Sandler, 1992). One solution to this challenge may be to offer new and innovative features to customers. Secondly, the hospitality industry is rapidly changing due to acceleration in information technology (Olsen & Connelly, 2000). Managers will have to make proactive changes which focus even more intensely on customer's preference, quality, and technological interfaces in order to stay competitive in such a dynamic environment (Karmakar, 2004). Thirdly, travellers today do not exhibit, as in past decade, a truly brand loyal behaviour. Travellers instead are choosing to patronize hotels that offer the best value proposition under existing budgetary constraints. In order to add value to guest's experience, hotel managers and marketers must meet the challenge of determining which services are more preferred by hotel guest. Atuahene (1996) is of the view that, these innovations in services are easier to imitate. Hence innovation should be carefully designed and implemented in order to reduce the level of imitation.

Peter and Donnelly (1991) is also of the view that service quality is paramount for all service providers and indicated that more than forty percent of customers switch to competitors' because of poor services. Excellent service is a profit strategy because it results in more new customers, more business with existing customers, fewer lost customers, more insulation from price competition, and fewer mistakes requiring the performance of services. Excellent

service can also be energizing because it requires the building of an organizational culture in which people are challenged to perform to their potential and are recognized and rewarded when they do.

Service is a key component of value that drives any company's success. To the customer, value is the benefits received for the burdens endured—such as price, an inconvenient location, unfriendly employees, or an unattractive service facility. Quality service helps a company maximize benefits and minimize non-price burdens for its customers.

One special marketing challenge facing most service providers is to find ways of keeping their current customers and to make their offerings more tangible to potential customers. Hotels therefore focus on providing quality services and products to their customers in order to make them satisfied and perhaps make them loyal customers. Foster (1992) pointed out that the dining experience and image of a restaurant may be enhanced through a friendly welcome and devotion to the slightest of customer's needs. Regardless of restaurant type, promptness and courtesy should be offered to customers.

## **2.2 Marketing strategy in hospitality industry**

For businesses to have competitive advantage over their competitors there is the need to use variety of marketing strategies. Marketing strategies are the group of techniques and actions that a business takes in order to achieve its marketing objectives. Having a marketing strategy and knowing what that strategy is can be an important part of being successful in any business. Marketing participants often employ strategic models and tools to analyze marketing decisions. These include marketing plan, identifying or uncovering new niche market and exploiting emerging trends. When beginning a strategic analysis, the 3Cs

(content, contact and community) can be employed to get a broad understanding of the strategic environment. An Ansoff Matrix is also used to convey an organization's strategic positioning of their marketing mix. The 4Ps (product, price, promotion and placement) can then be utilized to form a marketing plan to pursue a defined strategy.

Competitive marketing strategy improves financial performance of the firm through the route of sustainable competitive advantage. The purpose of competitive strategy is to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) and thereby enhance a business performance (Bharadwaj et al, 1993). One of the major objectives of marketing strategy is to enhance the long-term financial performance of a firm. There are four essential requirements for a strategy to be a source of SCA (Barney, 1991). It must be valuable; it must be rare among competitors; it must be imperfectly imitable; there must not be any strategically equivalent substitutes for this strategy. Sources of SCA lead to positional competitive advantage (Differentiation and low cost). Sustainability of positional advantages leads to superior long-term market and financial performance. Formulating competitive marketing strategies also involves, recognizing relationships between elements of the marketing mix as well as assessing the impact of competitive and market conditions on marketing mix formulation. Competitive advantage is realized based on three factors (Sudarshan, 1995): the firm's marketing strategy, implementation of this strategy and the industry context.

The marketing strategy for hospitality industries are developed by considering the 7Ps (Product, Price, Promotion, Place, people, process and physical evidence). During the process of marketing strategy development, an analysis of competition and other analytical inputs of the market are used. The marketing strategy developed is so implemented and any deviations from the plan are feedback to the marketing objectives and the development of

marketing strategies. Strategies may include offline marketing, online marketing or the integration of online and offline marketing. The identification and selection of the most effective channel(s) is an important aspect of the marketing strategy which ensures that businesses remain competitive and continue to reach the desired target market (Jobber, 2004).

Due to the intangibility and invisibility of their product, hotels need to implement an appropriate distribution strategy (Gardini, 2004). However, intangibility is not the only limitation which small to medium-sized hotels face. “New” (electronic) distribution channels such as the internet and online intermediaries, as well as the simultaneous management of numerous distribution channels, add a new dimension of complexity to distribution channel management (Klein & Zelewski, 2001). This raises the question if hotels are able to effectively manage a combination of traditional and “new” distribution channels to better cope with the challenges of rate integrity and rate parity due to highly transparent rates on the internet (Gazzoli et al, 2008). In terms of distribution, hotels need to be careful when selecting the channels they intend to use due to the challenges they face, such as a lack of negotiation power and a lack of resources (Morrison, 2002). Thus, distribution channels are not only chosen by price, but also by their effectiveness and the opportunities they offer to increase visibility and customer loyalty (Merx & Bachem, 2003).

Morrison (2002) adds that hospitality industries also need to consistently deliver quality products and services to each individual customer. Issues such as distribution via multiple channels and the maintenance of rate integrity and rate parity are important to reach the desired target market optimally and to gain customer trust.

### **2.2.1 Marketing offline in hotels**

Marketing offline includes other methods of marketing apart from internet marketing. This industry is very popular since hundreds of years back. It comprises of advertisement in newspaper, magazines, hoardings, exhibition shows, and print media (like the Yellow Pages, buses, benches, and billboards), sponsorship and partnership. Marketing offline is especially important for new hotels or services entering new markets. They can be used to increase awareness and knowledge by leveraging the strengths of the partners and sharing costs (Samu et al, 2002).

The traditional media or offline marketing can keep the audience because the audience is usually not asked to take action right away. Offline marketing also helps in increasing brand popularity, product sale, revenue generation, profit maximization and closing the gap between providers and consumers.

Despite the hype surrounding online viral marketing, it is claimed by WOMMA (the UK trade association) that 85% of WOM activity takes place Offline and that offline WOM (word-of-mouth) is more powerful because the communicator is usually known to the recipient and thus the communication has added trust power. A similar figure is reported from the US where according to the Keller Fay Group 73% of marketing-related conversations take place in person, and only 10% happen online. So, the focus of WOM marketing strategy should be face-to-face (mouth not mouse), rather than mouse-to-mouse communication. This comes to confirm that despite the emergence of the online marketing, offline marketing still plays a vital role in marketing services in the hospitality industry.

### **2.2.2 Marketing online in hotels**

In the early days of the development of internet commerce some grand claims were made for the impact of this new approach to trading. In particular the scope for rapid processing of large volumes of information and the freedom of access to such information was seen as a sea change in the operation of markets which would alter the behaviour both of firms and consumers and lead to increased competition. As the internet began to develop, this vision was enthusiastically adopted by business leaders.

The Internet is a nearly perfect market because information is instantaneous and buyers can compare the offerings of sellers worldwide. The result is fierce price competition, dwindling product differentiation, and vanishing brand loyalty.

Studies have shown that more and more consumers are moving towards the Internet to find their products and services and ultimately making the purchase online (Starkov& Price, 2003). Due to the excellent Internet and broadband access infrastructure available in most part of the country, most hotels can target their customers online. The Internet significantly reduces search costs (Brynjolfsson& Smith 2000) and enables the convenient comparison of various alternatives (Keeney, 1999). Consumers with greater Internet experience are more likely to use online channels to collect product information, because their cost of collecting information from the online channel is likely to be lower than that from the offline channel (Cook & Coupey, 1998).

There are several stages leading to the final decision to make the purchase and book the hotel rooms (Wolfe et al, 2004)). The first of these stages is the search. This sets the stage for subsequent online activities such as research, planning and eventually, the buying. Many

researchers have tried to study what goes into the thinking process for consumers when they are selecting a hotel (Lockyer, 2005). Consumers do online searches for a multitude of reasons but according to Teo (2002), the main reasons for doing so is to ensure that they get the best deals and make the most suitable and informed choice.

Consumers go through various channels to get to their desired website and based on Law & Huang (2006)'s research, majority of them will search till they find a satisfactory website. This finding resonates with Teo's (2002) findings where about half of respondents spent a lot of time surfing before deciding on an online purchase.

Whether it is offline or online, purchasing of services typically carry with them a higher degree of perceived risk as compared to products. Customers simply cannot gauge the performance of a service until they experience it. This raises a lot of doubt for the customer and drives them to do more searching before making the final choice (Kim et al., 2005). In the online arena, there is a host of ways to get to the final website to book the hotel. This could be search engines, met search engines, online travel agencies, links on consumer generated media (Starkov & Price, 2007). It was found that search engines are a popular method that consumers like to use for their search and hence, Law & Huang (2006) emphasized the importance of website optimization.

However, the Internet has brought a new dimension to the selection process and much more needs to be done to understand the mechanisms and psychology that affects it. Several studies have been done to understand what consumers find important in hotels when they travel for leisure. In the 2006 National Leisure Travel Monitor survey, it was found that consumers generally looked for value for the price of the hotel room rates they pay. It was the most desirable attribute to a leisure traveler, with location and room rate following

closely behind. However, the survey did not seem to distinguish between the important factors in hotel selection done through online and offline mediums.

How consumers select hotels online differ from offline selection and this is evident from some of the research done. Lockyer (2005) found that the key factors in hotel selection for most consumers were cleanliness and location. On the other hand, for online selection, VFM Interactive survey (2005) discovered that visuals were very important to online shoppers, while Law & Huang (2006) discovered that content richness and functionality of the website played an important role as well. The Internet allows for still photos, elaborate graphics like virtual tours and videos but a balance must be struck between having those and website loading speed (Ryan & Valverde, 2003). This resonates with the findings from Chu's research in 2001 that found that consumers preferred to have informative, interactive and attractive travel websites.

This difference between online and offline hotel selection is understandable because the Internet has opened new windows for businesses and how they can market their product or service. Price is not always the main factor in the decision to market online (Grau, 2005). While it will always be a factor to some extent, it might take second place to location, brand name or even facilities. Additionally, reduced prices offer only temporary benefits because such discounts are usually exploited by occasional users who will return to their preferred brand when the offer is over (Chan & Wong, 2005).

The Internet has basically put the power in the hands of the customer. There is so much more information and choices available online for consumers and businesses now have to work harder at managing both their online and offline channels to entice new customers while

retaining old ones. Fortunately for companies operating online, they have the benefit of the customers being predisposed to buy when they are already online searching and researching for information. This was referred to as customer-controlled “pull” approach or goal-oriented shopping instead of the traditional “push” marketing targeted at consumers with little or no intention to buy (Gan et al, 2006).

Businesses are concerned with the factors that convince a customer to purchase online. As stated by Scally et al (2001), online shoppers rely on the Internet to gather information as part of their build-up to the final buy. However, that does not necessarily mean that they would complete the process by buying online as well. Jayawardhena et al. (2007) also reiterated this point when they found that the customer’s purchase orientations have an influence over their intention to buy online. Hence, there are characteristics in online shoppers that point to the fact that they research online, but prefer to buy offline. With regards to hotel booking, customers also exhibit different preferences when they do buy online. Some studies have found that consumers might do their research on third party or intermediary websites and subsequently book directly from the hotel’s own websites (Carroll & Sileo, 2007). This raises questions about the marketing strategies to be employed by both hotels and travel agencies.

A closer look must be made at the reasons why customers choose to book on certain websites and why they would rather book offline despite doing all their homework online. Researchers have found that credit card and personal information security rank high as main barriers to online booking (Heung, 2003; Hua, 2005). It would be interesting to determine if this effect is as prominent with Ghanaians and if those are still issues online consumers contend with up to date. Security risk as highlighted above is most likely to be the main

deterrent to online purchasing. Kim et al. (2005) cited many other factors that might be at play. They showed that perceived risk in purchasing online could come in several forms, namely financial risk, performance risk, psychological risk, social risk, physical risk and time risk. Out of these few categories, they discovered that performance and financial risks had significant influence on a customer's online purchase intention while physical risk did not feature very strongly.

According to Teo (2002), online shoppers were also concerned with response time. This might be true of hotel bookings because not all hotel reservation website give an immediate confirmation on availability upon payment. The wait for a response might be too pressing or uneasy for a traveler wanting to settle his/her accommodation quickly. Other studies have also found other factors that could influence a customer's online purchase intentions. Today's consumers are becoming more sophisticated and they expect certain standards to exist before agreeing to buy online. They must see evidence of high transaction security where encryption software (e.g. VeriSign) is in place and refund policies are clearly stated on the website. Websites also need to be highly informative and accurate, aesthetically pleasing and navigationally functional in order to give the website sufficient credibility. Another factor of importance is the consumer's comfort level in using the Internet and his/her previous experience with buying online. A pleasant previous encounter would certainly give greater confidence to perform such transactions again. This is supported by research conducted by (Kim et al, 2004).

