




Influence of optimal room occupancy strategies on revenue maximisation during slack periods in selected 3- to 5-star hotels in Ghana

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ABSTRACT: An organisation's inability to generate adequate income to sustain its business activities poses a significant challenge to maintaining profitability. Employing revenue-maximisation strategies is crucial to securing necessary resources and ensuring the continued success and stability of organisations. The purpose of this study was to examine the strategies adopted to achieve optimum room occupancy during slack periods to maximise revenue in 3–5 star-rated hotels in selected regions of Ghana. The study adopted a descriptive survey and incorporated mixed methods for data collection. The study was guided by neoclassical economic theory. The Yamane formula was used to determine a sample size of 60 hotels rated 3- to 5-star from the study sites. A stratified simple random sampling was employed to select 60 hotels that were used as study sites. In each hotel, eight respondents — general managers and departmental supervisors — were targeted, giving a total of 480 respondents. A purposive sampling method was used to select eight key informants from each category, drawn from the Ghana Tourism Authority and the Association of Hoteliers. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative primary data from general managers and department heads. Key informant interview schedules were used to collect qualitative data from key informants. A multiple linear regression model was used to predict the overall relationship between independent and dependent variables. The analysed data was presented in tables and charts. The results revealed a significant correlation ($R = -0.823 = 82.3\%$) between the strategies employed to achieve optimal room occupancy. Based on the findings, it is recommended that 3- to 5-star-rated hotels in Ghana continue to focus on offering special rates and targeted marketing campaigns to attract guests, as well as collaborating with other stakeholders to expand their reach.

KEYWORDS: Competition, hotel industry, strategic alliances, strategic management, financial performance, Ghana

Introduction

The hospitality industry encompasses the hotel sector, specialising in food and accommodation services. The hospitality industry saw impressive growth, rising from US\$4 390.59 billion in 2022 to US\$4 699.57 billion in 2023, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.0%. This remarkable expansion highlights the industry's resilience and ability to recover from recent challenges (*Hospitality Global Market Report 2023*). Looking ahead, the global hospitality market is expected to reach an astounding US\$5 816.66 billion by 2027, maintaining a CAGR of 5.5% (*Hospitality Global Market Report 2022*). In Ghana, the hotel, travel and tourism industries contributed 3% to the national GDP in 2016, equivalent to 4.9 million Ghanaian cedi (GHC), or USD 1.2 million (Ansah, 2019). The sector's earnings are anticipated to rise by 5.1% in 2027, projecting GDP contributions of GHC 5.2 million (USD 1.2 million) and GHC 8.6 million (USD 2 million) respectively (Ansah, 2019). Despite challenges from the COVID-19 outbreak, Ghana's hotel industry shows promising

prospects for future growth, attributed to government tourism policies aimed at increasing hotel occupancy (Danso et al., 2020).

Revenue maximisation involves implementing management strategies to generate the highest sales of products and services in a firm (Tyburski, 2016). These strategies focus on creating short-term demand for products and services sold at favourable prices to increase revenue (Nagle & Müller, 2017). Introduced in the mid-1980s by Marriott International Hotels, revenue maximisation in the hotel sector involves forecasting demand and providing recommendations for capacity cases (Cross, 2011; Abrate et al., 2019). The 21st century has seen the hotel sector at the forefront of adopting competitive strategies for revenue maximisation (Hao et al., 2020). Despite challenges like high fixed costs and capacity issues, the hospitality industry has successfully implemented revenue maximisation concepts since the 1980s (Dileep & Mathew, 2017; Rodríguez-Algeciras & Talon-Ballesterro, 2017).

Studies, such as the one in Majorca by Vives and colleagues (2018), emphasise the importance of increasing room occupancy

for revenue growth. Global and local research highlights the association between strategic management responses and revenue maximisation, focusing on pricing policies, revenue forecasting, price optimisation and technology (Vives et al., 2018; Abrate et al., 2019; Teemu, 2020). Hotels, facing revenue-loss challenges, often lower prices to attract clients and increase room occupancy. This study aims to investigate strategies for achieving optimum room occupancy during slack periods to maximise revenue in 3–5 star-rated hotels in selected regions of Ghana.

