

# Analyzing websites in terms of digital marketing: A research on five-star hotel businesses in Istanbul

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**Abstract:** This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of digital marketing services offered in the corporate websites of five-star hotel businesses operating in Istanbul (Türkiye). In this study, the websites of 130 five-star hotel businesses in Istanbul, Türkiye, are analysed using content analysis, a qualitative research method. The digital marketing performance of these hotels is evaluated based on nine dimensions and 63 criteria. The results show that the websites of these hotel businesses are “poor” in terms of being mobile-friendly; “inadequate” in terms of sales promotion, different language options and online promotion; “fairly adequate” in terms of communication information, public relations and social media links; “good” in terms of direct sales; and “excellent” in terms of the services provided. Overall, this study concludes that the websites of the five-star accommodation businesses operating in the destination of Istanbul show “poor” digital marketing performance.

**Keywords:** Digital marketing; hotel businesses; websites; Istanbul.

## **Análisis de sitios web en términos de marketing digital: Una investigación sobre negocios hoteleros de cinco estrellas en Estambul**

**Resumen:** Este estudio tiene como objetivo investigar la efectividad de los servicios de marketing digital ofrecidos en los sitios web corporativos de empresas hoteleras de cinco estrellas que operan en Estambul (Turquía). En este contexto, se analizan mediante análisis de contenido los sitios web de 130 empresas hoteleras de cinco estrellas en Estambul, Turquía. Su desempeño en marketing digital se evalúa en función de nueve dimensiones y 63 criterios. Los resultados muestran que los sitios web de estas empresas hoteleras son ‘pobres’ en términos de compatibilidad con dispositivos móviles, ‘inadecuados’ en términos de promoción de ventas, diferentes opciones de idiomas y promoción en línea, ‘bastante adecuados’ en términos de información de comunicación, relaciones públicas y enlaces a redes sociales, ‘buenos’ en términos de venta directa y ‘excelentes’ en términos de los servicios prestados. En general, este estudio concluye que los sitios web de las empresas de alojamiento de cinco estrellas que operan en el destino Estambul tienen un rendimiento de marketing digital “pobre”.

**Palabras clave:** Publicidad digital; Negocios hoteleros; Sitios web; Estambul.

## **1. Introduction**

Websites allow consumers to research and purchase all the services and products necessary to make their trip (Leite and Azevedo, 2017; Van Huy et al., 2024). In the tourism industry and for hotel businesses, websites represent a significant communication tool for consumers and serve as

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a bridge between the hotel and its guests (Chang and Chen, 2008; Hahn et al., 2017). For all these reasons, the functionality of websites has an impact on the use and purchase intention of tourists. This makes it important to design websites in a way that can satisfy the needs of tourists (Chang et al., 2014; Türker, 2020). The success of hotels is influenced by certain aspects such as the design, visuality, ease of use, experience offered, information and communication in their websites, as well as their concreteness, reliability, responsiveness and supportability. In fact, consumers prefer businesses for reasons such as their ability to offer easy booking options in their websites, to create solutions for domestic and international customers, and to give direct access to authorized persons for any transaction (Li et al., 2017; Dimitrios et al., 2023). That said, businesses should design impressive and appealing websites considering the characteristics of their target audience. Hotel businesses also should be able to meet the expectations of visitors through the menus and headings on their websites, and to produce content and solutions that are easy to use and effective. Further, the compatibility of websites with devices such as phones and tablets is considerably important in today's technology-driven world.