One of the challenges that internet markets face (as does the general public) is that many internet products are outright scams or promoted with deception making it difficult to know what one is buying. This is especially the case with products that are supposed to train or

aid internet marketers in making money. While the quality of products has improved in the past few years, ethics is still often missing in internet marketing. Many so-called money making products are "empty boxes" in which there is essentially nothing there yet a buyer is to make money by reselling this empty box to others. Pyramid schemes are also still prevalent. Marketer will not be able to use the x-factor/personal touch factor/human touch factor to influence the audience as the marketing is completely based on the advertisement and the information that the advertisement might lead to (websites, blogs and other channels).

### **2.2.3 Integrating offline and online marketing**

A strategic combination of online and print methods optimizes advertising efforts. Online channels feature fast whereas print media achieve attention and quicken interests (Jones & Spiegel, 2003) obviously; integrating online and traditional media has significant advantages. When implementing such a strategy, the utilization of the partner's channels is connected with substantially lower costs than the use of traditional mass media such as print media or television. Whereas the E-Marketing may profit from advertising spaces in mailings, buildings and vehicles or in point-of-sale magazines of the offline partner, traditional firms may advertise on their partner's Internet platform.

Consumers use a mix of online (e.g., online reviews, blogs) and offline (e.g. family and friends, salespeople, and magazines) WOM information to help structure their decisions. Past research shows that WOM effectiveness depends on the strength of ties, or the closeness of the relationship between the recommendation source and the consumer who makes the decision. Strong ties are perceived as more influential than weak ties, and they are more likely to be utilized as sources of information (Brown & Reingen, 1987). In the case of offline

WOM, such as recommendations from friends and family members, consumers could use source similarity and expertise to determine the credibility of information (Chatterjee, 2001). In an online environment, however, “tie strength” is typically much weaker, because recommendations are from total strangers, and it is difficult for consumers to determine the information’s credibility. Indeed, experimental evidence shows that when both channels are present, the offline channel is generally preferred over the online channel (Frambach et al. 2007). As popular hotels are more likely to be featured in offline channels such as magazines and store demos, and discussed among friends, their consumers may not resort to online reviews for quality information, and hence are less likely to be influenced by online reviews.

The discussion above suggests that online reviews could be more effective in influencing the purchases of less popular services, because consumers are more likely to seek quality information to minimize the purchase risk and the likelihood of post-purchase regret, and such quality information is likely to be unavailable from offline channels. In order to overcome this issue, hotels can integrate online marketing with offline activities. It has been recognized that companies need to design their marketing strategies according to their individual situation (Gulati&Garino, 2000), meaning that they do not necessarily have to strive for the complete integration of online and offline activities with equal service and product offerings at all customer touch points.

Due to the intangibility characteristics of hotels services, distribution plays an important role in the Hospitality Industry. By creating and manipulating hotels’ accessibility, most consumer demands can be managed (Bastakis et al, 2004). The role of multi-channel marketing might be misunderstood or perceived as ambiguous, because the distribution channels used by hotels, when compared to those utilized by manufacturers, are not

considered as 'traditional' channels of distribution. However, this is due to the fact that the hospitality product can neither be physically transported to a customer nor stored. Gardini (2004) indicates that this intangibility of the service is attached to its locality and that the customer must proactively seek the hotel in order to receive the product/service, thus it is much more difficult to attract customers. He further argues that it is crucial to ensure a consistent performance through all selected distribution channels. This can be achieved by establishing and managing central booking and reservation systems, by qualitative advising through hotel employees or intermediaries and by developing reliable accordance between the hotel image and the image of the selected distribution channels. As such, both traditional and online distribution via third-party intermediaries and the hotel website become relevant (Gardini, 2004).

Offline channels hold the advantage of enabling closer contact with the customer as well as enabling the hotel to react more rapidly to market changes (Reid & Bojanic, 2001). However, customers tend to make reservations through intermediaries rather than contacting the hotel directly. Moreover, hotels still face the problem of successfully diverting customers to utilize direct distribution channels rather than intermediaries (Gardini, 2004). Indirect distribution is characterized by channels in which the customer communicates with the hotel through at least one intermediary which is responsible for one or more channel functions.

### **2.3 The impact of ICT on hospitality industry**

Cheong (1995) observes that new communication technologies have made travel systems more efficient. Many hotels now have the World Wide Web sites in the Internet to advertise their services. The emergence of the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) -- examples include the Internet, computers, interactive multimedia systems, and

digital telecommunications -- has dramatically altered theoretical and practical assumptions about the role of communication technologies in development.

ICT allows travelers to access reliable and accurate information, as well as the possibility of making reservations in much less time, and with less expenses and inconveniences than required by conventional methods. ICT can help improve the quality of services and contribute to greater customer satisfaction. The development of ICT, especially the Internet has created "new" tourists, who have become aware of and are looking for a value for their money and time. Travelers have direct access to much larger sources of information, tourist organizations, private corporations and other users. ICT provides a range of tools which simplify and improve the process of finding information. Users themselves search for information on hotels, online booking of accommodation and other facilities, rather than relying on travel agencies to do it for them. Due to the popularity of Internet applications, most travel organizations, such as hotels, airlines and travel agencies, introduced Internet technology as part of their marketing and communication strategies.

The Internet makes it easy to determine what users visit what sites and thus allows hotels to generate high quality profiles in a short time that enable them to create an individually shaped relationship to their customers (Weidmanetal, 2008). To develop the measures for effectiveness of Internet advertising Campaign, it is necessary to highlight the key performance indicators, or indicators on which the measurement is based on. KPIs can vary from businesses to businesses depending upon the industry they operate on and also the business strategies and goals each individual business has.

Developments in information technology have changed the manner in which competitive advantages are achieved today. The development of digital information channels in the framework of the Net Economy will further lead to the widespread economic use of information as a production factor (Weiberetal, 2001).

Potential tourists are becoming more independent and sophisticated with a wide range of tools to the realization of a journey. This includes the reservation system and online travel agencies (like Expedia and Fast booking), Internet search engines (like Google Kayak), destination management systems (e.g. visitcroatia.net), social networks (like Facebook) and Web 2.0 portals (such as Wayne and Trip Advisor ), sites for comparing prices (such as Kelkoo), as well as individual pages of the suppliers and intermediaries.

The Internet is one of the most influential technologies that have changed the behavior of travelers. Earlier research has shown that tourists who search the Internet had a tendency to spend more money in destinations where they wanted to go than those who have consulted other sources of information (Bonn et al, 1998). The Internet provides customers direct contact with suppliers. Currently, there is a large increase in the number of users who book directly on hotel websites (Jeong&Gregoire, 2003), Due to the rapid development of the Internet, the expected response time of the organization is greatly reduced, so that the response of the organization can significantly affect user satisfaction and decision provisions. According to Weber and Roehl (1999), people who buy travel products online are probably present on the internet four or more years, and that can build trust between users and online operations through the positive experience of previous transactions (Bieger et al, 2005), it is necessary for travel and hotel companies to make their customers satisfied, so as to make them e-buyers and not only e-searchers. Although there are enough options

for users on the Internet, psychological barriers often prevent users from completing the transaction online, resulting in offline purchase. With less time spent on waiting and planning, and with more time for enjoyment, users would, through Internet travel sites, safely book and receive tickets at home (O'Connor & Frew, 2001). Most importantly, users are concerned for the safety of transactions. Such concern is a potential consequence of computer crime, which is actually the primary factor of user discouragement of giving their credit card numbers. There is also an issue of privacy, which is addressed by many users. This leads us to a situation where many travelers use the Internet to seek information about the destination, but book and/or buy services offline. Internet sites should devote more attention to make the users feel safe and comfortable in order to complete the transaction that they began (Chen, 2006).



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The research methodology is a strategy of enquiry, which moves from the underlying assumption to research design and data collection (Myers, 2009). The chapter therefore outlined research paradigm, purpose of the study, sampling procedures and data collection method. The research design or purpose of this study was exploratory and data were collected quantitatively and qualitatively.

#### **3.2 Research paradigm**

Research paradigm is all encompassing system of interrelated practice and thinking that define the nature of enquiry along three dimensions (Terreblanche&Durrheim, 1999).The three recognized methods for conducting research are quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods.

Quantitative research is an empirical research in which the researcher explores relationships using numeric data. Results can often be generalized, though this is not always the case (Colorado State University, 2009). This technique is assumed to be the most appropriate as using a statistical data package can reveal key relationships between the answers of the target audience. The basic beliefs of a positivist or quantitative researcher lead them to perceive the world as external and objective, and science as value free. As an observer they are independent and values can be suspended in order to understand. Reality is seen as one and therefore by dividing and studying its parts the whole can be understood. Therefore in their general approach to research design the quantitative researcher is seeking to deduce cause and effect relationships to predict patterns of behaviour. Therefore the research purpose is

likely to be causal or predictive rather than exploratory. The quantitative researcher then develops theory and uses this to explore the world. This theoretical framework identifies key variables and their relationships and associations. It allows initial design clarity but the result may not necessarily contribute to existing knowledge.

The research sample size in a quantitative approach would be reasonably large, a subset of a larger population and random sample with the same characteristics as that population. There are time economies gained in this approach with documented and tested methods to generate data, while data analysis is of a low complexity through accepted statistical analysis methods. Typically a quantitative researcher will use secondary data, survey techniques and classic experiments when collecting data.

Quantitative data analysis and interpretation is primarily deductive, a matter of proving or disproving the hypothesis or an assertion developed from a general statement. Indeed in any causal or predictive study when the cause and effect relationship has been demonstrated, or not, then the researcher has done their duty (Westmeyer, 1994). Therefore in reporting research results, the findings are discussed, in a recognized format, as to the extent to which the data collected either confirms or dis-confirms the research question. Moreover, the quantitative analysis enables the researcher to compare the primary research findings with the secondary findings and therefore link theoretical data with those provided in the form of questionnaire results.

Qualitative research on the other hand, is a method of inquiry employed in many different academic disciplines, traditionally in the social sciences, but also in market research and further contexts. Qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human

behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior. The qualitative method investigates the why and how of decision making, not just what, where, when. Hence, smaller but focused samples are more often needed than large samples. It can also be used to understand complex social processes, to capture essential aspects of a phenomenon from the perspective of study participants, and to uncover beliefs, values, and motivations that underlie individual health behaviors (Berkwits et al, 1998). Such research can also illuminate aspects of organizational context and healthcare delivery that influence organizational performance and quality of care. Qualitative studies are often exploratory in nature and seek to generate novel insights using inductive (starting with observations and developing hypotheses) rather than deductive (starting with extant hypotheses and testing them with observations) approaches.

Qualitative research is primarily exploratory and descriptive in purpose designed to discover what can be learned about the area of interest. The interpretivist researcher views the world as a socio-psychological construct where there are multiple realities forming an interconnected whole that can only be understood as these multiple realities.

The qualitative approach to research strategy is characterized by lower sample numbers, than quantitative research, and participants selected to expand variability and represent the natural population. Normally forms of non-probability sampling such as convenience or purposive are used (Sarantakos, 1993). This approach is often time consuming as patterns slowly emerge. Also what is true in one context may not be true for another therefore data may need to be gathered in a variety of contexts, which takes both time and effort (Tucker et al, 1995). The interpretivist also explores first and then develops theory thus allowing deeper explanations and insights. Typical techniques include participant observation, in depth interviews, group interviews and documentation collection with an emphasis on

fieldwork. Data analysis and interpretation is an ongoing activity for the interpretivist researcher (Schultz et al., 1996). In contrast to the causal mode of functionalist analysis, interpretive analysis is associative, for the interpretivist what is meaningful emerges from the data, therefore the process is inductive.

Mixed methods research refers to all procedures used in collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data in the context of a single study (Tashakkori&Teddlie, 2003). The basis for employing these designs are likewise varied, but they can be generally described as methods to expand the scope or breadth of research to offset the weaknesses of either approach alone (Rossman& Wilson, 1991). Mixed methods, in which quantitative and qualitative methods are combined, are increasingly recognized as valuable, because they can capitalize on the respective strengths of each approach. Pairing quantitative and qualitative components of a larger study can achieve various aims, including corroborating findings, generating more complete data, and using results from one method to enhance insights attained with the complementary method. Approaches to mixed-methods studies differ on the basis of the sequence in which the components occur and the emphasis given to each. The qualitative and quantitative components may be performed concurrently or sequentially, and emphasis may be placed on either component or equal weight given to both. For instance, a preliminary qualitative component may serve to generate hypotheses or to develop the content for a questionnaire to be used in a follow-up quantitative study. Conversely, a preliminary quantitative component may generate surprising or inconsistent findings that may be examined in greater depth with a follow-up qualitative component. Strategies to enhance the validity of mixed-methods studies include recognizing the role of the complementary strategy and adhering to the methodological assumptions of each method. Principles and practices specific to mixedmethods research have been described

extensively current applications are reported in the recently established Journal of Mixed Methods. Although the present report focuses primarily on qualitative research, illustrative examples are also provided from mixedmethods studies to highlight the full range of potential applications.

