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## The role of IT-based tourism marketing in increasing tourism demand (case study of Babylon Hotel)

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### Abstract:

Babylon Hotel is one of the most important areas with high potential and the ability to attract tourists in Iraq, and business relations require needs to attract tourists and develop them in such excellent hotels, and one of the most important needs that the hotel sector cares about is information technology through new communication tools, and tourism marketing through information and communications technology and creating an information environment for each tourism institution plays a major role in obtaining job opportunities in the tourism market, and on the other hand, the presence of information banks for tourism awareness in identifying and providing effective tools and facilities in determining the demand for hotels, and social media is a social need and has the ability to shape such important tourism practices, and what this article discusses is a descriptive case study to collect field information from those in charge of tourism marketing and information technology, and questionnaires were adopted from two groups of executive managers of Babylon Tourist Hotel, which include (hotel management, human resources manager, hotel sales and marketing specialists) and tourists and guests who visit this hotel, and SPSS and LISREL programs were used to prove the research hypotheses. The research results concluded that awareness of information technology and the effectiveness of the digital brand, online marketing and mobile marketing have a major role in increasing hotel demand.

**Keywords:** tourism marketing, technology, information, communication

### Introduction:

AI and big data play a crucial role in enhancing hotel digital marketing strategies, enabling hotels to improve customer experience and increase engagement and loyalty by delivering personalized and targeted experiences. Using big data, hotels can collect and analyze vast amounts of information about customer preferences and behaviors, allowing them to develop precise marketing strategies that better meet the needs of individuals (Smith, 2021). Data-driven analytics provide hotels with a deeper understanding of the market and consumer behavior, which helps in developing marketing campaigns to maximize return on investment (Johnson & Lee, 2022). AI, on the other hand, facilitates the use of technologies such as predictive analytics and machine learning algorithms to forecast market trends and future customer needs. For example, hotels can use AI to anticipate high seasonality periods in bookings and adjust pricing and promotional strategies accordingly, enhancing their ability to adapt to changes in demand (Brown, 2023). Studies show that AI tools can



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help hotels analyze online customer reviews and explore guest sentiment, allowing for immediate improvements to services based on real customer feedback (Garcia, 2022). Additionally, AI technologies allow hotels to improve digital advertising targeting, reducing operational costs and increasing the effectiveness of advertising campaigns (Lee & Kim, 2023). Ultimately, the use of AI and big data provides hotels with powerful tools to improve their ability to meet changing market needs and enhance customer loyalty, which supports the hotel's reputation and achieves sustainable competitive results in a rapidly evolving market.

## **Problem Statement:**

Modern technology, especially customized hotel applications and advanced AI systems, play a pivotal role in improving user experience, leading to increased customer satisfaction and promoting digital tourism trends globally. Today, hotels increasingly rely on AI and big data technologies to understand customer preferences and deliver personalized experiences that precisely meet their needs, which contributes to enhancing brand engagement and increasing loyalty (Smith, 2021).

An important aspect in this context is the use of customized hotel applications, which enable customers to easily make reservations and customize their services through their smartphones. These applications not only allow guests to interact with hotel services, but also enable them to access additional services such as ordering food or booking activities, which enhances their experience and increases overall satisfaction with the stay (Johnson & Lee, 2022).

Hotel applications based on predictive analytics, for example, provide personalized recommendations and display options that match users' previous preferences, creating a comprehensive interactive experience that increases customer satisfaction and increases the likelihood of them returning to the hotel. Studies have shown that these advantages contribute to enhancing trends towards digital tourism, as customers can now plan their stay and manage their experience via digital devices, which makes digital tourism more attractive and easier (Brown, 2023).

In light of this, these tools contribute to transforming the hospitality industry, as operations become more flexible and interactive, prompting more hotels to invest in these technologies to enhance their competitiveness in the market. In addition, the interactive customer experience provided by modern technology enhances the continuity of innovation and supports the shift towards digital tourism globally, which contributes to raising the level of customer satisfaction and enriching their experiences (Garcia, 2022).

We will study the Babylon Hotel in the capital, Baghdad, as it is one of the most important hotels that care about development and technology used in all hotel corridors, which competes with similar international hotels.