Literature review

Empty rooms or low occupancy rates are the stuff of nightmares for hotel managers. The quest to maintain optimal hotel room occupancy emerges as an important aspect in securing maximum revenue generation (Vives et al., 2018). Low hotel room occupancy is a result of many factors, such as poor marketing, poor quality rooms, low season or slack periods, and high prices. The strategies adopted by hotels to ensure room occupancy include hotel group sales, direct sales, destination marketing, cross-promotions, revenue management sales, guest rewards sales strategy, re-marketing and making guests comfortable by providing them with the right atmosphere (Site Minder, 2021). A study conducted in Taiwan showed that group or package sales have the advantage of increasing room occupancy (Leung, 2019). This method ensures hotels get large bookings that are assured compared to direct sales. Morrison (2022) argued that to increase group sales, it is advisable to deal with event planners and segment customers. A hotel's direct sales strategy is used to target only direct bookings online to ensure adequate revenue collection. For this strategy to yield optimal results, it is vital to invest in an integrated online booking system seamlessly connected to the hotel's website and property management system. Moreover, this platform should be linked to various social media channels, allowing for direct bookings and significantly improving accessibility for potential guests.

In the realm of destination marketing, hotels forge partnerships with tourism professionals to tap into new business prospects (Morrison, 2022). This collaborative approach not only increases referrals, but also boosts room occupancy rates. Complementing this, the cross-promotional strategy identifies and capitalises on local events like conferences and trade fairs throughout the year to enhance hotel revenue (Katemi et al., 2023). These events serve as prime opportunities for hotels to showcase their offerings and attract attendees, further solidifying their market presence. Moreover, branding emerges as another key strategy, aimed at establishing a unique value proposition for the hotel and fostering a favourable image in the minds of potential guests (Demirciftçi & Kizilirmak, 2016). Maximising hotel revenues involves a spectrum of strategies. Ortega (2016) suggests that increasing both occupancy rates and room rates is fundamental to revenue maximisation. Elaborate marketing of products and services through price and customer segmentation is advocated by Abrate et al. (2019) as a means to boost revenue. Furthermore, Roberts (2022) highlights the importance of significant investments in hotel infrastructure to increase room supply during peak periods. Abrate et al. (2019) emphasise the use of marginal cost analysis to optimise revenue, while Liu et al. (2022) caution against excessively high room occupancy rates, which can negatively impact guest experiences. Instead, they

recommend enhancing guest experiences to optimise occupancy rates. Studies by Ivanov and Ayas (2017) and Rodríguez-Algeciras and Talon-Ballesteró (2017) delve into strategies adopted by European hotels to optimise room occupancy rates, with a particular focus on pricing strategies in Turkish hotels. Ivanov and Ayas (2017) observed the wide application of dynamic pricing strategies in Turkey, but noted that their efficacy is influenced by various factors beyond pricing alone, such as online travel agents and tour operators. Thus, the impact of pricing strategies on hotel revenue is contingent upon a multitude of variables. Rodríguez-Algeciras and Talon-Ballesteró (2017) highlighted the utilisation of specific pricing strategies by Spanish hotels to optimise room occupancy rates. Their study, conducted in Barcelona, revealed the widespread adoption of these strategies among revenue managers. However, the decision-making process for dynamic pricing is influenced by external factors, including hotel affiliations. Similarly, Khan and colleagues (2020) investigated revenue management practices in Bangladeshi hotels, identifying a prevalent use of price-related strategies. This observation prompts further exploration into the effects of price variation on revenue maximisation, particularly in regions like Ghana. Uzel (2015) extended this line of inquiry to African hotels, finding a positive correlation between the adoption of pricing strategies and hotel performance across the continent. Murimi et al.'s (2021) study in Kenya underscored the impact of revenue management practices, such as pricing and segmentation, on a hotel's financial performance.

In Ghana, the use of pricing strategies, including premium pricing and price discrimination, has been instrumental in attracting both local and international customers (Zheng & Forgacs, 2017). These strategies capitalise on customer perceptions of product quality and value, as well as leveraging reference pricing to influence purchasing decisions. Despite insights from studies conducted in various regions, such as North America, Turkey, Spain, Bangladesh, Kenya and Ghana, a gap exists in understanding the relationship between room occupancy strategies and revenue maximisation. Addressing this gap, the proposed study aims to investigate the strategies employed by 3–5 star-rated hotels in selected regions of Ghana to achieve optimal room occupancy and maximise revenue.

Our hypothesis (H01) suggests that there is no significant relationship between optimal room occupancy strategies and revenue maximisation in these regions. This study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by shedding light on the effectiveness of room occupancy strategies in maximising revenue in the Ghanaian hospitality industry.