A qualitative method as incorporated in the study emphasized the importance of looking at variables in the natural setting in which they are found and seeks to understand people's interpretations. Detailed data was gathered through open ended questions that provided direct quotations. Interview was an integral part of this investigation.

The researcher therefore interviewed managers from different hotels and the views obtained were added to views sampled from published articles and surveys. This research therefore employed a mixed study. Mixed method research uses the qualitative research paradigm for one phase of a research study and the quantitative research paradigm for another in order to understand a research problem more completely (Creswell & Vicki, 2005). When used in combination in one study, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allow for a more complete analysis of the research problem (Greene et al., 1989). Thus, the approaches are complementary rather than competitive methods and the decision to use both methods in the study was based on the nature of the research problem and the research questions. The qualitative method was adopted in order to understand the concept of growth, offline marketing and online activities. The quantitative on the other hand was used to assess the impact of these marketing strategies on the growth of the business. This model was chosen among others because it enabled the researcher to use limited available secondary data and explore patterns in the used of online marketing whilst at the same time finding out the number of consumers and hotels using electronic marketing services.

In mixed method research, results from one method are used to elaborate on results from the other method (Creswell & Plano, 2007). The paradigm recasts results from qualitative method to question results from the quantitative method, and extends the breath or range of inquiry by using different methods for different inquiry components in the study. For example, interviews were employed in order to get the key issues before embarking on the questionnaire.

The mixed study was chosen to ensure triangulation. Triangulation tests the consistency of findings obtained through different instruments. In the case study, triangulation will increase chances to control, or at least assess, some of the threats or multiple causes influencing the results (sydenstricker-Neto, 1997). That is, it facilitates comparison of quantitative and qualitative data sets to produce well- validated conclusions.

Mixed study also stimulates new research questions or challenges results obtained through one method. For example, the in-depth interviews with managers provided new insights on how the concept has been perceived and valued by customers.

### **3.3 Purpose of the Study**

According to Wiedersheim-paul and Eriksson (1999), the type of research purpose can be classified into three categories: exploratory, descriptive or explanatory.

Exploratory research is conducted into a research problem or issue when there are very few or no earlier studies to which we can refer for information about the issue or problem (Yin, 1994). It is designed to generate basic knowledge, clarify relevant issues, uncover variables associated with a problem, uncover information needs, and/or define alternatives for addressing research objectives (Mouton & Marais, 1990)

Descriptive Research is aimed at providing specific details of a situation. It is therefore designed to provide further insight into the research problem by describing the variables of interest. It can be used for profiling, defining, segmentation, estimating, predicting, and examining associative relationships. The findings from this type of study do not fit to be generalized but the information it provides can be valued in policy formulation.

Explanatory research design is about gaining familiarity into the phenomena or to achieve new insight into a concept. The explanatory method therefore is systematic, scientific and the only way through which a researcher can check whether an idea, that sounds promising has much appeal if at all in reality or not. The explanatory studies can further provide ideas or hypothesis of suggestions that might never occur to a researcher.

The study employed the exploratory research. The general objective of exploratory research is to gain insights into ideas and this provides a better understanding of the situation. It has the goal of formulating problems more precisely, clarifying concepts, gathering explanations, gaining insight, eliminating impractical ideas, and forming hypotheses (Robson, 1993). Exploratory research is also used to clarify concept.

In this study, the researcher is interested in knowing the impact of online marketing and offline marketing on the growth of a business and their combined effect on businesses. It is also to be used to clarify what is meant by accelerating business growth and to develop method by which growth can be measured.

According to DJS Research Limited, the principal use of exploratory research is to increase a researcher's understanding of a subject and should not be used to draw definite conclusions, due to its lack of statistical strength, but it can help a researcher to determine

why and how things happen. The study seeks to help understand the basic ways of marketing services in the hospitality industrial. It is also to help the researcher to understand the characteristics of services and problems encountered in marketing them.

Exploratory research was employed in sampling views for the study. The study made use of secondary sources, such as published literature as commonly used in exploratory research. Other sources of information used in this study studies included semi-structured interviews and case studies which are all tools used in exploratory research. Different cases in different hotels were considered. These involved sampling views from customers and managers from different star hotels. Care was however taken in selecting a range of unbiased sources to give a broad and well-rounded understanding of the subject.

Exploratory research is not typically generalizable to the population at large. This is because of the sample size used in gathering the necessary information for the study. Exploratory research is characterized by its flexibility and when use in a study, exploratory research studies would not try to acquire a representative sample, but rather, seek to interview those who are knowledgeable and who might be able to provide insight concerning the relationship among the variables. Due to the limited amount of time for the study and the difficulty in getting a large representative sample, a small sample size consisting of knowledgeable customers and managers were used.

Exploratory research can be very advantageous in directing subsequent research approaches. A greater understanding of a subject helps hone subsequent research questions and can greatly increase the usefulness of a study's conclusions. This research is also very useful in determining the best approach to achieve a researcher's objectives. For example, exploratory

research findings may indicate that one variable is a more consistent indicator of growth than another, indicating this as an appropriate outcome to test in a future trial.

### **3.4 Population and Sample**

A population is defined as the group of people on whom the results of a study are intended to apply (Fraenkel&Wallen, 2000). The target population of this study is the inhabitants of sunyani municipality which is eighty-seven thousand, six hundred and forty- two (87,642) both young and old. From this population, a sample (subset of elements from a population) was drawn and data were collected. According to Trochim (2001), sampling involves selecting units (e.g. people, organizations) from a population of interest so that one may fairly generalize the results of a study back onto the population from which they were chosen. Sampling was necessary because surveying every person or a whole set of units in a population was impossible, or at the very least, very costly in terms of time and money. Moreover, since the research requires reliable forms of evidence from which to draw robust conclusions, sampling the customers helped by enabling the detailed examination of a sizeable group. The sampling frame consisted of thirty hotels, ten guest houses. Out of these, five hotels were used for the case study: Eusbett Hotel, Ebenezer Hotel, Pena Guests House, point four Guest House and Glamoday. Fifty customers were however given questionnaires and five managers were interviewed from the hotels. The fifty customers included both potential and current customers of the various hotels within the sunyani municipality. In all the estimated sample size was fifty-five.

### 3.4.1. Sampling Method

Sampling method used in research can be divided into two types, namely probability or non-probability sampling (Best & Kahn, 2006). Some scholars also dichotomize them as random or non-random methods (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004).

In probability sample, each member of the target population has a known, nonzero chance of being included in the sample. The chances of each member of the target population being included in the sample may not be equal but everyone has some chance of being selected. With nonprobability samples, there is no way of estimating the probability that any target population element will be included in the sample. Thus, there is no way of ensuring that the sample is representative of the population. Non probability sample rely on personal judgment somewhere in the sample selection process rather than on a random process to select sample members.

The study made used of non-probability samples. Thus members were selected based on certain characteristics. This was influenced by the research methodology adopted or followed. Since the study was exploratory, small sample was used. The researcher also used both questionnaire and interviews in collecting the data. Customers answering questionnaire were selected using convenience sampling and the selection of the hotels were done using the quota sampling method. These were used to ensure that certain characteristics of the population were captured without sacrificing representation.

Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), describe a convenience sample as a group of individuals who are conveniently available for a study, it also refers to samples selected not through judgment or probability techniques, but because the elements in a fraction of a population can be

reached conveniently. Thus, a convenience sample is simply one where the units that are selected for inclusion in the sample are the easiest to access. This method was chosen because Convenience sampling is very easy to carry out with few rules governing how the sample should be collected. In the study, customers of the various hotels were sampled conveniently by giving out questionnaires during a visit to the place. In all ten customers were conveniently reached in each of the hotels.

Also this sampling method was used because of the relative cost and time required to carry out a convenience sample are small in comparison to probability sampling techniques. This enabled the researcher to achieve the sample size in a relatively fast and inexpensive way. The convenience sample helped to gather useful data and information that would not have been possible using probability sampling techniques, which require more formal access to lists of populations.

The selection of the hotels for the case was based on the quota method. Though customers were selected using convenient method, the researcher did not want to sacrifice representative hence the selection of the various hotels were not randomly selected but were selected using the quota method. In quota sampling, the population was first segmented into mutually exclusive sub-groups, just as in stratified sampling. Then judgment was used to select the units or hotels from each segment based on a specified proportion. Defining characteristic of a quota sample is that the researcher deliberately sets the proportions of levels or strata within the sample. This is generally done to insure the inclusion of a particular segment of the population. The proportions may or may not differ dramatically from the actual proportion in the population. The quota method was used in order to build a sample that mirror the population of the different star hotels in the sunyani municipality. one

stars, two stars, guest houses were selected based on the number within sunyani municipality. Since the one- star were more than the others, one star hotel was given two chances, and two guest houses and one of the three- star hotels were used in the study.

Chair et al. (1999), stress that there is no simple rule governing what sample size should be used for all surveys. Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) agree that the question remains open as to what constitutes an adequate or sufficient size for a sample. Several things were considered in deciding the sample size. Key among them were cost, the objectives of the study, and the number of cases needed to detect differences of interest. Analysts usually find that a moderate sample size is sufficient for most needs. Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), claim that any increase in the sample will increase the precision of the results. This concurs with Seaberg's assertions in (Grinnell, 1994) that the general rule of thumb is the bigger the sample, the better. There are concerns as well about the level of accuracy expected. In deciding on the sample size, all the above mentioned issues were considered. Research design also featured significantly, given Neuman's (2006) observation that qualitative research is less concerned with issues of sample size and more with richness, texture and feeling. In other words, qualitative research focuses less on how representative a sample is and more on how it illuminates the issue at stake.

As noted by Seaberg (in Grinnell, 1994), a fairly common problem relating to sample size is the failure to consider the number of categories of the sample which may be required to analyze the data appropriately. In this study, this problem was addressed by using different sampling methods.

### **3.5 Data Collection Method**

In the most general sense, techniques are described as the specific procedures that determine how a researcher gathers data. The data collection tools used in the research was self-administered questionnaires and personal interviews.

#### **3.5.1 Questionnaire**

The use of questionnaire to collect data is very popular in a lot of information seeking research. According to Cockburn and Mackenzie (2000:2), “The main attraction of questionnaire is the relative ease of gathering a large set of responses”. The written questionnaire, whether administered through the mail or as part of a personal interview process, can be a highly effective means of obtaining data (Loose & Worley, 1994).

The questionnaire’s ability to elicit both qualitative and quantitative data on unobservable behaviour, such as feelings, attitudes, ideas, opinions, and viewpoints, made it the instrument of choice. Furthermore, questionnaires give respondents time and the freedom to independently respond to questions, therefore leading to well thought out responses. Because the researcher has less influence on the responses, the respondents’ enjoy greater anonymity, resulting in less bias.

Most of the questionnaires were administered and collected in person during a visit to the place. In few occasions, questionnaires were left with management of the hotels to be given out to their customers. This data collection strategy partly minimized chances of yielding faulty or unreliable data since the researcher took time to explain everything to the respondents before administering the questionnaire. The researcher was also able to immediately respond to any queries. This gave the researcher control over the data collection procedure and increased the overall response rate.

### 3.5.2 Interviews

Interviews are method of gathering information through oral quiz using a set of preplanned core questions. According to Shneideman and Plaisant (2005), interviews can be very productive since the interviewer can pursue specific issues of concern that may lead to focused and constructive suggestions. Interviews have the advantage of obtaining detailed information from few participants hence the decision to used interview to collect data from the hotel managers. The type of interview used in collecting the data in this study was semi-structured. Semi-structured type of interviews allow the interviewer to pose open and closed – ended questions and the interviewee expresses his/ her opinion freely .This mixed approach balanced the broader, more prescriptive survey questions, providing participants with an opportunity to give more spontaneous, in-depth accounts on online marketing in the various hotels.

In a big way, the interviews reduced the shortcomings of the questionnaire. Interviews were highly efficient in obtaining qualitative data. Other benefits of using interviews are that the interviewer can clarify any points that are obscure and probe further whenever the responses are particularly important or revealing. It has often been suggested that respondents are more likely to express their views openly in a semi-structured interview (Flick, 2006). For this reason, semi-structured interviews have attracted a lot of interest and are widely used to obtain data about people’s behaviour and viewpoints. Semistructured interviews, which were opted for in this study, follow a pre-defined question set but still allow for a degree of flexibility using a mixture of “open” and “closed” question types.

Before the interview was schedule, the researcher met the different managers and introduction was done after which different dates were given by the various managers. The purpose for the interview and topic were discussed and the interviews were scheduled. The managers were reassured of confidentiality before the interview commence. After a detailed discussion on the topic, the researcher shook hands and thanked the managers. This happen in all the hotels except one, where the manager agreed to a telephone interview. So the first meeting day, a brief introduction was made and numbers were exchanged and the date and time for the interview was scheduled. That was the most challenging but during the scheduled date, the manager had to reschedule the date. It continued until the fourth time before the manager finally granted the interview.