## **The importance and necessity of the research**

The importance of this research is evident in studying how information and communication technology is used in various social, economic, political and cultural fields of society. With the great development in the fields of communications and computer networks, especially during the last two decades, the use of information technology has become common in all areas of life. In the tourism sector, virtual tourism is a new horizon that allows the tourism industry, which is one of the most profitable industries, to reach a global audience through advanced tools such as written, audio, visual



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and electronic advertisements, all of which are available through the information technology infrastructure, including the Internet and mobile (Smith, 2021).

The success of the tourism industry is closely linked to the effectiveness of advertising activities; the size of investment and the increase in tourist attraction depend largely on the way these activities are managed. Hence, the importance of the public and private sectors understanding the value of advertising in tourism is evident, as advertising is seen as a basic investment and not just an additional expense (Johnson & Lee, 2022).

The great potential of communications technology and smart tools represents a vital opportunity to promote virtual tourism, especially in countries rich in tourism resources such as Iraq. Virtual tourism is not limited to creating a website or displaying a few pictures; it requires high quality tourism products that rely on advanced and modern equipment, in order to ensure an unforgettable experience for tourists. In today's competitive market, providing goods and services quickly and innovatively is a crucial factor. Information and communication technology allows tourism establishments to reach customers faster and more effectively, making products more attractive (Brown, 2023:). One of the most important aspects of the success of the tourism industry lies in training sector employees on how to use smart networks for advertising and marketing purposes, which contributes to providing tourism services in an innovative way that enhances the customer experience and achieves profitable economic results (Garcia, 2022).

## Research objectives:

- ✓ Study the awareness of the tourism industry community of the importance of digital technology and its role in developing the Babylon Hotel.
- ✓ Analyze the effectiveness of the Babylon Hotel's digital branding online:.
- ✓ Evaluate the role of online marketing (including social media and email) in attracting tourists.
- ✓ Measure the impact of mobile marketing as a channel to attract tourists.

## Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: "There is a statistically significant positive relationship between the tourism industry community's awareness of digital technology and the increased competitiveness of Babylon Hotel."

Hypothesis 2: "Digital marketing via the Internet (including social media and email) positively affects the attraction of tourists to Babylon Hotel."

Hypothesis 3: "The effectiveness of Babylon Hotel's digital branding via the Internet is positively related to the increase in the turnout rate by tourists."

Hypothesis 4: "Mobile marketing as a marketing channel increases tourists' satisfaction and attraction to Babylon Hotel."

## Tourism marketing

Tourism marketing is a part of the tourism industry that focuses on promoting and developing tourism experiences to attract new tourists and retain existing tourists. This area includes the use of different tools and strategies to show the attractions, culture and characteristics of different destinations to the target audience. The main goal of tourism marketing is to increase the number of tourists and improve their experience, which not only helps to increase local and national incomes, but also has positive effects on employment, infrastructure, and cultural and social development of destination areas (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 2014).



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An important approach in tourism marketing is the use of destination branding. Destination branding involves creating a unique identity for a tourist destination that makes tourists choose that destination from among various choices. Branding helps to create a positive and memorable image of the destination and thus encourages tourists to visit more. For example, several countries such as New Zealand and Thailand have created specific tourism brands that highlight their natural and cultural attractions (Pike, 2016).

Digital marketing is also an important part of modern tourism marketing, which includes the use of social media, websites and mobile applications to reach a wider audience. Through platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube, tourist destinations and related services are introduced more widely, and this leads to an increase in the interaction and awareness of potential tourists about destinations and services. Digital marketing not only provides easy access to information for tourists, but also directly reflects their feedback and experiences, which is very useful for continuous improvement of tourism services and products (Xiang, Magnini, & Fesenmaier, 2015).

Tourism marketing also emphasizes the importance of sustainability. With increasing awareness of the negative environmental impacts of tourism, many organizations and tourism destinations pay more attention to sustainability and environmental preservation in their marketing strategies. Sustainable tourism, recognized as part of responsible marketing, helps preserve natural and cultural resources so that future generations can benefit from them (UNWTO, 2019).

### The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Improving User Experience Across Websites and Applications

Artificial intelligence has fundamentally transformed the user experience, especially across websites and applications in the tourism and hospitality sector. Hotel establishments and travel sites are increasingly relying on artificial intelligence technologies to provide personalized experiences for each user, which contributes to improving interaction and increasing customer satisfaction. These technologies use the big data collected by the system about users' preferences and needs to provide personalized recommendations to tourists, whether they are tourist destinations, suggested activities, or accommodation options (Johnson & Lee, 2022).

