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## E-MARKETING STRATEGIES AND CUSTOMER PATRONAGE IN SELECTED HOTELS IN UMUAHIA NORTH, ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The e-marketing strategies and customer patronage in selected hotels in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State were assessed in this study. The objectives were to determine the extent of use of e-marketing in hotels, determine how e-marketing affects customer patronage, assess the benefits of e-marketing on customer patronage and assess the challenges facing e-marketing in hotels. The study adopted the survey research design through the use of questionnaire where information was gathered from a primary source. The total population of the study was 200 while the sample size was 133. Mean and frequency distributions were used to analyze the research questions. The results of the different questionnaire items collected revealed that the various extent of utilization of e-marketing by hotels includes social media marketing (Face book, twitter, you-tube and Instagram), Search engine (Google), Affiliate marketing (third party hosting) as well as instant messaging (Messenger, Whatsapp and Viber). Also the effect of e-marketing on customer patronage include: increased client base, increased internet awareness, creating job opportunity and improved sales. Benefits of e-marketing include: wider prospect reach, cost-effective approach, reduction in cost through automation and use of electronic media, 24/7 marketing, personalized one-on-one marketing, increased interactivity and increased ability to track results and finally the challenges of e-marketing include among others, marketing integration, privacy, increased integration with social networks, trigger-based e-mail and special issues on e-marketing. It was thus concluded that e-marketing influences customer patronage of hotels. The study therefore recommends amongst others, that other hotels that have not incorporated e-marketing as part of their marketing strategy should try and incorporate it as it has a positive way of improving customer patronage.*

**Keywords:** e-marketing, strategies, customers, patronage, hotel.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The recent growth of the Internet has considerably changed the operating environment of the hotel industry. The Internet has become an innovative marketing tool in offering travel information and online transactions (Doolin, Burgess and Cooper, 2002). The information-based nature of tourism products means that the Internet, which offers global reach and multimedia capability, is an increasingly important means of promoting and distributing tourism services. Today, hotels' web presence is no longer exclusive to large hotels; internet marketing tool is not just for big hotel chains. The websites that are well-designed and easy to navigate provide independent hotels with an inexpensive and effective platform for marketing and advertising, which potentially increase their competitiveness in the marketplace (Lituchy and Rail, 2000; Merono-Cerdan and Soto-Acosta, 2007). The website marketing can potentially provide

distinct value to the hotels. These come from the offering of information online, the possibility of establishing communications and exchange of information and the conducting of transactions online. The rapid adoption of Internet marketing by hotels has yielded myriad studies of hospitality internet adoption and its impact on hotel operation (Hashim, Murphy, Purchase, and O'Connor, 2010; Scaglione, Schegg, and Murphy, 2009). The website marketing is particularly useful for dealing with intangible nature of the hotel service, and to gain a competitive advantage (Baloglu and Pekcan, 2006). For tourism organizations, the website content allows them to engage customers' interest and participation, to capture information about their preferences, and to use that information to provide personalized services (Doolin, Burgess and Cooper 2002). Chung and Law (2003) indicated that well designed hotel websites with useful information can

help increase sales volume and improve the reputation of a hotel. Scaglione and Chris (2009) analyzed revenue per available room before and after hotels adopted websites and found that website adoption related positively to hotel performance. Merono-Cerdan and Soto-Acosta (2007) evaluated 228 Spanish firms and found a positive relationship between external web content and firm performance. Additionally, e-information was found as critical for enabling e-transaction to impact upon firm performance.

Hotels have come up beyond what used to be in the years past in terms of customers (Chen, 2007). Hotels now use innovative means in other to remain in the industry's competitive environment. Just like any other commercial establishment, hotels have functional compartments ranging from customer service, human resources, finance, research and development and facilities among others (Chiang, Tsai and Wang, 2004). The competition for having a strategic location and adequate facilities that create delight to customers is now the priority in the minds of the hotel investors.