Nowadays, the use of digital marketing activities has become requisite for hotels to survive. The features of the websites of hotel businesses are critical for the effective use of digital marketing and competitive advantage (Ercan, 2020). These being said, the main purpose of this study is analyzing the websites of five-star hotel businesses in Istanbul in terms of digital marketing features. To do so, this study identifies the features of the websites of the five-star hotel businesses operating in Istanbul, which is the most visited city in Türkiye and one of the top ten most visited cities in the world (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, 2023; Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2023), based on the literature, and examines these websites in terms of certain dimensions and criteria. It is remarkable that research into websites in the related literature have been on the rise due to developments in information communication technology; such research has focused mostly on an overall review of websites. There are numerous studies on websites in Turkish literature; however, although available research offers a review of the website of hotel businesses, there has been no study that specifically focuses on Istanbul in this regard, which underlines the significance and uniqueness of this study.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

With the tourism industry being characterized by a different set of online channels, it is imperative for tourism marketers to find effective marketing tools and strategies to be aware of how tourists access information and maintain their presence (Angeloni & Rossi, 2021). Meanwhile, tourists resort to the internet technologies for reasons such as searching for information, making reservations or bookings, and making payments. The internet is an effective tool that operates, integrates most of the commercial activities, including controls, advertising, marketing and distribution activities of goods and information services, and that transforms the planning methods of the hospitality sector (Kasavana & Cahill, 1997; Wan, 2002). Therefore, the success of tourism businesses operating today largely depends on the use of digital technology and marketing strategies. Knowing what consumers want and need when using digital marketing tools is critical for a marketer to succeed (Persaud & Azhar, 2012; Deb et al., 2024). Digital marketing is an approach that covers all marketing channels and methods to promote products or services on the Internet, as well as on electronic devices such as television, mobile phones, and electronic billboards (Khmiadashvili, 2019). It also provides two-way communication between the business and consumers and makes it easier for the business to better understand its target audience and their needs. Additionally, digital marketing offers direct, affordable and more personalized communication than other types of marketing. It enables communication at any time of the day and anywhere in the world, without geographical or time limitations (Dimitrios et al., 2023).

The tourism industry includes all the people, activities, and organizations that provide services to people on vacation, like hotels, restaurants and tour guides. With digitalization, users can compare businesses from all over the world to purchase tourism-related services online from digital channels. Also, on the Internet, consumers have the ability and potential to communicate with other consumers. As mentioned above, internet technologies facilitate the accessibility of tourism-related services through consumer-friendly services. Therefore, tourism businesses resort to digital technologies to boost their recognition and brand image (Gupta, 2019; Apio et al., 2024). There are

various means through which digital marketing applications can be successfully and effectively used. Those that stand out among these means are a high-quality website, a strong social media presence, search engine optimization, e-mail marketing, impressive content, and mobile-friendly features. Websites, which are also the subject of this study, are remarkable in the establishment of an online business or trading. Marketing specialists create high-quality and effective websites, develop applications for consumers to visit websites and ensure the website traffic (Kotler et al., 2010; Saura, 2020). Websites act as a direct link between the hotel and its guests in meeting the customer's needs. Nowadays, travelers will use online booking applications to easily choose their accommodation. In addition to providing quality service to its visitors, the hotel's website reduces costs and saves time (Jawabreh et al., 2022).

The content and structure of websites are of particular significance throughout the tourism industry, especially in the service sector. The quality of a website pertains to components such as security, enjoyment, information quality, ease of use and service quality. Website design is crucial in determining its features and key in achieving the quality of service offered to customers through the website (Hasanov & Khalid, 2015; Mamakou et al., 2024). Websites are digital targets with which a business can define its brand experience. A good website should be clear and understandable, and the services provided on the website should be clearly listed. A good website also reflects the quality that hotels represent. Thus, adding high-resolution images and examples of various services offered in hotel rooms, food and beverage areas, pool, beach, and SPA enables users to make informed decisions. Here, it is important to leave enough space between the images and texts used on websites. Websites should be designed in a way that allows users to make purchases without the need for any assistance (Wang & Law, 2020). For this reason, websites should be updated regularly, considering changing consumer needs and preferences (Chang & Chen, 2008; Kaur, 2017).