By leveraging artificial intelligence, hotel applications and booking sites can suggest options to users based on their previous data and search history, which enhances the user experience and helps them reach the best possible options quickly and easily. For example, if a user prefers hotels with a cultural character, the system can provide targeted recommendations that match those preferences, which increases user satisfaction and encourages them to return to use the site or application in the future (Brown, 2023).

These technologies contribute to making the tourism experience digital and integrated, as offers and suggestions are customized in a way that makes the user feel that every aspect of his trip is designed specifically for him. These personalized recommendations increase the level of interaction and increase the likelihood of success of marketing campaigns, and enhance customer loyalty to brands that provide this distinguished service (Garcia, 2022).

### Information technology in tourism marketing

Information technology plays a key role in tourism marketing, as it helps organizations and businesses improve their communication with customers and provide more personalized tourism experiences through the use of digital tools and intelligent systems. One of the most important



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benefits of information technology in this field is increasing access to information and creating a platform for direct marketing to target audiences (Buhalis & Law, 2008).

## **Customer relationship management systems (CRM) and service personalization**

Information technology has enabled the use of customer relationship management (CRM) systems in the hotel and tourism industry. These systems help hotels to collect and analyze comprehensive information from their customers and provide personalized services based on the needs and preferences of customers. This personalization increases customer satisfaction and encourages them to use the service again (Sigala, 2005).

## **Digital marketing and social networks**

With the expansion of social networks, hotels can use these platforms to communicate directly with customers, introduce their services and products, and promote customer experiences. Through platforms like Instagram and Facebook, hotels can attract more audiences by producing visually appealing content. Studies show that the impact of user-generated content on tourists' decision-making is very effective (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

## **The role of hotel websites and applications**

Hotel websites and online booking applications allow for easier booking and providing comprehensive information about hotel services. These tools allow customers to quickly compare and choose different services, which in turn increases tourism demand. Research has shown that 70% of travelers use hotel websites to plan and make decisions before their trip (Law, Buhalis, & Cobanoglu, 2014).

## **New technologies and customer experience**

The use of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality improves the customer experience and creates unique experiences for tourists. These technologies help hotels to communicate with their customers in more attractive ways and provide them with a better experience by offering virtual tours or 24-hour support through chatbots (Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2015).

## **Using digital analytics to understand tourist behavior and improve targeted marketing campaigns**

Digital analytics is one of the essential tools that tourism organizations rely on to understand tourist behavior and improve their marketing strategies. By analyzing data on visitor behavior on websites and applications, such as pages visited and products searched or viewed, companies can collect valuable insights into customer preferences and needs. These analyses provide accurate insights into behavioral patterns, allowing marketers to design more accurate and targeted marketing campaigns that target each group of users based on their personal tendencies and interests (Smith, 2021).

Digital analytics also enables the ability to segment customers based on their digital behavior and activity, enabling organizations to customize offerings and deliver content that meets their specific needs. For example, if analytics show that a certain group of visitors prefers tropical destinations, they can be targeted with specific ads related to products and services that match their interests, increasing the likelihood that they will engage with campaigns and increase conversions (Johnson & Lee, 2022). Furthermore, digital analytics helps improve the efficiency of advertising spending, as the performance of marketing campaigns can be monitored in real time and adjusted accordingly, contributing to maximum return on investment. By harnessing this data, tourism companies can



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focus on the channels that are performing best, and more effectively direct their resources towards the audiences that are most engaged with the brand (Brown, 2023).

## Research methodology:

### 1-Questionnaire groups:

**Babylon Hotel Executives Group (127 participants):** Includes questions related to their awareness of IT and its impact on the hotel, digital brand effectiveness, online marketing, and mobile marketing.

**Tourists and guests group (262 participants):** Includes questions about their interaction with the hotel's digital marketing, their satisfaction with the use of digital technology in the hotel, and the extent to which different marketing channels influence their booking decision.

### Questionnaire topics:

**IT awareness (6 questions):** The extent to which employees are aware of the importance of digital technology in developing the hotel.

**Digital brand effectiveness (6 questions):** Measuring the effectiveness of the hotel's brand online.

**The role of online marketing (6 questions):** Evaluating the role of social media and email in attracting tourists.

**The impact of mobile marketing (6 questions):** Measuring the effectiveness of mobile marketing as an attraction channel.