Generally, the hotel business is challenging and thrilling and these pave ways for investors to become financially independent, bosses in their own right, create job opportunity and also increase self-esteem. Besides, it gives owners the opportunity to be creative in terms of meeting customers' expectations. To record huge success in this aspect, efforts must be geared towards putting in place all essentials that will create customer satisfaction because, customers are becoming more conscious of their convenience, hence, want to be fulfilled. The awaking consciousness in customers have sharpened their knowledge horizon, thereby armed them to the extent that customers are readily prepared to challenge bad service rendered. This increase in knowledge has reshaped end user service expectations from service provider. This heightened knowledge has exposed the organization of hotel businesses to embrace factors that are capable of enhancing customer patronage. This is because the society depends on organizations, so also organizations depend on the society for survival and for achieving specific and desirable ends, through services, products, and facilities offered to the members of the society. Therefore, effective customer service cannot be ignored in the realm of achieving effective customer patronage in hotels. Wan, (2002) defined hotel patronage as the support, encouragement, privilege, or financial aid that hotels

receive from guest.

According to the definition provided by the American Marketing Association (2008), marketing refers to "an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders. In essence, marketing is a consumer-oriented philosophy or way of doing business; companies that are consumer oriented will put consumers' needs and wants on their top priority. From this perspective, the ultimate goal of marketing is therefore to create and retain profitable customers by satisfying their demands.

E-Marketing or electronic marketing refers to the application of marketing principles and techniques via electronic media and more specifically the Internet. The terms e-Marketing, Internet marketing and online marketing, are frequently interchanged, and can often be considered synonymous. E-Marketing is the process of marketing a brand using the Internet. It includes both direct response marketing and indirect marketing elements and uses a range of technologies to help connect businesses to their customers. By such a definition, e-Marketing encompasses all the activities a business conducts via the worldwide web with the aim of attracting new business, retaining current business and developing its brand identity. E-marketing refers to the use of the Internet and digital media capabilities to help sell your products or services. These digital technologies are a valuable addition to traditional marketing approaches regardless of the size and type of business. E-marketing is also referred to as Internet marketing (i-marketing), online marketing or web marketing. As with conventional marketing, e-marketing is creating a strategy that helps businesses deliver the right messages and product/services to the right audience. It consists of all activities and processes with the purpose of finding, attracting, winning and retaining customers, (Law and Hsu, 2005).

Electronic marketing can also be considered as the equivalent to Internet marketing and Digital Marketing. E-marketing involves the marketing of products and services using electronic media (David, 2017). E-Marketing is a process which easily trades off demands as per customer satisfaction by using the process of Planning, promoting, and pricing the different products and services with the help of the internet. E-Marketing is preferred over the traditional way of marketing because it offers

convenience to the customers and decreases business expenses.

The development of the internet has brought unprecedented development in new methods of conducting business and transaction which has affected different aspects of lives and professions including marketing. Different definition has been proffered for internet marketing. According to Chaffey, Gwinner, Gremler, and Bitner, (2000) internet marketing involves the use of the internet and other digital technologies to conduct marketing activities. Kotler and Armstrong, (2004) viewed internet marketing as consisting of activities which facilitate the sale of products and services and also promote customer relationships over the Internet. The application of Online marketing, which is also referred to as internet marketing, makes use of interactive, virtual spaces for the aim of promoting and selling goods and services. In fact, new synchronous, internet-based communication technologies introduce flexibility, speed of time and cost effectiveness in the conduct of business activities over the internet.

To gain competitive advantage in the demanding tourist market, it is important nowadays for a hotel company to have its own website, promote its products through social networks and mobile applications, use e-mail as a channel of communication with its business partners and customers, and apply all available information-communication technology (ICT). It needs to provide all information for potential clients in one place at any time of day, from anywhere in the world. That can be possible by using innovative ways of communication and by adapting business operations to demanding requirements of the modern tourist market. This imposes the innovation of practices and the implementation of new technologies in business processes. Therefore, there is a need for awareness about the necessity of applying ICT in the hotel business.

The online marketing is doubtless one of nowadays most powerful advertising methods. All companies, and notably in the Tourism and Hospitality industry, are fiercely competing to lead and overwhelm the online space in order to shift market shares from competition, increase their online traffic and make more profits. It is always required for any company wishing to succeed its e-marketing strategy, to ensure that all of its online space is well managed and that it is entirely under control. These strategies are: digital marketing (Cheffey, 2013),

Viral Marketing (Ho and Dempsey, 2010), Mobile marketing (Smutkupt *et al*, 2010, Shankar *et al*, 2010, Tripathi, 2008) and E-mail marketing (Marinova *et al*, 2002) which include among others; social media marketing, affiliate marketing, search engines, instant messaging and picture advertising. Moreover, updates and innovations in the online world are a must to attract customers and keep their interest constantly stimulated.