Today, increased digitalization in all areas have attracted a growing scholarly interest in digitalization. Numerous studies in the field of tourism and hotel businesses have investigated websites to the date. These studies have focused on one or all aspects of the performance of such websites. The study by Baloglu and Pekcan (2006) examined the design features (interaction, navigation, and functionality) and marketing practices of the websites of an elite hotel group in Türkiye. Their study ascertained that hotels in Türkiye are not able to take advantage of the full potential of the Internet, regardless of the type of hotel, and that digital marketing strategies are not applied effectively by hotels. Bayram and Yaylı (2009) assessed the websites of four and five-star accommodations businesses throughout Türkiye and evaluated the websites of 295 hotel businesses based on 51 different criteria. They concluded that these hotel businesses offer convenient menus, and that the design of their websites is user-friendly. The stand-out features of the convenient menus in these businesses include fast downloads, fast-loading pages, and homepage overlay. Dimitrios et al., (2023) conducted a study to evaluate the most current applications of digital marketing and the social media (such as Facebook, Trip-advisor) used by luxury hotels and their guests and determined that social media plays an important role in the marketing of luxury hotels.

Research offering an analysis of websites for the destination of Istanbul, which is the destination focused on this study, have mostly concentrated on how the promotion tools in the websites influenced customer preferences, instead of presenting a general evaluation of the websites. Regarding the websites of the hotel businesses that operate in the city of Istanbul, the scholarly debate has revolved around e-complaint management (Alrawadie and Demirkol, 2015), relationship between customer and loyalty programs (Özer, 2015), smart hotel applications (Atay et al. 2019), and the use of QR codes by businesses (Şimşek and Cinnioglu, 2020).

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Research universe and sample

The research universe included the websites of five-star hotel businesses with a tourism business certificate that operate in Istanbul. In selecting the businesses in the research universe, the distribution of the hotel businesses in Türkiye was taken into account. Istanbul is one of the cities that accommodate most hotel businesses across the country and has a significant tourism potential, which was an important factor in selecting the businesses in Istanbul for the research universe. The reason why only five-star hotel businesses are included is the assumption that these businesses have more professional and institutional structures. Sometimes it is not possible to reach the whole universe in

scientific research. In that case, the research universe can be represented through a sample selected from within the research universe using a specific method. But in cases where the universe is limited, it is possible to reach the entire universe, which is called complete enumeration (Saunders et al., 2000; Ural and Kılıç, 2006: 33-34). With the appraisal that it is possible to reach the entire universe, this study uses complete enumeration, instead of a certain sampling method.

According to the list of Tourism Business Certified Facilities on the website of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic, Directorate General of Investments and Enterprises, there are 131 five-star hotel businesses that operate in Istanbul (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2023). The website of one of these businesses is not currently accessible. Thus, this study analyzes the websites of 130 five-star hotel businesses that operate in the city of Istanbul based on the determined criteria. Considering the frequent updates to the websites of the hotels, the examination process was limited to 7 days; the analysis on the websites was performed from January 23rd to January 29th, 2023.

3.2. Research method

This study benefits from content analysis, which is one of the qualitative research methods, to examine the websites of the hotel businesses. Accordingly, it utilizes an evaluation form for websites, which was created to obtain the relevant data considering the related literature. A total of 63 criteria under nine different dimensions were identified for assessing the websites of the hotel businesses in relation to their digital marketing activities. The criteria used by Ercan (2020) were based in determining these criteria. The evaluation criteria consist of the following dimensions: communication information, language options, services provided, social media links, sales promotion, public relations, direct sales, online promotion, and mobile application. The criteria in the evaluation form were coded either “available” or “NA”. After coding, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The frequency and percentage values obtained from these analyses were used to determine the performances of the websites of the hotel businesses. The percentage values and the performance levels corresponding to these values are presented in a table (Table 1).

Table 1: The Range of Values and the Performance Levels

Range of Value (%)	Level of Performance
0-19.99	Poor
20.00-39.99	Inadequate
40.00-59.99	Fairly Adequate
60.00-79.99	Good
80.00-100	Excellent

Source: Authors own work.