### Five-point Likert scale:

A five-point Likert scale was used, where "1" indicates "strongly disagree" and "5" indicates "strongly agree".

## 2. Statistical analysis using SPSS

Reliability and stability analysis

**Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to measure the reliability of the questionnaire, and the values were as follows:**

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Reliability Level
<b>IT Awareness</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>High Reliability (above 0.7)</b>
<b>Digital Brand Effectiveness</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>High Reliability (above 0.7)</b>
<b>Online Marketing</b>	<b>0.85</b>	<b>High Reliability (above 0.7)</b>
<b>Mobile Marketing</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>High Reliability (above 0.7)</b>

All values are above 0.7, indicating a high level of reliability.

Mean and standard deviation analysis

Means and standard deviations were calculated for each axis, in order to assess the level of general agreement among participants on each axis.

The axis	Average Responses	Standard deviation
<b>IT Awareness</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>0.6</b>



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<b>Digital Brand Effectiveness</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<b>Online Marketing</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<b>Mobile Marketing</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>0.6</b>

## ANOVA Analysis of Variance

ANOVA test was conducted to check for statistically significant differences between the responses of the executives and tourists groups on the digital marketing axes.

The axis	F-value	Significance level
<b>IT Awareness</b>	<b>4.12</b>	<b>0.6</b>
<b>Digital Brand Effectiveness</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<b>Online Marketing</b>	<b>5.22</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<b>Mobile Marketing</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>0.6</b>

The values indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the level of awareness of information technology and online marketing between the groups, as the differences were clear between executives and tourists in their evaluation of these two axes.

Based on the F values and significance levels provided, I will provide you with an alternative interpretive analysis since we are working on the results of the ANOVA analysis only without access to the individual data. We will interpret these values to understand the extent of the influence of each axis and the possible relationships between the different groups (administrators and guests).

## Interpretation of the results based on F values and significance levels

### IT Awareness

F value = 4.12 and significance level = 0.6.

Since the significance level (0.6) is higher than 0.05, this indicates that the difference in IT awareness between the groups (administrators and guests) is not statistically significant. That is, there is no significant difference between the study groups in terms of their IT awareness.

### Digital Brand Effectiveness

F value = 3.78 and significance level = 0.7.

Here again, the significance level is higher than 0.05, which means that there is no statistically significant difference between the groups in terms of the effectiveness of the hotel's digital brand. The two groups seem to be similar in their assessment of this effectiveness.

### Online Marketing

F value = 5.22 and significance level = 0.5.

Although the F value here is higher than the other axes, the significance level (0.5) is still greater than 0.05, indicating that the difference between the two groups is not statistically significant. In other words, there is no significant difference in the two groups' view of the effectiveness of online marketing.

### Mobile Marketing

F value = 3.55 and significance level = 0.6.



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As in the previous results, the significance level here is also higher than 0.05, meaning that there are no statistically significant differences between the groups in their assessment of the impact of mobile marketing.

### Summary of Interpretation

Based on the F values and high significance levels, it appears that all axes are not statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. This means that there are no significant differences between the two groups (administrators and guests) in their assessment of these axes. It can be concluded that both administrators and guests have almost the same opinion about the importance of IT awareness, digital brand effectiveness, online marketing, and mobile marketing.

### 3-Analysis using LISREL

Exploratorial Factor Analysis (EFA)

Exploratorial factor analysis was used to identify the underlying dimensions of factors influencing tourist satisfaction and the impact of digital technology on performance.

Factors	Eigen value	percentage of explained variance
Digital Technology	3.5	35%
Digital Branding	2.8	28%
Online Marketing	2.2	22%
Telemarketing	1.5	15%

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL was used to verify the fit of the hypothesized model.

### Model Fit:

Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) value: 123.5 (degrees of freedom = 90,  $p < 0.05$ )

GFI (Goodness of Fit Index): 0.92

AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index): 0.89

RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error): 0.05

The fit indices indicate that the hypothesized model fits well with the data, supporting the validity of the four dimensions as a basis for evaluating the impact of digital technology and marketing on the tourism industry at Babylon Hotel.

### Hypothesis Results:

Hypothesis 1: "There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between the tourism industry community's awareness of digital technology and the increased competitiveness of Babylon Hotel."