It is perceived that the non-existence or poor utilization of e-marketing has in one way or the other contributed to low patronage of hotels because clients find it difficult to come down to a location far from theirs when they are not sure it will be worth it. Some hotels do not follow up complaints neither do they rectify customers' problems even after responding to feedback. This has been a problem associated with e-marketing. This unresponsive attitude of hotels has made them to be unable to identify customers' needs. Some of the hotels provide customers' needs based on assumption while others expect customers to make do with what is available at the hotel at every point.

Most hotels do not have websites where customers can view their products while others who have do not make good use of it. Only few hotels like the five star hotels have applications that can be downloaded on smart phones. This has limited the coverage of these hotels because effective use of e-marketing widens the coverage of every business organization and have in turn, affected hotel patronage. Hotels that have effective websites should endeavor to respond to feedbacks. A good customer relationship can be affected through adequate and effective use of e-marketing. Few studies have been conducted in E-marketing; Alex-onyeocha and Iwuagwu (2015), Kagendo (2015), Wisdom (2015), Olgha, Francis and Joseph (2017) but none has been carried out on customer patronage in Umuahia North. It is against this backdrop that the study intends to examine e-marketing strategies and customer patronage in hotels.

This research therefore seeks to find a solution to these identified problems associated with e-marketing as it affects hotel patronage. The objectives of this study, therefore, are to:

- i. determine the extent of use of e-marketing in hotels.
- ii. determine how e-marketing affects customer patronage in hotels.
- iii. assess the benefits of e-marketing on customer

patronage in hotels.

iv. assess the challenges facing e-marketing in hotels.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted the survey research design. The study area is Umuahia North. Umuahia North is a Local Government Area in Abia State, Nigeria. Its headquarters are in the city of Umuahia. It has an area of 245 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 220,660 at the 2006 census. The postal code of the area is 440. Umuahia North is located along the rail road that lies between Port Harcourt to its south and Enugu city to its north. Umuahia North indigenous ethnic group are the Igbos (Wikipedia, 2019). The list of towns in Umuahia North L.G.A include Umuahia, Umukabia, Umuawa Alaocha, Umuda Isingwu, IhiteUde, Umuekwule, Umuagu, Amaogwugwu and Ohuhu. Umuahia north is a major city in Abia state and contains many tourism and relaxation centers.

The population for the study include the staff of the six (6) hotels selected from the fifty nine (59) registered hotels in Umuahia North L.G.A as recorded by the Abia State Tourism board in 2017. The total number of the staff of these selected hotels amounted to 200 staff as gathered from a pre-survey conducted in these hotels. For the sample size determination, Ten percent (10%) of the registered hotels was used for the study which is 5.9 (approximately 6 hotels). Senior and junior staff from these six selected hotels were used for the study. The hotels are Hotel Helson, Ever green Hotel, Ice Grand Hotel, Villa Roy hotel, Smile More Hotel and suites and Gado hotels all in Umuahia North. The sample size of 133 was determined from the population of 200 using Taro Yamane formula.

Thus:

$$\text{Sample size } n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} = \frac{200}{1+200(0.05)^2}$$

where n= sample size

N=population of the study=200

E=error estimate or error significance (5%)

To determine the sample size, since N=200

$$\text{Therefore sample size, } n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} = \frac{200}{1+200(0.05)^2}$$

$$\begin{aligned} N &= \frac{200}{1+200(0.05)^2} = \frac{200}{1+200 \times 0.0025} \\ &= \frac{200}{1+0.5} = \frac{200}{1.5} \\ &= 133.33 \end{aligned}$$