4. Findings

This section presents information on the digital marketing activities identified in the websites of the 130 hotels included in this study based on the specified dimensions and criteria. First, the performance dimensions of their websites are analyzed based on different criteria; then, all the performance dimensions are evaluated in general and presented in tables.

4.1. Findings on sales promotion tools

Sales promotion activities include many elements aimed at facilitating the sale of products and services offered by businesses. Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage values of the sales promotion tools available in the websites of the hotel businesses based on 14 criteria.

Overall, the inclusion of the criteria for sales promotion tools in the websites of the hotel businesses is “inadequate” (22.31%). It is remarkable that the most frequently used sales promotion tools on the websites of the hotel businesses examined in this study are, respectively, as follows: packages/ deals (51.54%), discounts (46.15%), club/loyalty cards (memberships) (44.62%), e-newsletter (33.85%), and best

price guarantees (33.85%). This means that the websites of the hotel businesses often do not present certain sales promotion tools such as offers, web opportunities, and 2D codes.

Table 2: Distribution of Criteria Related to Sales Promotion Tools

Sales Promotion Tools	Available		NA	
	n	(%)	n	(%)
Offers	21	16,15	109	83,85
Promotions	31	23,85	99	76,15
Score	28	21,54	102	78,46
Complimentary Gifts / Treats	3	2,31	127	97,69
Opportunities	34	26,15	96	73,85
Discounts	60	46,15	70	53,85
Packages / Deals	67	51,54	63	48,46
E-newsletters	44	33,85	86	66,15
Club / Loyalty Cards (Memberships)	58	44,62	72	55,38
Sales Contract	2	1,54	128	98,46
2D Codes	8	6,15	122	93,85
Feedback Surveys	1	0,77	129	99,23
Web Opportunities	5	3,85	125	96,15
Best Price Guarantees	44	33,85	86	66,15
TOTAL	406	22,31	1414	77,69

Source: Authors own work.

4.2. Findings on contact information

Communication is one of the most valued matters by people. Especially for consumers, accessibility may be a reason for preferring or not preferring a specific business. Based on the obtained data, Table 3 offers the frequency and percentage data for the 11 criteria of the dimension of contact information in the websites of the businesses.

Table 3: Distribution of Criteria Related to Contact Information

Contact Information	Available		NA	
	n	(%)	n	(%)
Phone Number	130	100	0	0
Mobile Phone Number	11	8,46	119	91,54
Fax Number	56	43,08	74	56,92
E-mail	127	97,69	3	2,31
Call Center	12	9,23	118	90,77
Address	130	100	0	0
Contact Form	60	46,15	70	53,85
Live Assistant	24	18,46	106	81,54
Map & Location	101	77,69	29	22,31
Navigation & Route	43	33,08	87	66,92
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)	13	10	117	90
TOTAL	707	49,44	723	50,56

Source: Authors own work.

All of the hotel businesses (100%) present their phone number and address in their websites; almost all of them (97.69%) offer their e-mails, and the vast majority of them (77.69%) provide information about map and location. Overall, contact information in the websites of the hotel businesses is “fairly adequate” (49.44%). It is notable that there are only few hotel businesses that include call center and live assistant information on their websites, where guests visiting their websites can get information about the business 24/7.

4.3. Findings on different language options

It is important for hotel businesses to offer different language options on their websites so that foreign visitors can have information about the business. Table 4 indicates the distribution of the frequency and percentage values based on the seven criteria of the dimension of different language options available on the websites of the hotel businesses examined in this study.

Table 4: Distribution of Criteria Related to Different Language Options

Different Language Options	Available		NA	
	n	(%)	n	(%)
Turkish	119	91,54	11	8,46
English	102	78,46	28	21,54
German	24	18,46	106	81,54
Russian	22	16,92	108	83,08
Chinese	22	16,92	108	83,08
Arabic	21	16,15	109	83,85
French	15	11,54	115	88,46
Other	15	11,54	115	88,46
TOTAL	340	32,69	700	67,31

Source: Authors own work.