### **3.6 Data Analysis Methods**

Data gathered from questionnaires was entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. After the complete data was entered, frequencies were run for the generation of descriptive statistics. For each question or variable in the survey, the overall percentages, averages, modes and ranges (where applicable) are presented in table and/or chart form.

Appendix C contains the complete list of categorized responses to open-ended questions. Each response to an open-ended question was grouped into a category with similar responses, counted and then the categories were prioritized based upon frequency of mention. The most often mentioned responses to open-ended questions are presented in table format, similar to the closed-ended (multiple choice type questions), in the results section of this report. In general, open-ended questions elicit the strongest and most important responses of customers. They also lead to a relatively wide range of detailed responses and

give the respondents an opportunity to express their opinion on important issues in their own words.

The data from the interviews was also compared with relevant literature and the necessary conclusions were drawn from them. Neuman (2003) described the process of data analysis as a means for looking for patterns to explain the goal of the studied phenomena. The analysis of data used responses from interviews. From these sources, the emerging themes will be categorized and coded.

Once the categorization was completed, the data was coded according to the indicators from the literature. This study used an open-coding system to analyze participants' narrative responses line-by-line, phrase-by-phrase and word-by-word (Suter, 2006)

### **3.7 Quality of Research**

A valid work must be supported, acceptable, and convincing. Each piece of research adds to their particular discipline and often does so by adhering to the guidelines for proper research. Therefore a number of measures were put in place to ensure the validity and reliability of the research.

According to Trochim and Donnelly (2006), validity refers to the best estimate of the truth of any proposition or conclusion or inference described in the research. Validity was used to assess the quality of the research conclusions. The internal and external validity of the research was evaluated to determine the cause and effect relationship between the variables identified in the study.

According to Creswell (2003), validity plays a significant role in a qualitative study in that it is a powerful source used to determine the accuracy of the study's findings. To increase the validity of this study, triangulation was used. Triangulation is the method of using multiple research approaches and methods. Such a technique can help in overcoming the bias and unproductiveness of a single method. It is applicable to both quantitative validation and qualitative validation (Yin, 2003).

Validity and reliability involve checking the status of the data collected to determine if they are valid and reliable (Struwig& Stead, 2004). Internal validity calculates the extent to which the responses from the respondents reflect the same attributes (Fink, 2008). The triangulation technique ensured the validity and reliability of the data gathered through the questionnaire, which asked multiple questions of the target sample to determine the integrity of the answers (Fink, 2008). The sources for the historical qualitative research taken from official company websites and peer-reviewed journals ensured that the information used in the literature review was accurate and valid (Creswell, 2003; Trochim& Donnelly, 2006).

Valid research instruments are paramount to collection of reliable data. The researcher therefore validated the questions in the survey instrument before the commencement of data collection.

Pilot testing of questionnaires were conducted among five respondents to identify any difficulties that may affect the respondents' feedbacks. The validation exercise also identified unreliable questions which the respondents did have answers for. These questions were changed to suppress the difficulties in the ultimate questionnaire.

Reliability refers to the measurement of the quality of the data collected in any research (Behling & Law, 2006). Reliability is a measurement of the consistency of the data with the research background, and is also a measurement of the suitability of the data for analysis. This study focused on the perspectives of a group of individuals, as Merriam (1998) suggested, “Qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities; that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception” (p. 17). In a qualitative research, the collection of data must provide evidence for the perspective under investigation, which provides an opportunity to explore the themes arising throughout the data.

### **3.8 Research Ethics and Limitation**

This study being a mixed study demanded both qualitative and quantitative method of data collection. The researcher has to therefore interact deeply with the customers and managers, thus entering their personal domains of values, weaknesses, individual usage of hotels services and the like. Silverman (2000) reminds researchers that they should always remember that while they are doing their research, they are actual fact entering the private spaces of their participant. Understandably, this raises several ethical issues that were addressed during and after the research. Therefore, appropriate steps were taken to uphold participant’s privacy, confidentiality, dignity, right and anonymity.

The researcher informed the participant- customers and managers of the purpose, nature, data collection methods and the extent of the research prior to the commencement. Thus each participant was contacted by the researcher to discuss the proposed study; the requirements of the participants during the study, the knowledge that participation in the study is voluntary, and participants can withdraw from the study at any time. Confidentiality

of all information and the knowledge that results of the study was to be stored for a period of time and be shared.

In the study, the researcher guaranteed that no participants will be put in a situation they might be harmed as a result of their participation being it physical or psychological. Hence no names were required in the answering of the questionnaire and no hotels manager's name or hotel names will appear in the data analysis.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS RESULTS

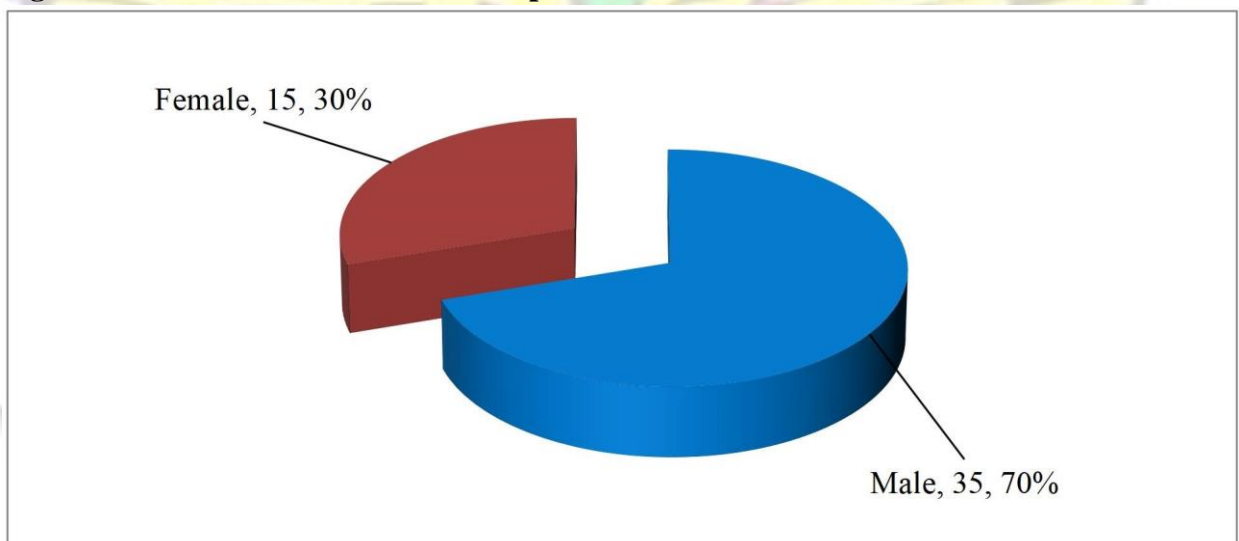
#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes data collected. The presentation has been done according to background characteristics of respondents and a chronological presentation of the research questions.

#### 4.2 Background Characteristics of Respondents

The study was made of customers and hotel managers. Whilst the customers answered questionnaires, the hotel managers were interviewed. The following charts present the biodata of the customers who participated in the study. There were 50 in all.

**Figure 4.1: Gender Distribution of Respondents**

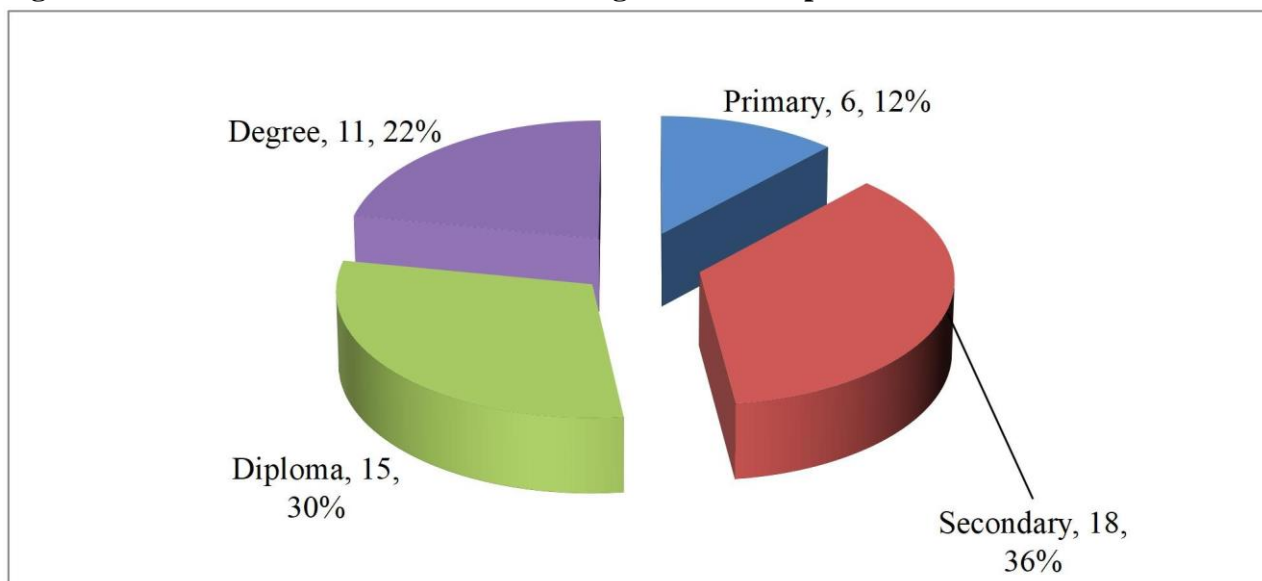


Source: Field Work

Data in Figure 4.1 shows the gender distribution of the respondents. From the figure, it could be clearly seen that the male respondents were 35 (70%) indicating that the males were more than the females who were only 15 representing 30% of the total respondents.

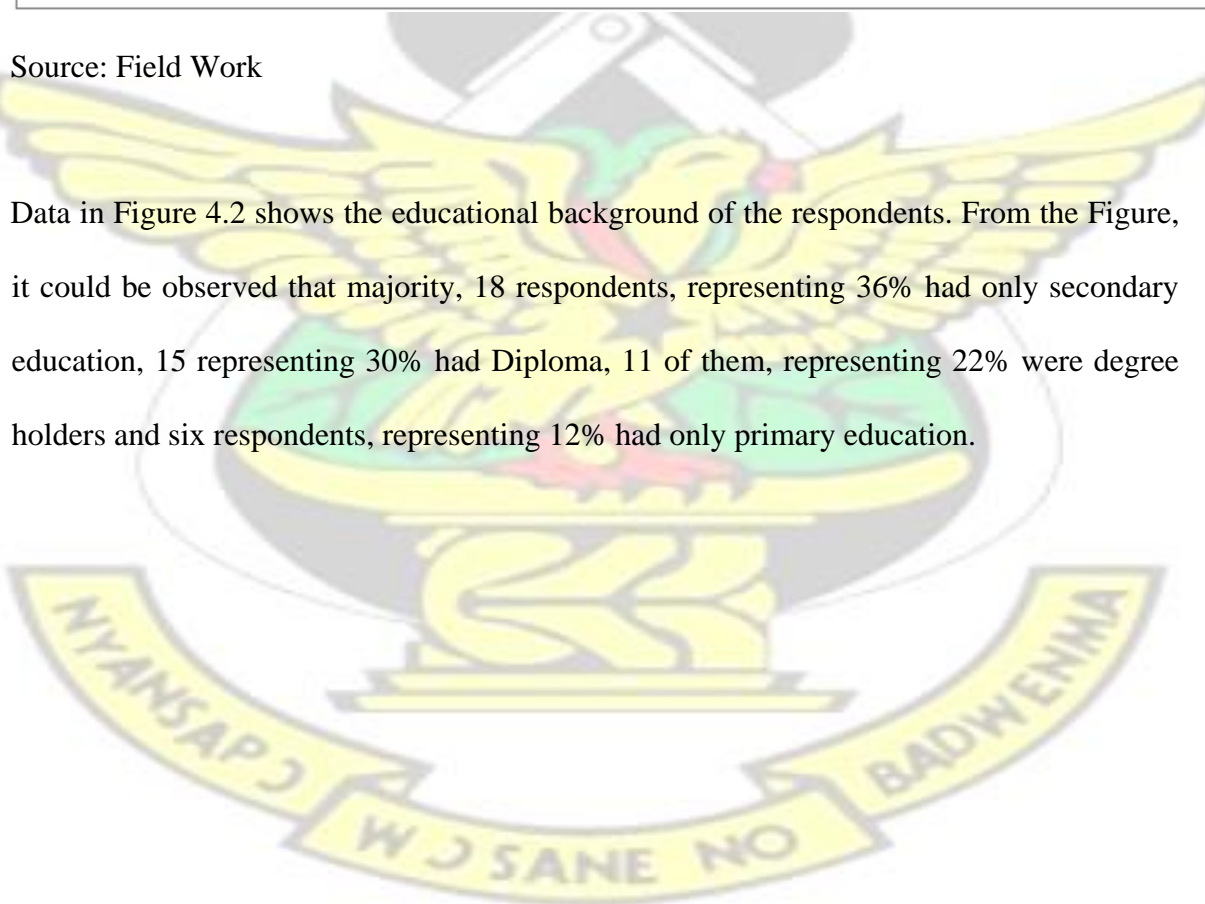
This implies that the results of the study were biased towards the views of men than women.