Thus Sample size = 133.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the number of hotels to be sampled while convenient sampling was used to select the respondents who were willing and ready to partake in the study. This work used primary data to collect data from the respondents. The primary data were collected with the use of a well-structured questionnaire that was administered directly to the respondents. The distributed questionnaire contained questions that invoked responses from respondents. The questionnaire was designed in a Likert summation format where the responses of the respondents were limited to a close ended format. Thus, the options were presented in this form; 5- Strongly Agree (SA), 4-Agree (A), 3-Undecided (U), 2- Disagree (D), 1- Strongly Disagree (SD) and 5- Very High Extent (VHE), 4- High Extent (HE), 3-Low Extent (LE), 2- Very Low Extent (VLE), 1-Not Applicable (NA). The options have a weighted score of 5,4,3,2 and 1 respectively. This questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by three senior lecturers in the Department of Hospitality Management and Tourism of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The suggestions of the validators were considered in producing the final instrument that was used. Also, the researchers employed Test- retest method to check its reliability. Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to test the result. The instrument showed a positive reliability result of +0.95 which is an excellent reliability test result for the instrument. Descriptive statistics of percentage, frequency and mean distributions was used to analyze the questions. The decision rule is that if the mean value is above or equal to 3.0 accept but if it is below 3.0 do not accept.

**RESULTS**

**Table 1: Objective one- Extent at which e-marketing is utilized by hotels**

S/N	Extent of utilization of e-marketing	VHE (%)	HE (%)	LE (%)	VLE (%)	NA (%)	Mean score (X̄)	Remark
1	Social media marketing (Facebook, twitter, you tube, Instagram)	100 (75.2)	28(21.1)	5(3.8)	0	0	4.7143	Accepted
2	Affiliate marketing (third party hosting)	33 (24.8)	67(50.4)	22(16.5)	8(6.0)	3(2.3)	3.8947	Accepted
3	Search engine (Google)	46(34.6)	37(27.8)	50(37.6)	0	0	3.9699	Accepted
4	Instant messaging (Messenger, Whatsapp, Viber)	55(41.4)	29(21.8)	20(15.0)	29(21.8)	0	3.8271	Accepted
5	Picture advertising	14(10.5)	13(9.8)	24(18.0)	48(36.1)	34(25.6)	2.4361	Not accepted

**VHE=Very High Extent, HE=High Extent, LE=Low Extent, NA=Not Applicable, n=133**

Table 1 presents the mean response of various extent of utilization of e-marketing by hotels.

The various extent of utilization includes social media marketing, affiliate marketing, search engine, instant messaging and picture advertising. The decision rule states that any mean below 3.0 is considered not accepted while mean equal to or above 3.0 is accepted. Based on the decision, among the five (5) items stated, four (4) were accepted while one item was not accepted. The result above showed that social media marketing (face book, twitter, you tube and Instagram) are utilized at a very high extent by hotels with an accepted mean score of 4.71. Search engine (google) with a mean score of 3.97 was also accepted. Affiliate marketing (third party hosting) with a mean score of 3.89 was equally accepted. Also instant messaging (Messenger, Whatsapp, Viber) with a mean score of 3.82 was accepted. However, picture advertising with a mean score of 2.44 was not accepted because it did not reach the acceptable limit.

**Table 2: Objective Two- Effect of e-marketing on hotel patronage**

S/N	Effect of e marketing on hotels	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean (X̄)	Remark
1	Increases client base	89(66.9)	31(23.3)	10(7.5)	3(2.3)	0	4.5489	Accepted
2	Increases internet awareness	68(51.1)	43(32.3)	22(16.5)	0	0	4.3459	Accepted
3	Creates more job opportunities	56(42.1)	58(43.6)	15(11.3)	0	4(3.0)	4.2180	Accepted
4	Improves sales	79(59.4)	28(21.1)	12(9.0)	10(7.5)	4(3.0)	4.2632	Accepted

**SA=strongly agreed, A=Agreed, U=Undecided, D=Disagreed, SD=Strongly Disagreed, n=133**

The effect of e-marketing on customer patronage was itemized in Table 2 above. The four items that were listed were accepted by the respondents as the effect of e-marketing on customer patronage. The items are increased client base with a mean score of 4.55 as well as increased internet awareness with a mean score of 4.35 which were all accepted. The respondents also agreed that it creates job opportunity with a mean score of 4.22 as well as improve sales (with a mean score of 4.26). These were also accepted. Increase client base has the highest mean of 4.55 and it was equally accepted. This shows that e-marketing plays a very big role on customer patronage.