The criteria for different language options in the websites of the hotel businesses are generally rated as “inadequate” (32.69%). The most common language options on the websites of the businesses are Turkish (91.54%) and English (78.46%). Although all the businesses included in this research are located in the province of Istanbul, 11 businesses do not offer the Turkish language option on their websites. Another striking finding is that the websites of the hotel businesses offer other language options. Respectively, German (18.46%), Russian (16.92%), Chinese (16.92%), Arabic (16.15%), and French (11.54%) are the most common language options following Turkish and English available on the websites. Given the distribution of tourists visiting Türkiye by their nationalities, it is also remarkable that the businesses rarely include Russian and German options on their websites. Other than these options, the websites of the five-star hotel businesses in Istanbul offer different language options too. 10 of them offer Spanish; 9 offer Korean; 8, Portuguese; 3, Japanese and Italian; 1, Spanish, Czech and Dutch.

4.4. Findings on public relations tools

Public relations is pivotal for businesses to communicate more effectively with consumers in the target market. This study, for this reason, analyzes whether the websites of the hotel businesses include public relations tools in their websites. Table 5 presents the distribution of the frequency and percentage values based on the seven criteria of the dimension of public relations tools available on the websites of the hotel businesses.

The criteria on public relations tools in the websites of the hotel businesses are “fairly adequate” (44.73%). The vast majority (90%) of the websites of the businesses contain business information. Also,

the websites include awards - certifications (52.31%), memberships (50.77%) and destination information (48.46%). Although most of the businesses provide business information on their websites, a significant part of them includes public relations tools less often.

**Table 5: Distribution of Criteria Related to Public Relations Tools**

Public Relations Tools	Available		NA	
	n	(%)	n	(%)
Business Information	117	90	13	10
Mission - Vision	10	7,69	120	92,31
Awards - Certifications	68	52,31	62	47,69
Quality Policy	42	32,31	88	67,69
Hotel News	41	31,54	89	68,46
Destination Information	63	48,46	67	51,54
Memberships	66	50,77	64	49,23
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>44,73</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>55,27</b>

Source: Authors own work.

#### 4.5. Findings on direct sales marketing

Communication is a sine qua non for the successful execution of direct sales marketing activities. For businesses to make sales directly to consumers without the need for any intermediary, they must include all the information needed by the consumer on their websites. Table 6 presents the distribution of the frequency and percentage data based on the seven criteria of the dimension of direct sales marketing available on the websites of the hotel businesses.

**Table 6: Distribution of Criteria Related to Direct Sales Marketing**

Direct Sales Marketing	Available		NA	
	n	(%)	n	(%)
Online Booking	125	96,15	5	3,85
Room Rate	123	94,62	7	5,38
Additional Fees	115	88,46	15	11,54
Customer Relations	125	96,15	5	3,85
Free Services	119	91,54	11	8,46
Guest Book	4	3,08	126	96,92
Hotel Reviews	29	22,31	101	77,69
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>70,33</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>29,67</b>

Source: Authors own work.

Based on the criteria related to direct sales marketing, the inclusion of these tools in the websites of the hotel businesses is, overall, “good” (70.33%). The criteria of online booking (96.15%), customer relations (96.15%), room rate (94.62%), free services (91.54%), and additional fees (88.46%) are widely available in the websites of the hotel businesses. Regarding direct sales marketing tools, a striking finding is that the websites of the hotel businesses often do not include guest books and hotel reviews. Given that today’s consumers make the purchase decision using the experiences of other consumers prior to purchasing products or services, it is remarkable that the hotel businesses include user experiences, especially hotel reviews, on their websites less often.



4.6. Findings on social media connections

Social media is one of the effective communication methods widely used today. This study examines whether the websites of the hotel businesses include social media links or not. Table 7 indicates the distribution of the frequency and percentage data based on the nine criteria of the dimension of social media links available on the websites of the hotel businesses.