**Figure 4.2: Distribution of Educational Background of Respondents**

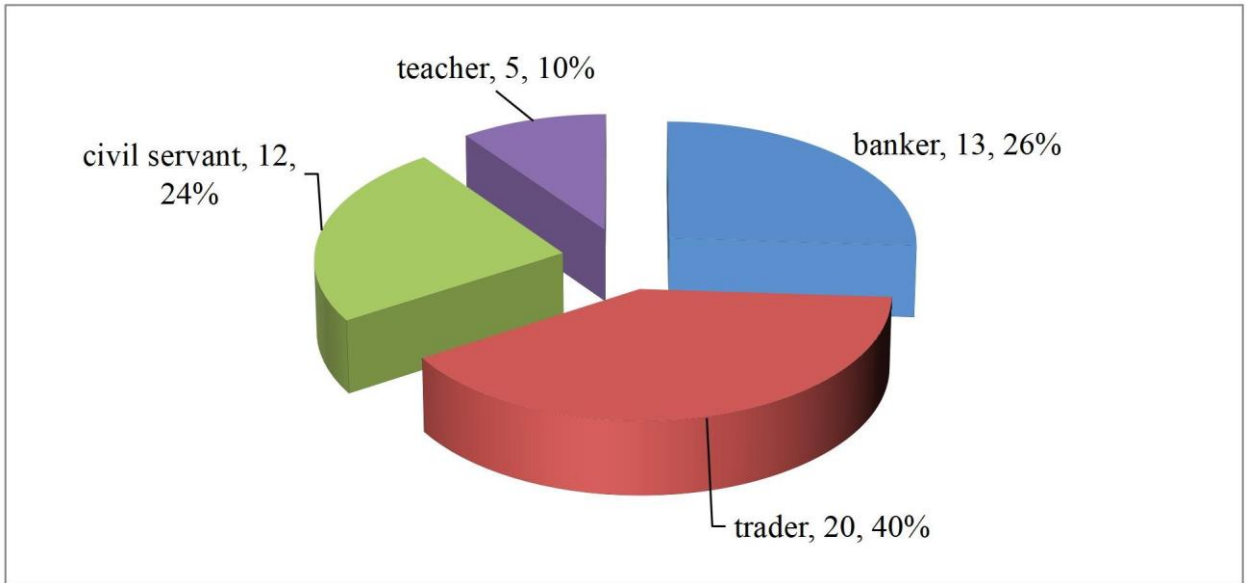


Source: Field Work

Data in Figure 4.2 shows the educational background of the respondents. From the Figure, it could be observed that majority, 18 respondents, representing 36% had only secondary education, 15 representing 30% had Diploma, 11 of them, representing 22% were degree holders and six respondents, representing 12% had only primary education.



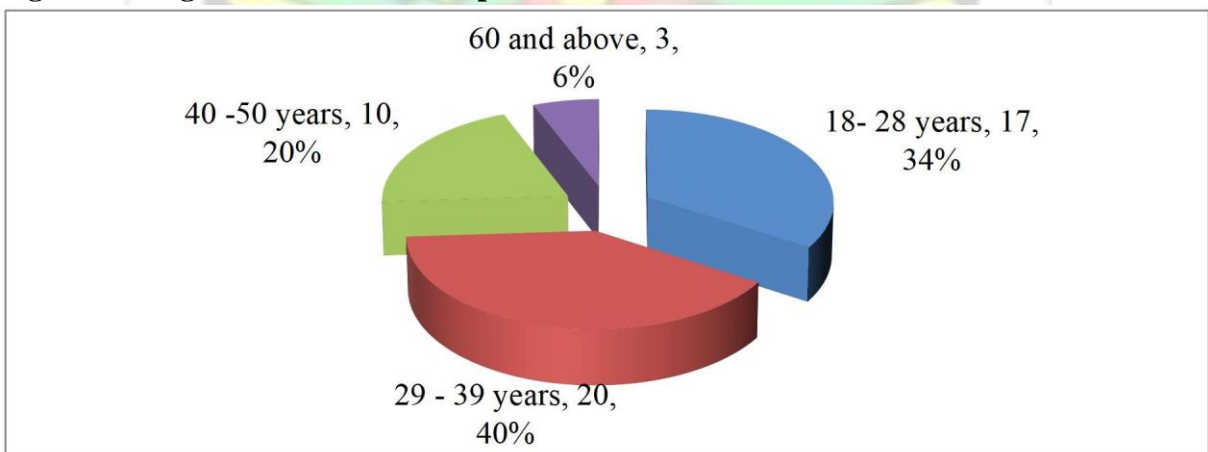
**Figure 4.3: Distribution of Respondents' Occupation**



Source: Field Work

Data in Figure 4.3 shows the occupation of the respondents. It could be seen from the figure that majority of the respondents (20, 40%) were traders, 13 of them, representing 26% were bankers, 12 of them, representing 24% were civil servants and five (10%) were teachers.

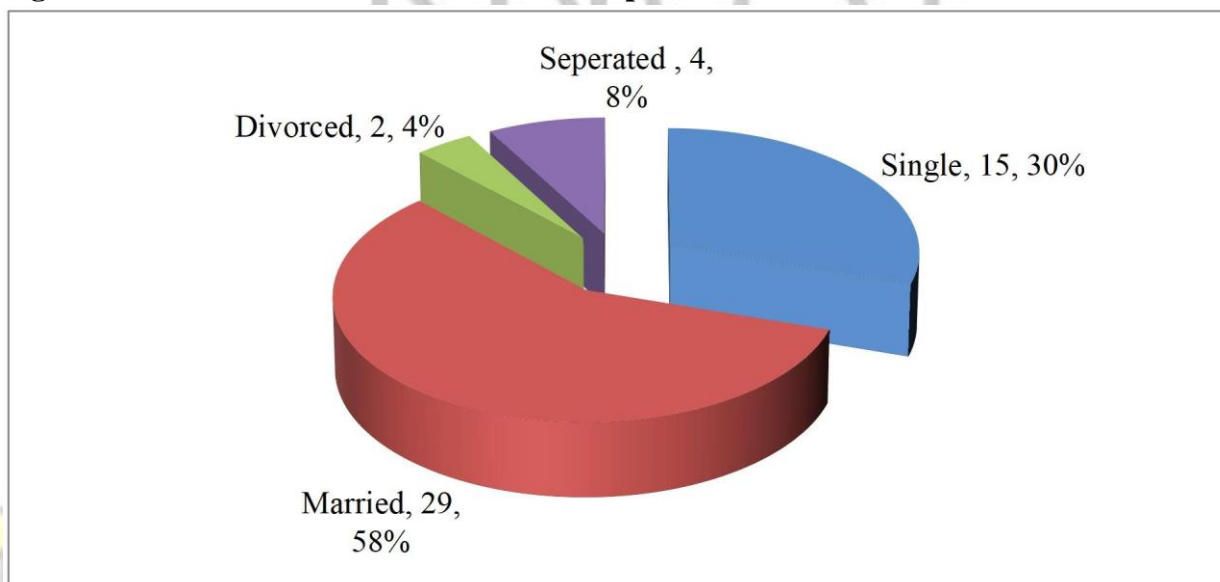
**Figure 4.4: Age Distribution of Respondents**



Source: Field Work

Data in Figure 4.4 indicates the ages of the respondents. Majority (20, 40%) of the respondents were between the ages of 29 – 40, 17 (34%) were between 18 – 28, 10 of them representing 20% were 40 – 50 whereas three of them, representing 6% were 60 and above.

**Figure 4.5: Marital Status Distribution of Respondents**



Source: Field Work

Data in figure 4.5 shows the marital status of the respondents. From the figure, it could be observed that more than half, 29 (58%) of the respondents were married, 15 (30%) were single, four (8%) were separated and two representing 4% were divorced.

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### 4.3 Services rendered by selected hotels in Sunyani

**Table 4.1: Customers’ responses on the services provided by hotels in Sunyani**

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
	Frequency					mean

Provision	of						
comfortable	32	13	5	0	0		4.84
Accommodation							
Catering services	27	15	8	0	0		4.38
Car rentals	12	10	20	8	0		3.52
Bar	28	8	14	0	0		4.28
Restaurant	28	17	5	0	0		4.46
Conferences	18	10	28	2	0		4.36
Communication	25	12	13	0	0		4.24
services							
Medical services	8	10	2	12	18		2.56
Sports equipment	13	29	17	0	0		4.64

Source: Field Work

Data in table 4.1 indicates customers' views on the kind of services provided by hotels in Sunyani. From the table, it could be seen that with the high mean scores of 4.84, 4.64, 4.46, 4.36, 4.38, 4.28, 4.24, 3.52 and 2.56 indicate that the customers agreed that hotels in Sunyani provided comfortable accommodation, sports equipment, restaurants, catering services, conferences, bar, communication services, car rentals and medical services. It could be inferred from the responses that the most common of all the services rendered was the provision of comfortable accommodation which scored had the highest mean core for the responses.

The managers who were interviewed also shared their very similar opinions. The following sample statements reflect the views of two hotel managers in sunyani: Here in Sunyani, you cannot bring every facility into your hotel. People may not be able to patronize it and you will be at loss. What I do is to simply provide a suitable accommodation for my customers (one of the respondent indicated).

The above statement supports the notion that the hotels in the Sunyani Municipality provide decent and comfortable accommodation to their customers. In another opinion, a 46 year old Hotel Manager in the Municipality also had this to say: We provide decent services. Our customers are very important to us so we put them into very nice rooms with TV, fridge, desk and so on just to make them feel at home. Aside the fact that, it is bread and breakfast, customers can benefit from our restaurant.

Deducing from the findings in both data, it could be realized that hotels in Sunyani offer a lot of services including providing comfortable accommodation, sports equipment, restaurants, catering services, conferences, bar, communication services, car rentals and medical services. This finding is consistent with the study of Sigala (2003), who mentioned accommodation, sports equipment, restaurants and bar as some of the basic hospitality services provided by hotels in Greece.

#### **4.4 How the selected hotels market their services**

The research sought to find out how the selected hotels sell their products to their customers. Questionnaire item 10 and interview guide item 3 were used to answer research question two.

**Table 4.2: How the selected hotels market their services**

Statements	Strongly	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly	Mean
	Agree	Disagree	Frequency			
E-Marketing	12	18	10	8	2	3.64
Newspaper	12	20	9	1	8	2.74
Billboards	16	26	4	4	0	4.08
Radio	20	28	2	0	0	4.36
Television	8	24	10	8	0	3.64
Posters	0	10	15	8	17	2.06

Source: Field Work

Data in Table 4.2 shows customers' responses on how the selected hotels in Sunyani market their services. The high mean scores of 4.36, 4.08, 3.64 and 2.74 is an indication that the customers agreed that the selected hotels market their services through radio adverts, billboard adverts, television adverts, e-marketing and newspapers. The low mean score of 2.06 indicates their disagreement to the hotels marketing their products through posters.

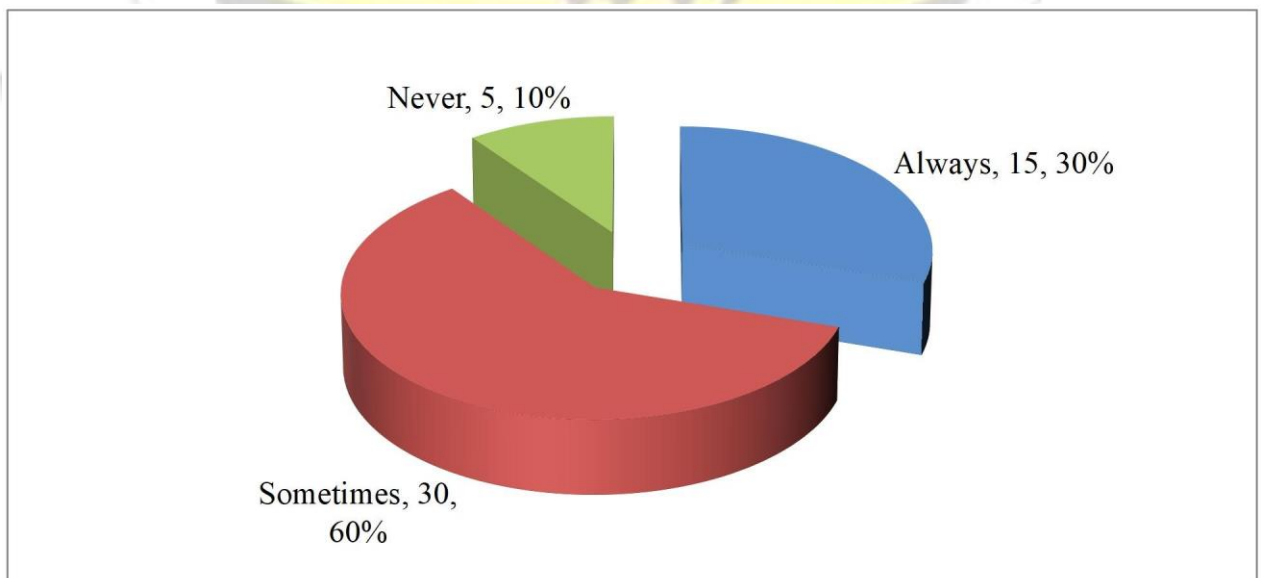
Furthermore, the managers who were interviewed gave very similar opinions. A couple of their statements have been quoted below: As a manager, you need to understand the competition between rivalry firms. Now a lot of hotels are coming up. I have loved to explore every avenue to sell myself. Hope you've checked out our website:

<http://eusbetthotel.com/>. We do radio ad too. In Sunyani, a lot of people listen to the radio so, I do a lot of advert on the radio but since I do not limit myself to the people of Sunyani only, I like to have a website.