**Table 3: Objective three-Benefits of e-marketing on customer patronage**

S/N	Benefits of e-marketing	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean (X̄)	Remark
1	Wider prospect reach	99 (74.4)	33 (24.8)	1 (0.8)	0	0	4.7368	Accepted
2	Cost-effective approach	63 (47.4)	50 (37.6)	12 (9.0)	8 (6.0)	0	4.2632	Accepted
3	Reduction in cost through automation and use of electronic media	12 (9.0)	57 (42.9)	32 (24.1)	32 (24.1)	0	3.3684	Accepted
4	24/7marketing	51 (38.3)	19 (14.3)	46 (34.6)	17 (12.8)	0	3.7820	Accepted
5	Personalized one-on-one marketing	32 (24.1)	29 (21.8)	24 (18.0)	48 (36.1)	0	3.3383	Accepted
6	Increased interactivity	87 (65.4)	37 (27.8)	6 (4.5)	3 (2.3)	0	4.5639	Accepted
7	Increased ability to track results	9 (6.8)	72 (54.1)	48 (36.1)	4 (3.0)	0	3.6466	Accepted

**SA=strongly agreed, A=Agreed, U=Undecided, D=Disagreed, SD=Strongly Disagreed, n=133**

Table 3 above shows the benefits of e-marketing on customer patronage. Seven items were listed and among the seven stated items all were accepted by the respondents. The stated items includes wider prospect reach with the mean score of 4.74, Cost-effective approach with the mean score 4.26, Reduction in cost through automation and use of electronic media with the mean score of 3.37, 24/7marketing with the mean score of 3.78, personalized one-on-one marketing with the mean score of 3.33, Increased interactivity with a mean score of 4.56 as well as increased ability to track results with mean score of 3.65. From the result above, it is obvious that e-marketing has a lot of benefits on customer patronage.

**Table 4: Objective Four- The challenges of e-marketing on customer patronage**

S/N	Challenges of e marketing	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean (X̄)	Remark
1	Bad reputation	3 (2.3)	9 (6.8)	54 (40.6)	38 (28.6)	29 (21.7)	2.3910	Not accepted
2	Marketing integration	53 (39.8)	23 (17.3)	28 (21.1)	26 (19.5)	3 (2.3)	3.7293	Accepted
3	New layer of e-mail filtering	0	9 (6.8)	67 (50.4)	52 (39.1)	5 (3.7)	2.6015	Not accepted
4	Increased integration with social networks	69 (51.9)	36 (27.1)	21 (15.7)	4 (3.0)	3 (2.3)	4.2331	Accepted
5	Trigger-based e-mail	21 (15.8)	45 (33.8)	38 (28.6)	26 (19.5)	3 (2.3)	3.4135	Accepted
6	Special issues on e-marketing	10 (7.5)	39 (29.3)	40 (30.1)	39 (29.3)	4 (3.0)	3.0752	Accepted

**SA=strongly agreed, A=Agreed, U=Undecided, D=Disagreed, SD=Strongly Disagreed, n=133**

Table 4 above shows the challenges facing e-marketing on customer patronage. It is obvious that e-marketing has many challenges facing it. Six items were stated as the challenges facing e-marketing and out of the six stated items four were accepted by the respondents as the challenges facing e-marketing on customer patronage while two items were not accepted. The items includes bad reputation with the mean score of 2.39 which was not accepted, Marketing integration with the mean score of 3.73 which was accepted, New layer of e-mail filtering with the mean score of 2.60 which was not accepted, Increased integration with social networks with a mean score of 4.23 which was accepted,

## Discussion of Findings

The findings from the study revealed that e-marketing is utilized in a very high extent by many hotels in Umuahia North L.G.A., Abia state. The method of utilization of e-marketing by these hotels includes social media marketing (Face book, Twitter, You tube and Instagram), search engine (Google), affiliate marketing (Third party hosting) and instant messaging (Messenger, Whatsapp and Viber). Social media has the highest score and it was highly accepted while picture advertising recorded the lowest and was not accepted. Picture advertising was not accepted by the respondents because the cost involved is high and they are not sure of its efficiency. This results correlates with that of Kagendo (2015) that studied the influence of electronic marketing on customer retention. The findings revealed that the most commonly used electronic marketing practices by Safaricom Limited were as follows: social media marketing; audience participation, viral campaigns, customer feedback, offline communication; direct email, online partnership; widget marketing, affiliate marketing, online public relation; publisher outreach, brand protection, search engine optimization and paid search.