Table 7: Distribution of Criteria Related to Social Media Links

Social Media Links	Available		NA	
	n	(%)	n	(%)
Facebook	107	82,31	23	17,69
Twitter	81	62,31	49	37,69
Instagram	110	84,62	20	15,38
YouTube	55	42,31	75	57,69
TripAdvisor	21	16,15	109	83,85
Pinterest	20	15,38	110	84,62
LinkedIn	31	23,85	99	76,15
Other	11	8,46	119	91,54
TOTAL	436	41,92	604	58,08

Source: Authors own work.

Notably, the majority of the hotel businesses have Instagram (84.62%) and Facebook (82.31%) links on their websites. The links that are more available in the websites of the hotel businesses than others are as follows: Twitter (62.31%), YouTube (42.31%), LinkedIn (23.85%). Based on the criteria related to social media links, the inclusion of these links in the websites of the hotel businesses is, overall, “fairly adequate” (41.92%). Despite the active and intensive use of social media among people in today’s life, the lack of sufficient information about social media links on the websites of these businesses can be considered as an important weakness.

4.7. Findings on online promotion tools

Experiencing the products or services offered by a hotel business is only possible through visiting that business. However, people have the opportunity to visually examine the hotel businesses they intend to go to in detail, thanks to online promotional tools such as virtual tours and promotional videos. For this reason, this study also analyzes whether the websites of the hotel businesses include online promotion tools or not. Table 8 offers the frequency and percentage data based on the four criteria of the dimension of online promotion tools available on the websites of the hotel businesses.

Table 8: Distribution of Criteria Related to Online Promotion Tools

Online Promotion Tools	Available		NA	
	n	(%)	n	(%)
Promotional Videos	11	8,46	119	91,54
Hotel Photos	129	99,23	1	0,77
Promotional Texts	8	6,15	122	93,85
Virtual Tours	6	4,62	124	95,38
TOTAL	154	29,62	366	70,38

Source: Authors own work.



Based on the criteria related to online promotion tools, the inclusion of these tools in the websites of the hotel businesses examined in this study is, overall, “inadequate” (29.62%). Almost all of the hotel businesses (99.23%) present hotel photos as an online promotion tool on their websites. The following online promotion tools are rarely used in the websites of the hotel businesses: promotional videos (8.46%), promotional texts (6.15%), and virtual tours (4.62%). The relative lack of online promotion tools such as promotional videos and virtual tours in hotel businesses, where one can only experience the services and products offered through visit, can be considered as a major shortcoming.

#### 4.8. Findings on accessibility information

Websites must be usable by all users. Accessibility provides important convenience, especially for disabled users to effectively use websites. This study also examines the accessibility levels of the websites of the hotel businesses; Table 9 shows the distribution of the related frequency and percentage data.

**Table 9: Distribution Related to Accessibility Information**

Accessibility Information	Available		NA	
	n	(%)	n	(%)
Accessibility	41	31,54	89	68,46
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>31,54</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>68,46</b>

Source: Authors own work.

Based on the criteria related to accessibility information, the inclusion of such information in the websites of the hotel businesses is, overall, “inadequate” (31.54%).

#### 4.9. Findings on mobile-friendly features

With easier access to the Internet being offered via mobile devices, it has become much more crucial for businesses to have mobile-friendly features on their websites. This study probes into the mobile-friendly features of the websites of the hotel businesses. Table 10 presents the frequency and percentage data based on the three criteria of the dimension of mobile-friendly features available on the websites of the hotel businesses.

**Table 10: Distribution of the Criteria on Mobile-Friendly Features**

Mobile-Friendly Features	Available		NA	
	n	(%)	n	(%)
Website	21	16,15	109	83,85
Redirecting Users to the Application	15	11,54	115	88,46
WhatsApp	19	14,62	111	85,38
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>14,10</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>85,90</b>

Source: Authors own work.