Analytically, it could be realized from the findings in research question two that hotels in Sunyani market their services mostly through the radio. Other avenues where they marketed their services were billboards, e-marketing, television and the newspaper. Marketing through posters had faded out. This is consistent with Barsky and Nash (2006), who claimed that increased marketing activities like radio advertising, was essential creative conducive business atmosphere in the hospitality industry.

**4.5 The online and offline marketing activities of the selected hotels in Sunyani** The research sought to explore how hotels in the Sunyani Municipality are engaged in internet as a tool for marketing their products. Questionnaire items 13 – 15 and 17 -18 together were used to answer research question.

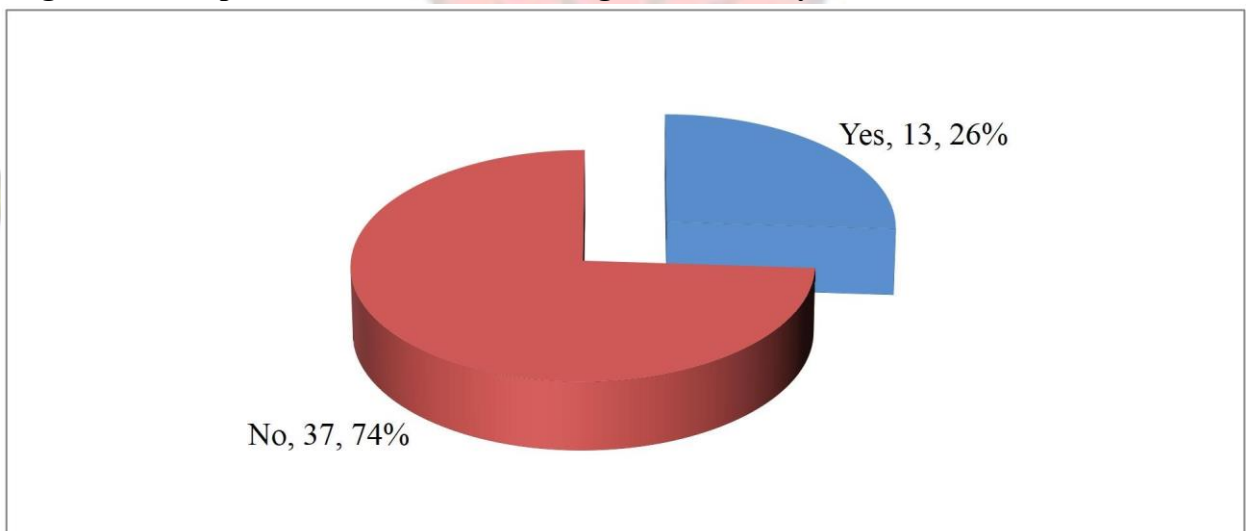
**Figure 4.6: Respondents' views on how often they have seen hotels in Sunyani market on-line**



Source: Field Work

Data in Figure 4.6 shows the responses of the customers when they were asked to indicate how often they have seen hotels in Sunyani market on-line. Majority 30 (60%) indicated that they sometimes see hotels in Sunyani market on-line, 15 of them, representing 30% however indicated that they always saw hotels in the Municipality market on-line. Only five of them, representing 10% indicated that they have never seen hotels in Sunyani market on-line.

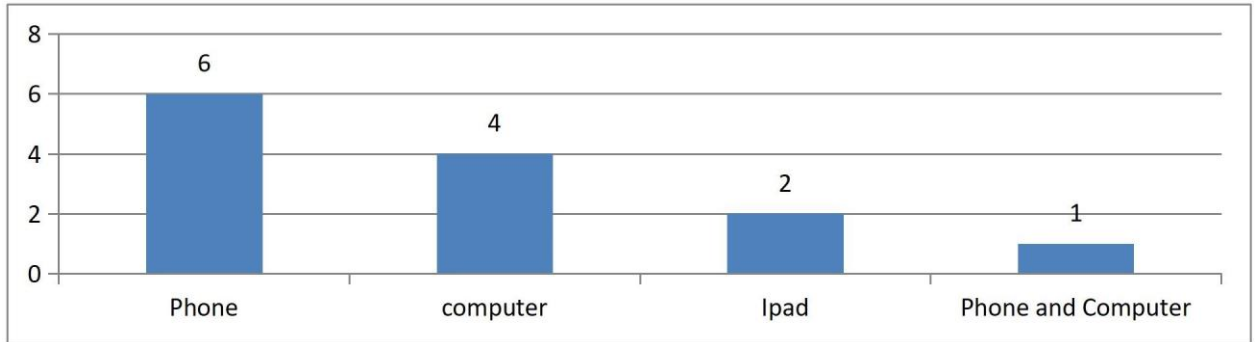
**Figure 4.7: Respondents' views on accessing hotels in Sunyani via on-line**



Source: Field Work

Data in figure 4.7 shows customers' responses on accessing hotels in Sunyani through the internet. It could be clearly seen from the figure that, majority (37) representing 74% have never accessed hotels on-line whilst only 13 of them, representing 26% responded in the affirmative. The figure below shows the media through which the 13 were able to access the hotels on the internet.

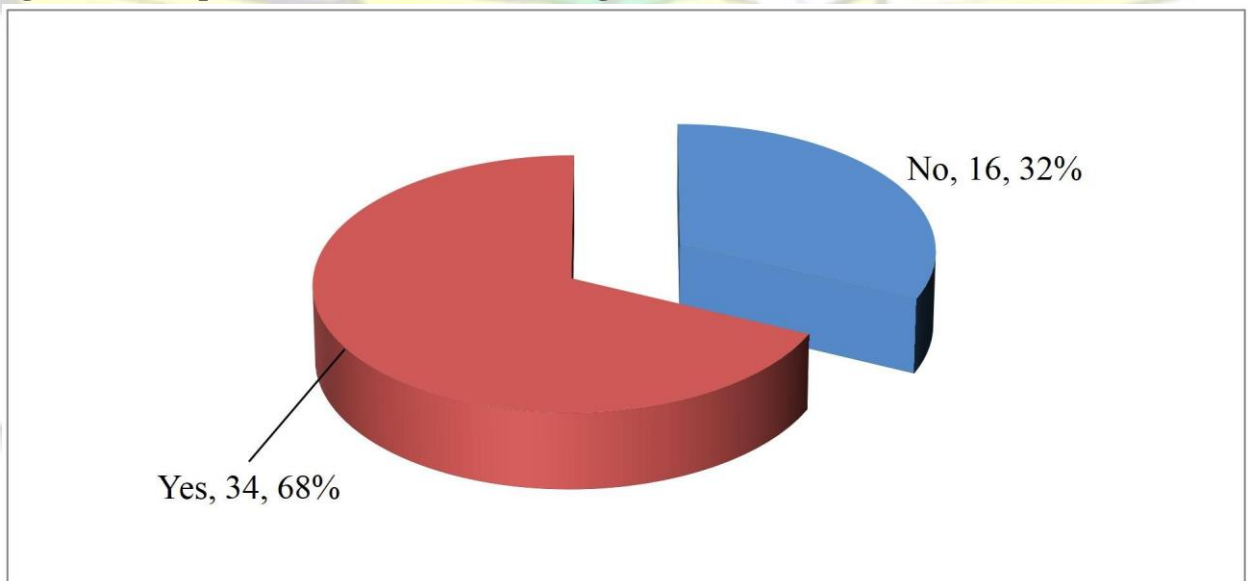
**Figure 4.8: The media through which customers accessed hotels from the internet**



Source: Field Work

Data in Figure 4.8 indicates the media through which the customers were able to access hotels in Sunyani from the internet. From the figure, it could be observed that among the 13 people who have accessed hotels via the internet, six of them used their phones, four of them used the computer, two used the Ipad and one person used both computer and the phone.

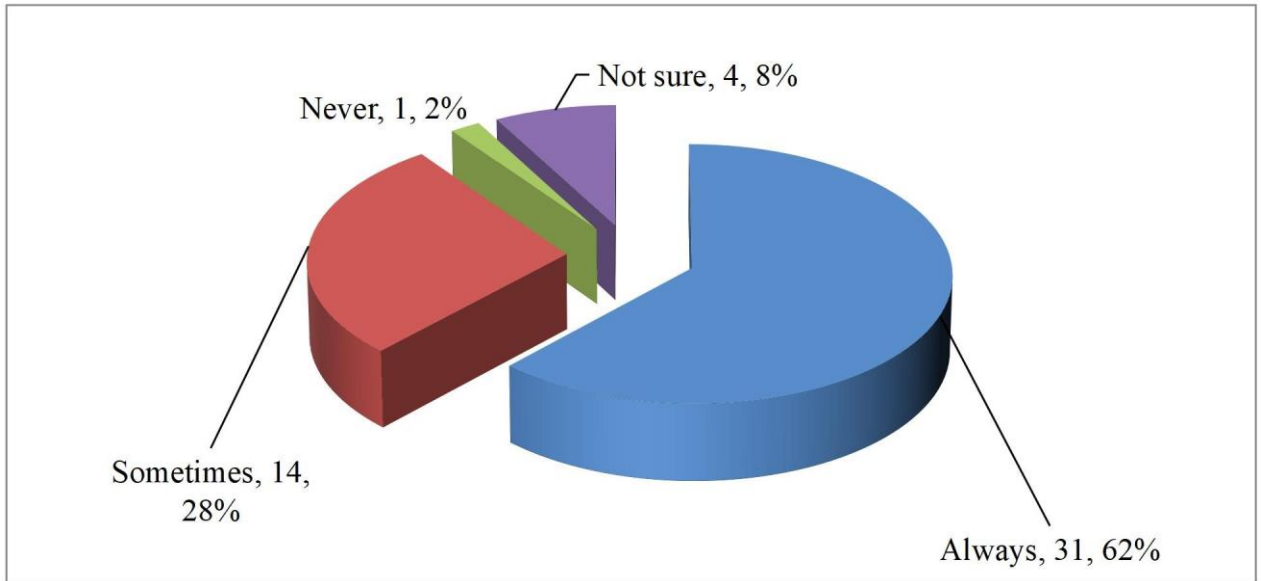
**Figure 4.9: Responses on the cost of accessing hotels on the internet**



Source: Field Work

Figure 4.9 shows customers views on the cost of accessing hotels on the internet. Majority (34) representing 68% of the customers indicated that it was costly whereas 16 of them, representing 32% indicated that it was not costly.

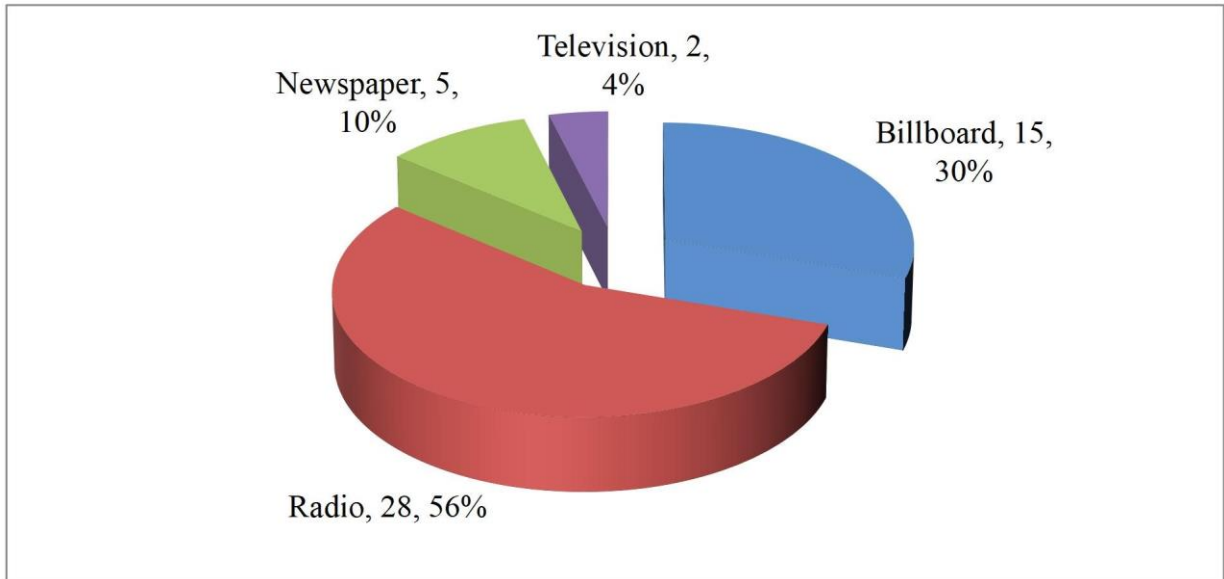
**Figure 4.10: Responses on how often customers see hotels market offline**



Source: Field Work

Data in Figure 4.10 shows the views of customers concerning how often they see hotels market their services offline. Majority (31), representing 62% responded that they have always seen hotels marketing their products offline, 14 of them representing 28% sometimes see hotels market their products offline yet, four indicated that they were not sure and 2% indicated that they have never seen hotels in Sunyani market their services offline.