The theory

Using neoclassical economic theory as a guide, this study explores the strategies implemented by hotels to achieve maximum room occupancy. The theory encourages rational decision-making among individuals and businesses, with a focus on utility and profit maximisation, while navigating the limitations of scarcity. Specifically, in the hotel industry, neoclassical economics informs the pursuit of revenue maximisation through effective resource allocation, pricing tactics and customer interaction. According to neoclassical economics, achieving maximum revenue involves balancing supply and demand by setting appropriate prices. In the hospitality industry, hotels employ dynamic pricing tactics to adapt to factors like seasonal

changes, shifts in demand and competitor rates (Aoyagi et al., 2016). By increasing prices during periods of high demand and offering discounts during slower periods, hotels can effectively generate revenue and maintain high occupancy rates. Furthermore, neoclassical economics highlights the significance of effective marketing and promotional efforts in attracting customers and boosting demand. To attract guests and boost demand for their rooms, hotels make strategic investments in targeted marketing initiatives, loyalty programmes and online distribution channels. Through the use of advertising, social media and collaborations with travel agencies, hotels strive to not only fill their rooms, but also increase their revenue (Zhang & Kallesen, 2008). This approach acknowledges the importance of product differentiation in the competitive market of hotels. By offering unique amenities, exceptional services and a strong brand reputation, hotels are able to entice guests and charge premium rates. Hotels can boost their competitive edge and increase their profits by offering one-of-a-kind experiences, tailoring their services to each guest's preferences, and providing additional benefits. This not only leads to higher room occupancy rates, but also encourages effective resource allocation. Revenue management techniques, such as yield management and demand forecasting, allow hotels to strategically set room prices and allocate inventory based on demand patterns and customer segments. This ensures that hotels can optimise revenue by precisely adjusting room rates and availability while also minimising the risk of rooms going unused (Bossan et al., 2015). The theory emphasises the significance of customer satisfaction in generating repeat business and positive recommendations. As a result, hotels prioritise providing exceptional guest experiences through outstanding service, cleanliness and amenities to guarantee guest satisfaction and loyalty. To ensure consistently high occupancy levels and continuous revenue growth, it is crucial for hotels to place a strong emphasis on understanding and catering to the specific needs and preferences of their customers. By prioritising this, hotels can not only attract more guests, but also keep them coming back in the future.

Methodology

The current research employed a descriptive survey approach, aiming for an accurate depiction of optimal room occupancy strategies in Ghana's hotel industry (Kothari, 2014; Creswell, 2018). The study focused on strategic management responses as the independent variable and revenue maximisation as the dependent variable, measured by improved cash flow and reduced operational costs.

The target population comprised 3–5 star-rated hotels, with the units of measurement being the hotels themselves and their departments serving as fundamental domains for comparisons and policy decisions. Seven key areas in the hotels were explored: marketing, reservations/front office, information communication technology, finance/revenue, banquets, human resources and food and beverages. To ensure a comprehensive national overview, representatives from the Ghana Tourism Authority and the Hoteliers Association of Ghana were included in the target population. Yamane's (1967) mathematical formula was used to calculate an adequate sample size. After accounting for an error margin of 4.2%, the estimated sample size was 60 3–5 star-rated hotels, thus, a total of eight respondents per hotel

were selected, from which the total number of respondents for the study was calculated as $8 \times 60 = 480$. A purposive sampling technique was utilised to select two categories of individuals in a chosen hotel, and eight respondents each were chosen from the Ghana Tourism Authority and Ghana Hoteliers Association, bringing the total to 16 respondents.

Data collection involved self-administered questionnaires for hotel managers and departmental heads and an interview schedule for key informants. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, pre-testing was done in the Greater Accra Region to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaires. Reliability was assessed through a Cronbach's alpha coefficient analysis, resulting in a strong reliability score of 0.78, greater than the threshold of 0.7 (Taber, 2018). A research assistant was employed to assist in the distribution of the questionnaires. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the participants from the Ghana Tourism authority and the Ghana Hoteliers Association. Quantitative and qualitative analysis methods were employed in analysing the retrieved data (Orcan, 2020). A factor analysis was utilised to obtain a common construct for optimum room occupancy strategies, and regression analysis was conducted to determine their collective influence on revenue maximisation.

The study's matrix form (Westfall & Arias, 2020) illustrated the impact of independent factors on revenue maximisation in Ghana's hotels. Qualitative data collected through the interview schedules underwent content analysis to identify patterns in both oral and written interviews. Triangulation with quantitative research results involved presenting key voices and narratives alongside the qualitative data.