Based on the criteria related to mobile-friendly features, the inclusion of these features in the websites of the hotel businesses is, overall, “poor” (14.10%). The websites of the hotel businesses have the following mobile-friendly features most rarely: websites (16.15%), WhatsApp (14.62%), and redirecting users to the application (11.54%).

#### 4.10. Overall performances of the hotel businesses regarding digital marketing activities

Table 11 shows the performance values and indicators of the websites of the hotel businesses examined in this study in terms of the dimensions of sales promotion tools, hotel contact information, different language options, public relations tools, direct sales marketing, social media links, online promotion tools, the services provided, and mobile-friendly features.

The websites of the hotel businesses have “poor” performance in terms of mobile-friendly features (10.80%), “inadequate” performance in terms of sales promotion (22.92%), different language options (32.69%), online promotion tools (29.62%), accessibility (31.54%); “fairly adequate” performance in terms of hotel contact information (49.44%), and public relations tools (44.73%), and social media links (41.92%); “good” performance in terms of direct sales marketing (70.33%). Besides, the overall performance of the websites of the hotel businesses for digital marketing is “inadequate” (37.04%).

**Table 11: Performance Values and Indicators by Dimensions**

Dimensions	Number of Criteria	Performance Value (%)	Performance Indicator
Sales Promotion Tools	14	22,31	Inadequate
Contact Information	11	49,44	Fairly Adequate
Different Language Options	8	32,69	Inadequate
Public Relations Tools	7	44,73	Fairly Adequate
Direct Sales Marketing	7	70,33	Good
Social Media Links	8	41,92	Fairly Adequate
Online Promotion Tools	4	29,62	Inadequate
Accessibility Information	1	31,54	Inadequate
Mobile-Friendly Features	3	10,80	Poor
OVERALL PERFORMANCE	Dimension / Criterion (9 / 63)	37,04	Inadequate

Source: Authors own work.

5. Conclusion, Discussion, and Suggestions

In today’s globalization activities, hotel businesses carry out their promotional and marketing activities and communicates with their current and potential customers (guests) through their websites. Websites that allow online booking are particularly a major communication tool for corporate hotel businesses. Effective and efficient use of websites, which are one of the effective means of digital marketing activities, are among the factors that enhance the success and performance criteria of hotel businesses.

Investigating the websites of the five-star hotel businesses in Istanbul in terms of digital marketing, this study has examined these websites based on the dimensions of dimensions of sales promotion tools, hotel contact information, different language options, public relations tools, direct sales marketing, social media links, online promotion tools, the services provided, and mobile-friendly features. This study concludes that the inclusion of sales promotion tools on the websites of the hotel businesses are not adequate (22.31%). Indeed, Ercan (2020), who examined digital marketing performance based on the websites of the resort hotel businesses, also reported that their websites are lacking in terms of sales promotion tools (22.92%). Regarding the inclusion of sales promotion tools in the websites of the hotels, the finding of this study is congruent with that of Ercan (2020). This study reveals that all the hotel businesses, except for one, do not offer feedback/surveys in their websites; all of them, except for two, do not include sales contracts in their websites; lastly, sales promotion tools such as offers, web opportunities and 2D codes are rarely available in the websites of the hotel businesses. Obtaining feedback from consumers through its website is crucial for the business to be able to identify its shortcomings and enhance its strengths further. Also, the inclusion of sales contracts in websites would make consumers feel confident in preferring one business over the other. Sales promotion activities consist of tools that can significantly increase the sales of products and services offered by businesses. For this reason, hotel businesses need to use their websites very actively for sales promotion.

This study ascertains that the inclusion of contact information in the websites of the hotel businesses is adequate (49.44%). It further determines that all the hotel businesses offer their phone numbers in their websites, but fail to provide adequate information on call center, mobile phone number, live assistant and frequently asked questions. This may be because the hotel businesses reach consumers through tour operators and travel agencies. Still, the lack of due attention by the hotel businesses that

operate in a highly competitive market to communication with consumers can be regarded as a major shortcoming.