**Figure 4.11: Responses on media through which hotels market offline in Sunyani**



Source: Field Work

Data in Figure 4.11 shows the means through which hotels market their services offline. From the figure, it could be seen that the majority 28 representing 56% of the customers indicated that the radio was used, 15 of them, representing 30% indicated that hotels in Sunyani used billboards, five of them representing 10% indicated that hotels in Sunyani used the Newspaper to market offline and only two, representing 4% used the television.

Findings in research question three indicated that hotels were not always seen marketing on-line. Among the selected hotels, the customers indicated that marketing on-line was inconsistency. It was also found that only a few customers access hotels in Sunyani on-line. This is in contrast with the study of Carroll and Siguaw (2003), who projected in their study in the United States that by the end of 2005, 1 in 5 hotel booking will be made online. The present study has proved otherwise in the case of hotels in Sunyani. Even in 2012, a lot of customers are not engaged in using the internet to access hotels.

#### 4.6 The effect of E-Marketing on business performance in Sunyani

The research sought to find out the effect of E-Marketing on the business performance in the municipality. Questionnaire item 28 was used.

**Table 4.3: Customers responses on the effect of E-Marketing**

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
On-line selling allows services to be sold directly to customers	20	15	10	3	2	3.96
E-marketing has created price and service competition between hotels in Sunyani	22	17	8	3	0	4.16
E-marketing has taken away middle men in room reservations and other services	18	20	12	0	0	4.12
Business to business trade is transformed	12	10	2	18	8	3.0
Hotels in Sunyani have become easily accessible globally	15	19	16	0	0	3.98

Source: Field Work

Data in Table 4.3 indicates customers' responses on the effects of e-marketing on hotels in Sunyani. It could be clearly seen from the table that the high mean scores of 4.16, 4.12, 3.98, 3.96 and 3.0 indicates that the customers agree that e-marketing has impacted positively on hotels in Sunyani. The evidence is seen in the

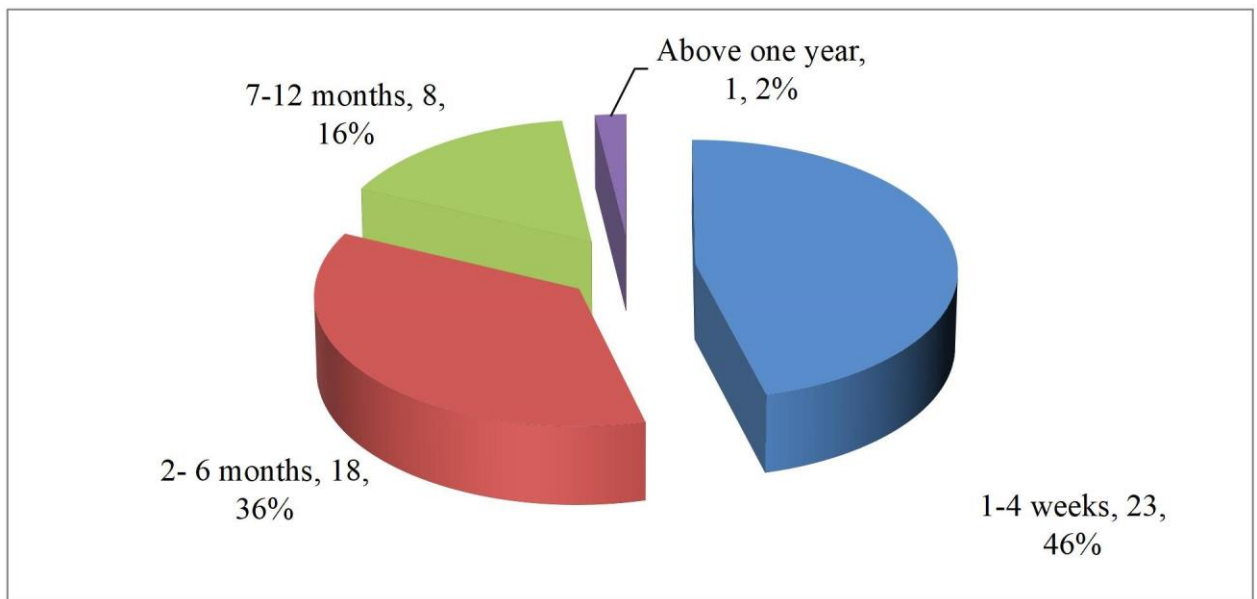
price and service competition that has been created, the middle men that have been removed and the fact that hotels in Sunyani have become easily accessible. Again, on-line selling has allowed services to be sold directly to customers and business to business trade has been transformed.

Deducing from the above discussion, it could be realized that e-marketing has been of great importance in boosting the hotel business in Sunyani. This is particularly evident in the fact that the facility has been able to bring competition in price and services and removed middlemen in the business and so customers are able to contact the hotels directly. This finding underpins Dholakia and Kshetri (2004), who mentioned the power of the internet in promoting business with particular emphasis on reaching customers directly and removal of middlemen. They indicated that this resulted in increased competition for price and services.

The few customers who accessed hotels online were able to do that through their phones in most cases. Majority of the customers also indicated that accessing hotels through the internet was expensive. On the other hand, the customers indicated that hotels in Sunyani were always seen marketing their services offline and most of these were through radio and billboard advertising.

**4.7 How the marketing activities of the selected hotels affect their performance** The research sought to find out the effects of the marketing activities on the performance of hotels in Sunyani. Questionnaire items 7 – 8 and 20 were used to answer research question.

**Figure 4.12: Responses of customers on the last time they patronized the hotels**

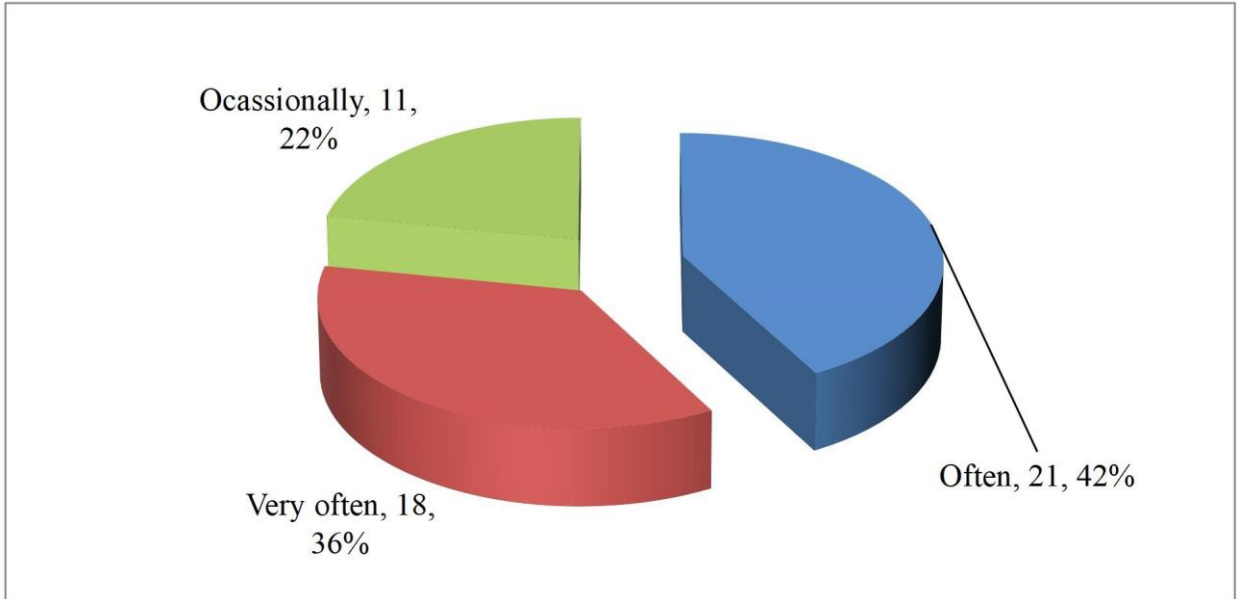


Source: Field Work

Data in figure 4.12 shows the responses of customers about how often they patronize the services of hotels in Sunyani as a result of the marketing activities the hotels engage in. From the figure it could be clearly seen that majority 23 (46%) of the customers visited one of the selected hotels in the last 1-4 weeks and 18 (36%) of the customers had visited the one of the selected hotels in the last 2 – 6 months. Eight of them, representing 16% had visited one of the selected hotels in the last 7 -12 months and only one customer, representing 2% indicated that the last time he visited any of the selected hotels was a year ago.

**Figure 4.13: Responses of customers on the frequency with which they patronize the**

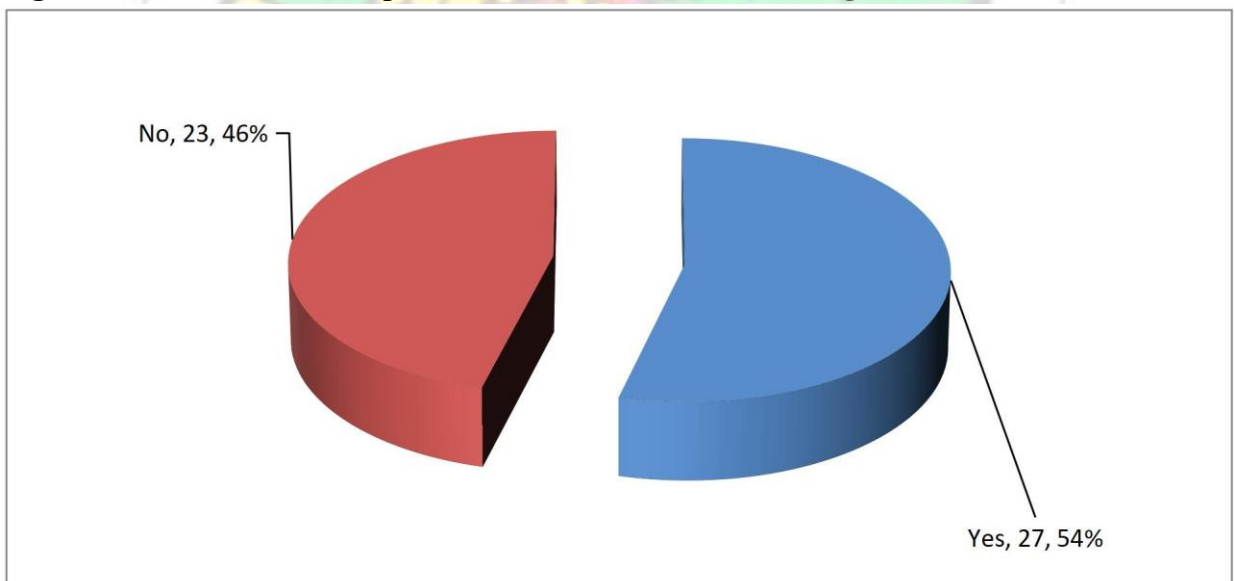
**hotels**



Source: Field Work

Data in Figure 4.13 shows responses of customers on how often they patronize the hotels in Sunyani as a result of the marketing activities. It could be observed that majority (21) of the customers representing 42% often patronize the hotel, 18 of them representing 36% very often patronize hotels. Yet, 11 of them patronize the hotel only occasionally.

**Figure 4.14: Customers' responses on the effect of e-marketing services**



Source: Field Work

Data in figure 14 indicates customers' responses effect of the e- marketing services offered by hotels. They were to indicate whether or not it has become easier to communicate in regard to complaints about services or expression of satisfaction. More than half of the customers (27) representing 54% indicated in the affirmative whereas 23 of them, representing 46% of them answered in the negative.