Also, the findings revealed the effect of e-marketing on customer patronage. From the result obtained from the analysis, the effect of e-marketing include: increase client base, increase internet awareness, create job opportunity and improve sales. This result is in accordance with Media System Dependency theory as postulated by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin Defleur (1976). Media System Dependency Theory ties together the interrelations of broad social systems, mass media, and the individual into a comprehensive explanation of media effects. The basic dependency hypothesis states that the more a person depends on media to meet needs, the more important media will be in a person's life, and therefore the more effect media will have on a person. Dependency on media emerges from three relationships. **The relationship between the society and the media:** Within this relationship, media access and availability are regarded as important antecedents to an individual's experience with the media. **The relationship between the media and the audience:** This relationship is the key variable in this theory because it affects how people might use a mass medium. **The relationship between the society and the audience:** The societies influence consumers' needs and motives

for media use, and provide norms, values, knowledge, and laws for their members.

It was also found out that the benefits of e-marketing include; wider prospect reach, cost-effective approach, reduction in cost through automation and use of electronic media, 24/7 marketing, personalized one-on-one marketing, increased interactivity and increased ability to track results. This result is in line with Merisavo (2008) that stated that the benefits of e-marketing include wider prospect reach, reduction in cost through automation and use of electronic media, 24/7 marketing, personalized one-on-one marketing and increased interactivity.

Finally, it was found out that the challenges of e-marketing include among others marketing integration, privacy, increased integration with social networks, trigger-based e-mail and special issues on e-marketing. This study compliments that of Clown and Baak (2013) that stated that all business processes has its own challenges and overcoming those challenges will help to increase customer patronage. Also, the website will never be visited if there are no links to it. Viral marketing requires email or social media websites to communicate the message and search engines are useless without websites to link to it.

## CONCLUSION

This work attempted to evaluate the e-marketing strategies and customer patronage of selected hotels in Umuahia North L.G.A of Abia state. The various extent of utilization of e-marketing by hotels were identified. Also the effect of e-marketing on hotel patronage was identified as well as the challenges of e-marketing. The study showed that the use of e-marketing influences patronage in hotels in Umuahia North Local Government area of Abia State. Specifically, e-marketing is utilized in a very high extent by many hotels in Umuahia North L.G.A Abia State; it is very effective in increasing customer patronage and is of great benefit though it is faced with some challenges. These findings will be used as a guide on areas of improvement to effectively realize the benefits of electronic marketing and its contribution to customer patronage

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were drawn from the findings of this work:

1. Hotels that have not incorporated e-marketing as part of their marketing strategy should try and incorporate it as it has a positive way of improving

customer patronage.

2. The importance of e-marketing cannot be over emphasized as it has been shown to have a great effect on hotels.

3. Hotels should use good strategies to eradicate or minimize the challenges facing e-marketing so that they can fully enjoy the benefits.

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# WHAT IS HATMAN?

It is the professional body for the international hospitality industry. With around 3,000 members in 36 states in Nigeria and Abuja, the *Hospitality and Tourism Management Association of Nigeria* (HATMAN) is recognized throughout the nation.

Established in 1999, HATMAN's national influence brings together individuals from all sectors of the hospitality and tourism industry – airlines, resorts, hotels, contract catering, restaurants, fast food, pubs and clubs, hospitals, education, armed forces and the teaching profession.

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### **ASSOCIATE (AHATMAN)**

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- Continuing Professional Development: Have shown evidence of an ongoing commitment to Continuing Professional Development

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- Have made a significant personal contribution to the industry.
- Have been in a Senior Management position for at least 5 years
- Have been a Full Corporate Member (MHATMAN) of the association for at least five years or at the discretion of the Executive Council be considered for direct entry in accordance with the relevant constitutional provisions.
- Should be able to demonstrate a significant contribution to the aims and work of the association.
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- Applications for upgrading to Fellowship shall be supported by two Fellows of the association, who shall have knowledge of the candidate for THREE years immediately preceding the application. Referees must not be members of the applicant's immediate family circle.

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In exceptional circumstances, the National Executive Council may admit directly into Fellowship, individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the industry. They must be able and willing, in the view of the Executive Council, to personally advance the objectives of the Association and encourage others to pursue these objectives throughout a major segment of the industry. They should be supported by three Fellows of the Hospitality and Tourism Management Association of Nigeria, one of whom acts as proposer. This method of entry into Fellowship is not available by application; it is invitation only.

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