Availability of different language options on the websites of hotel businesses is particularly significant important for foreign visitors to obtain information about the business and to decide to choose that business. This study also ascertains that the availability of different language options on the websites of the hotel businesses is inadequate (36.26%). It is further striking that very few hotel businesses include Russian and German (18.46% / 16.92%) options on their websites. For Istanbul, which is the destination most visited by German and Russian tourists, the lack of sufficient language support in the websites of these hotels represents an important shortcoming. Ultimately, not only the visitors who purchase package tours and book their trips to Istanbul through travel agencies and tour operators, but also those who travel on their own, visit Istanbul, and these solo tourists decide on the business where they will accommodate more often through its website. For this reason, availability of different language options in the websites of hotel businesses can allow the tourists visiting Istanbul to contact them without any intermediaries such as agencies or tour operators.

In digital marketing, reaching consumers directly without intermediaries is essential for purchasing activities. For this reason, businesses need to structure their websites in such a way that consumers can access information on reservations, room rates, free services without the need for any intermediary. This study finds that the hotel businesses include direct sales marketing tools on their websites overall at a good level (70.33%). However, it should be noted that the websites of the hotel businesses do not offer adequate information on the visitor book and hotel reviews as direct sales marketing tools. In fact, Ateş and Boz (2015) concluded that information such as online comments, complaints, and suggestion forms are not adequately included on the websites of hotel businesses. On that sense, this study supports the study by Ateş and Boz (2015). Due to the nature of the tourist product, there is no possibility to experience it in advance. For this reason, in choosing a hotel for accommodation, visitors benefit from the experiences of those who previously used the accommodation services of that hotel. In today's world, where information is spreading rapidly, it is important for hotel businesses to include visitor experiences on their websites for digital marketing.

Another finding of this study is that the websites of the hotel businesses are inadequate in terms of social media links (37.27%) and online promotion tools (29.62%). The number of social media users is increasing day by day. The relative absence of social media links on the websites of hotel businesses despite the increasing number of users, perhaps represents a significant shortcoming. Check-ins of visitors in a hotel business and posts shared by them related to a hotel business, will allow many other people to obtain information about that business. Further, as today's consumers have much easier and faster access to information, they decide on a business for accommodation by making an extensive search on different alternatives in the destination they'll be visiting. For this reason, it is pivotal for hotel businesses to include promotional images, texts, and videos related on their websites or social media accounts. This study uncovers that the inclusion of virtual tours in the websites of the businesses is inadequate (4.62%). Assessing the websites of the hotel businesses in the city of Kocaeli, Bayraktar and Üzümcü (2019) concluded that virtual tours are inadequately offered in these websites. It seems that this study supports the study by Bayraktar and Üzümcü (2019) within the relevant literature. Offering virtual tours, through which guests can visit a business virtually, in hotel websites, may considerably attract more guests to that business.

Mobile devices have become an integral part of people today. With advanced technology, many services, including shopping, banking transactions, and so forth, are provided via mobile devices. Recognizing this, this study also examines the websites of the hotel businesses in terms of mobile-friendly features. It concludes that the websites of the hotel businesses are poor (10.80%) in terms of mobile-friendly features. The websites of hotel businesses need to be compatible with mobile devices widely used in daily life.

With the development of technology, digitalization has become inevitable for both people and businesses. Especially from the point of view of businesses, competition on a national scale, along with advanced technology and the digitalization it brings, has led to intense competition on an international scale. This resulted in the need for hotel businesses operating in an intense competitive environment to use their websites effectively with regard to digital marketing. This study reveals that the performance of the hotel businesses in using their websites for digital marketing purposes is inadequate (37.04%). Hotel businesses that intend to avoid the negative effects of competition should use their websites more actively in communicating with guests and for digital marketing purposes.

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