Findings in research question five revealed that through the e-marketing activities, customers patronize the hotels more regularly and are able to communicate with the hotels easily. Choi and Chu (2001) concluded in this same manner in their study to find the determinants of hotel guests' satisfaction and repeat patronage in Hong Kong hotel industry. They specifically found that many customers of hotels were able to send their comments about the kind of services they received via the internet. In this case, it was found that customers were more comfortable to comment via the social networks than to communicate in person.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the research findings, draws conclusions, provides recommendations and makes suggestions for further research.

#### 5.2 Summary of research findings

The purpose of the study was to examine ways of accelerating the growth of a business by integrating online marketing with existing offline activities using some selected hotels in the Sunyani Municipality as case study. There were both qualitative and quantitative data. Customers answering questionnaire were selected using convenience sampling and the selection of the hotels were done using the quota sampling method. In all, there were 55 respondents which were made up of five hotel managers and 50 customers. The result of the quantitative data was analyzed based on descriptive statistics whereas the qualitative data were transcribed and organized into patterns and themes that reflected the research questions. The following research question guided the study:

1. What types of services are rendered by the selected hotels within the Sunyani municipality?
2. How do the selected hotels market their services in Sunyani Municipality?
3. What are the online and offline activities in the selected hotels in the Municipality?
4. What is the effect of E-Marketing on the business performance in the Municipality?
5. How do the marketing activities in the selected hotels affect the performance of the hotels in the Municipality?

The study found that hotels in the Sunyani Municipality provided a lot of services including provision of comfortable accommodation for their customers, car rentals, sport facilities, medical care, conference rooms, catering services, restaurants and bar.

It was also found that the selected hotels had several ways of marketing. The most popular choice according to the study was through radio advertisement. Meanwhile, billboards and e-marketing were also used. The newspaper and the television were the other options.

Furthermore, it was found that a lot of online and offline activities were available for marketing the hotels. But, it was evident from the study that most hotels patronized the offline activities rather than the online activities. Customers indicated that they heard adverts on radio more often than for example, surfing the net to check out a hotel. The few people who accessed hotel's on-line did so through their mobile phones.

Also, it was found that e-marketing impacted positively on hotel business in Sunyani because it has decreased prices of services rendered and the quality of the services provided by the removal of middle men and promoting business to business trade.

Finally, the study found that through the e-marketing activities, customers patronized the hotels more regularly and were able to communicate with the hotels easily.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Based on the findings, the study established that both online and offline marketing activities were important in terms of accelerating business activities as far as hotels in

Sunyani are concerned. Whilst on-line marketing activities are not so popular in the municipality, the study has revealed its significant role in improving the hotel business. On the other hand, the offline activities played their roles accordingly as many customers made mention of the fact that they often heard radio adverts about hotels. The effect of these activities were obviously resulted in customers patronizing the hotels regularly and on the contrarily, customers benefiting from the improved services as a result of the competition that is created.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

Hotels should blend the two marketing activities for the time being and slowly shift attention to online marketing activities considering the enormous benefit the study outlined. This means that though the two marketing channels should be used in marketing services rendered, much attention should be given to online marketing since that is a new marketing channel not known by many customers.

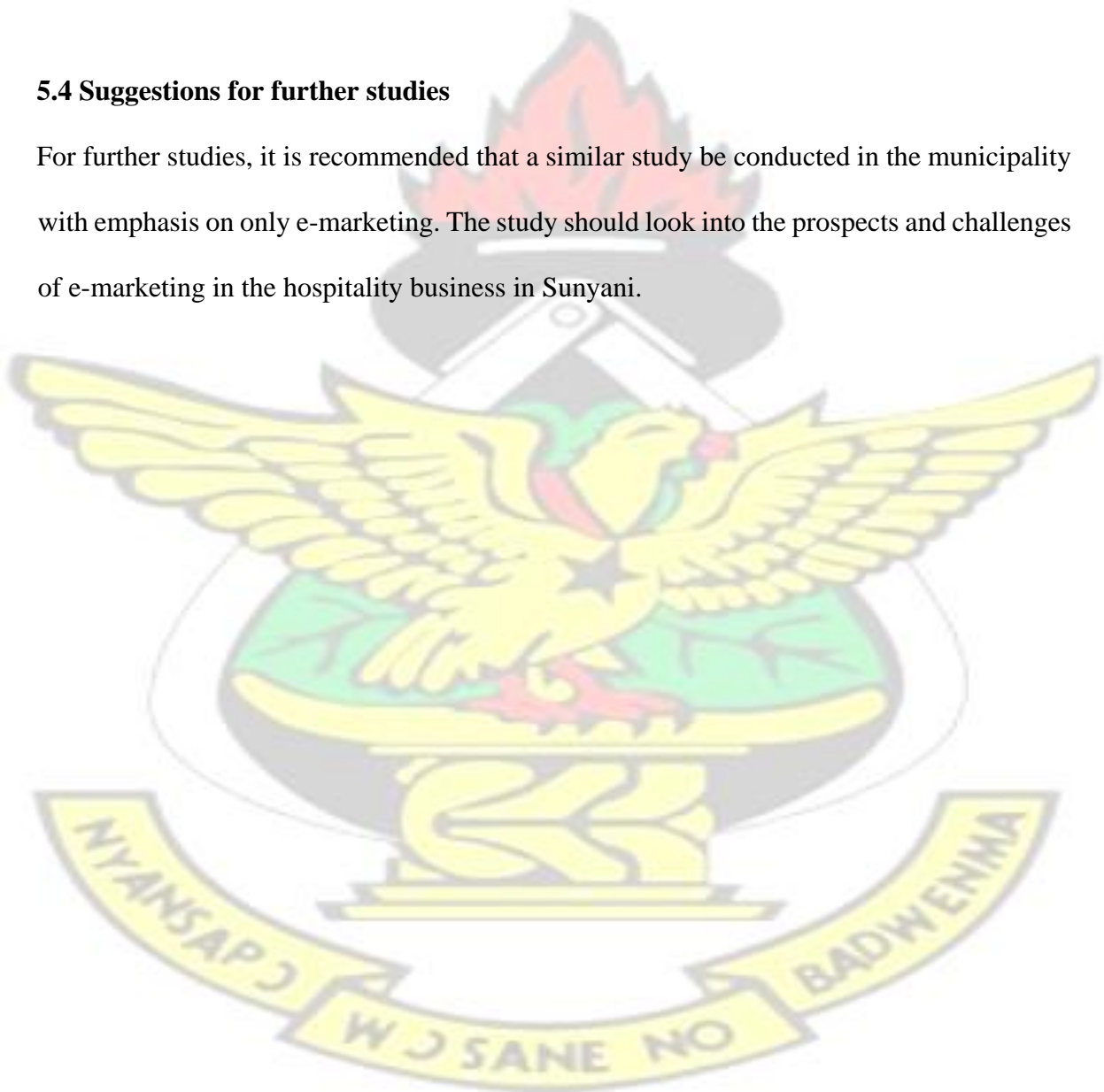
Again Hotels should create websites for easy accessibility to the whole world. Thus, a hotel's website enable potential customers to know the existence of the hotel no matter where they are.

Also customers should stop relying on middle men to make their hotel reservations for them. This means that with the introduction of online marketing, customers can make their own reservation and there will not be the need for any middle men who may end up disappointing them or charging them extra.

Furthermore, customers should be abreast with time and hotel management should take it upon themselves to educate their customers on how to use the internet to purchase their services. Employers too should be given in-service training in IT. And lastly, hotels should expand their range of services to attract more customers. Different customers have different needs that must be satisfied. Hence hotels must expand their services to cater for the various needs of the customers.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for further studies**

For further studies, it is recommended that a similar study be conducted in the municipality with emphasis on only e-marketing. The study should look into the prospects and challenges of e-marketing in the hospitality business in Sunyani.



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## APPENDIX I

### QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire seeks to collect data on accelerating the growth of a business by integrating online marketing with existing offline activities in the hospitality industry. The data collected will be used for academic purpose only. Please answer the questions which follow; ticking or providing your own answers where necessary. Thank you.

1. What is your gender?  
Male ( )                  Female ( )
2. What is your educational background?  
Primary ( )                  Secondary ( )          Diploma ( )                  Degree ( )  
Other (specify) .....
3. What is your occupation?  
Civil servant ( )          banker ( )          Trader ( )                  teacher ( )  
Other (specify).....
4. What is your age?  
18- 28 ( )                  29-39 ( )                  40-50 ( )                  above 60 ( )
5. What is your marital status?  
Married ( )          single ( )                  Divorced ( )                  separated ( )
6. Have you ever patronized the services of any hotel before? Yes ( )          No ( )  
If yes indicate the hotel below  
Eusbett hotel ( )          Point four ( )                  Ebenezer hotel ( )  
Glomosay ( )          Pena guest house ( )          All the above ( )  
Other,  
specify .....

7. When was the last time you visited any of these hotels?

1- 4 weeks ( ) 2- 6 months ( ) 7- 12 months ( ) above one year ( )

8. How often do you use the services of these hotels?

Very often ( ) often ( ) occasionally ( ) annually ( )

9. What types of services are offered by the hotel you visited?

Accommodation ( )

Catering services ( )

Car rentals ( )

Bar ( )

Restaurant ( )

Conferences ( )

Others please specify.....

10. How do hotels market their services in Sunyani?

**How hotels in Sunyani market their products**

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
E-Marketing					
Newspaper					
Billboards					
Radio					
Television					
Posters					

11. Is there an internet facility in the hotel you visited?

Yes ( ) No ( )

12. Would you like to use the internet to purchase any of the services?

Yes ( ) No ( )

Give reason .....

13. How often have you seen hotels marketing online?

Always ( ) sometimes ( ) Never ( ) Not sure ( )

14. Have you ever accessed hotels electronic marketing services? Yes ( )  
No ( )

If yes, which media do you use?

Computer ( ) Mobile phone ( ) Both ( ) other (specify) .....

15. Is it costly to access/ encounter e- marketing services?

Yes ( ) No ( )

16. Do you experience any difficulties in accessing e- marketing services?

Yes ( ) No ( )

If yes, what difficulties have your encountered when accessing e marketing services? .....

17. How often do you see hotels marketing offline?

Always ( ) sometimes ( ) Never ( ) Not sure ( )

18. Which media do is use for offline marketing?

Billboard ( ) newspaper ( ) Radio ( ) television ( ) Other, specify.....

19. How do you use e marketing services offered?

Room reservation ( ) ordering catering services ( )

Accessing information ( ) other (specify) .....

20. Through the e- marketing services offered by hotels, it has become easier to communicate in regard to complaints about services or expression of satisfaction?

Yes ( ) No ( )

Give reasons for you answers above.

.....  
 21. Please tick the e- marketing services you are familiar with.

Social network marketing(  ) mobile phone marketing(  )

E mail marketing (  ) websites (  )

Other (specify) .....

22. Do you encounter e- marketing services in your day to day interactions with any of the hotels?

Yes (  ) No (  )

23. If yes, Please tick the e- marketing services that you access/ encounter in your day to day interactions with hotels.

Social network marketing (  ) mobile phone marketing (  )

E mail marketing (  ) website (  )

24. How often do you use/ encounter e- marketing services?

Always (  ) sometimes (  )

Never (  ) Not sure (  )

25. Do you think the current e- marketing services offered by hotels make it competitive? Yes (  ) NO (  )

26. What marketing strategy is adopted by the hotel you visited?

Traditional offline marketing (  ) online marketing (  ) Both (  )

27. How do you assess the marketing strategy adopted by the hotel you visited?

Not good (  ) neutral (  ) good (  ) very good (  )

28. How does e-marketing affect hotel business in Sunyani?

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
On-line selling allows Services to be sold directly to customers					

E-marketing has created price and service competition between hotels in Sunyani					
E-marketing has taken away middle men in room reservations and other services					
Business to business trade is transformed					
Hotels in Sunyani has become easily accessible globally					

Thank you for your cooperation and time

## APPENDIX II

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MANAGERS

1. Who are your target customers and how do you reach them?
2. What type of services do you render to your customers?
3. How do you communicate with your customers?
4. Do you use any of the traditional marketing tools or strategies? If yes, list them and if no, Why?
5. Do you use any of the electronic media in reaching your target customers? if yes list them and if no , why?
6. Do you face any challenge in the use of this electronic equipment? Yes or No. Explain your answer.
7. Do you integrate the online marketing with offline marketing? Yes or No. explain your answer.

8. What has been the effect of the two on performance of business in term of
  - i. Sales
  - ii. Profit
  - iii. Customer satisfaction
9. When was electronic marketing introduced in the hotel?
10. How has the hotel been using e -marketing in its operations?
11. How has customer adaptation/response rate been to e- marketing services?
12. Has the introduction of e- marketing services proven to be beneficial to the hotel?
13. Since the introduction of e marketing services, has there been a noticeable increase in the sales volume?
14. What challenges do you experience in offering e- marketing services to consumers?
15. Do you see any relationship between e- marketing and sales volume?

Thank you for your cooperation and time.