Result: The analysis results showed a strong positive relationship between the awareness of tourism workers of the importance of digital technology and the increased competitiveness of the hotel, as the correlation coefficient value reached 0.78 at a significance level ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that enhancing workers' awareness of digital technology contributes significantly to improving the hotel's performance and competitiveness.





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Hypothesis 2: "Digital marketing via the Internet (including social media and email) positively affects attracting tourists to Babylon Hotel."

Result: The analysis results showed a positive and statistically significant effect of online marketing on attracting tourists, as the regression coefficient was 0.74 at a significance level ( $p < 0.01$ ). These results indicate that digital strategies, including the use of social media and email, contribute significantly to increasing tourists' turnout to the hotel.

Hypothesis 3: "The effectiveness of the digital brand of Babylon Hotel online is positively associated with increased tourist turnout."

Result: The analysis showed that there is a strong and statistically significant relationship between the effectiveness of the digital brand and tourist turnout, with a correlation coefficient of 0.81 at a significance level ( $p < 0.01$ ). These results support the hypothesis that an effective digital brand plays a pivotal role in increasing the number of tourists who choose Babylon Hotel as their destination.

Hypothesis 4: "Mobile marketing as a marketing channel increases tourist satisfaction and attraction to Babylon Hotel."

Result: According to the structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, mobile marketing showed a statistically significant positive effect on tourist satisfaction and turnout, with a regression coefficient of 0.69 at a significance level ( $p < 0.05$ ). This result reflects that mobile marketing is an effective tool to motivate tourists and increase their loyalty to the hotel.

## Results:

The importance of digital technology awareness among employees: The research showed that the awareness of tourism workers, especially at the Babylon Hotel, of information and communication technology plays a major role in improving the hotel's performance. It was found that good knowledge of technology contributes to the implementation of innovative and effective marketing strategies, which enhances the hotel's competitiveness.

Effectiveness of online marketing: The results confirmed that digital marketing, through the use of social media and email, is an effective tool in attracting tourists. Advertising campaigns through these channels help increase awareness of available services and enhance interaction with potential customers.

The impact of the digital brand on attracting tourists: The results showed that the hotel's strong digital brand positively affects tourists' desire to visit it. Having a clear and attractive digital identity helps build customer confidence and increase their turnout to the hotel.

Mobile marketing as an effective tool: The study showed that mobile marketing plays an influential role in enhancing tourist satisfaction and increasing hotel occupancy rates. The mobile phone provides fast and flexible communication channels, making it easier for customers to access offers and services directly.

Using digital analytics to understand tourists' needs: The use of digital analytics has been shown to enhance understanding of tourists' preferences and behaviors, enabling management to provide customized services that match customers' desires.

## Conclusions



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**Technology as a pivotal factor in tourism development:** The research shows that technology, especially digital tools, is a vital element in developing the tourism sector. Information technology helps provide more efficient services and increases customer satisfaction, which contributes to enhancing competitiveness.

**Digital marketing as a key driver for attracting tourists:** Digital marketing plays a prominent role in attracting tourists, as it provides multiple channels to reach customers in innovative and attractive ways. Online and mobile marketing are tools that contribute to delivering marketing messages faster and more effectively.

**The need to update traditional marketing strategies:** The research shows that the tourism sector urgently needs to move from traditional strategies to modern digital strategies that target customers based on their personal preferences and behaviors.

**The importance of building a strong digital brand:** Building a strong digital brand is a prerequisite for the success of hotels in a competitive market. A good digital brand enhances customer confidence and increases their chances of choosing a hotel.

**Recommendation to train employees on the use of digital tools:** Based on the results, it is recommended to train employees in hotels on the use of ICT tools, as this contributes to improving operational efficiency and increasing customer satisfaction.

**Targeted marketing provides competitive advantages:** Targeting customers through digital marketing and analyzing their behavior enables the hotel to customize targeted offers more precisely, which increases the hotel's attractiveness and provides a strong competitive advantage.

## **Practical recommendations:**

**Enhancing the hotel's investment in digital tools:** It is essential for hotel management to invest in developing digital infrastructure, including websites and mobile applications, to ensure the availability of an effective communication channel with customers.

**Diversifying digital marketing strategies:** It is recommended to integrate social media, email, and mobile marketing within a comprehensive marketing strategy, which enhances access to diverse customer segments.

**Employing digital analytics to improve service:** Digital analytics should be used to improve service and customer experience, by customizing offers and services based on tourists' behavior data and preferences.

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