Ethical considerations were prioritised throughout the research process, guided by the principles outlined by Bell and Wray-Bliss (2009) and Durkheim's (2018) definition of ethics. Research approval letters were secured from the Kenyatta University Post-Graduate Board and the Ghana Tourism Authority, and consent was obtained from outlet management. Clearance letters were obtained from both the Ghana Tourism Authority and the Kenyatta University Post-Graduate Board to ensure ethical compliance in the research process.

Results and discussion

Demographics

Response rates

The study collected data from 496 managers and department heads using questionnaires in selected 3- to 5-star hotels. A total of 487 out of 496 questionnaires were successfully completed, representing a response rate of about 98%. This impressively high response rate shows that the participants were eager to participate and offer their opinions for the study. In research investigations, a high response rate is often preferred since it improves the validity and generalisability of the results. The likelihood that the sample is representative of the population as a whole increases when a significant portion of the target population participates, which improves the study's external validity (Wu, 2021). The high response rate was attributed to the use of a short, structured questionnaire whose items were devoid of ambiguity. It can be attributed to the briefing that was done before administering the questionnaires. In addition, the questionnaires were subjected to piloting, which ensured validity and reliability, and resulted in high response rates. According to Sharma (2020), a response rate of above 50% is

adequate for analysis. In this study, the response rate was 98%, an indicator of a representative sample, thus making the study results valid.

Hotel classification

The study aimed to discern participants' hotel classifications to inform specific strategic responses. Table 1 reveals a substantial majority in 3-star hotels, with 75% of managers and 78% of department heads falling into this category. General managers and department heads from 4-star hotels constituted 20% and 17%, respectively, while only 5% from both categories were from 5-star hotels. The prevalence of 3-star hotels in the survey area suggests their prominence due to budget-friendly pricing compared to higher-rated options. This aligns with Robert's (2022) observation that 3-star hotels often rank third in general, resonating with Tichaawa and Kimbu's (2019) identification of the prevalence of 3-star hotels in sub-Saharan Africa.

Sex

The findings in Table 1 indicate a notable near-sex parity distribution among the respondents, though with a higher proportion of males across both managerial and departmental heads. Specifically, among the managers, approximately 65%, and department heads, around 62% were males. Female representation was evident, with 35% of the managers and 38% of the department heads being women. The findings of this study imply there is no great sex disparity, but there is still space for bridging the gap. The study's discoveries regarding the distribution of sexes among those in managerial

and departmental head positions offer valuable insights into the current gender dynamics at play in organisations. These findings are in line with previous research on unequal gender representation in leadership positions, diversity in the workplace and the obstacles that women encounter while striving for higher positions in the corporate world (Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023). The data reveals a noticeable difference in the number of men holding managerial and departmental head positions compared to women, highlighting a persistent gender disparity in leadership roles. Extensive research has thoroughly examined and recorded the recurring issue of under-representation of women in top positions in organisations. This highlights the concept of the "glass ceiling", a term used to describe the intangible barriers that hinder women from reaching higher leadership positions (Babic & Hansez, 2021). The unequal gender distribution in these roles suggests that women may encounter systemic and cultural obstacles that impede their advancement into leadership.

The findings of this study indicate that implicit biases and gendered hiring practices may be the root causes of the gender imbalance in leadership roles. According to research, ingrained biases can impact decision-making, resulting in a lack of female representation in top positions. Furthermore, biased hiring processes may give preferential treatment to male candidates, even when their qualifications are comparable to those of female candidates. The results of this study are in line with the research work of Deiana and Fabbri (2020), which suggests that women are vastly under-represented in senior management positions in the hospitality industry, holding only 26% of these roles. When excluding jobs in human resources, this number drops even further to just 20%. Similarly, the Castell Project's (2019) findings paint a concerning picture, revealing that a mere 11% of leadership positions in the hotel industry, including directors, presidents, partners, principals, and CEOs, are held by women.

TABLE 1: Demographic characteristics

Variable	Managers (%)	Departmental heads (%)
Hotel classification		
3 star	75.0	78.0
4 star	20.0	17.0
5 star	5.0	5.0
Sex distribution		
Male	65.0	62.0
Female	35.0	38.0
Age group (years)		
18-22	0.0	0.97
23-25	0.0	2.91
25-30	3.0	12.14
31-35	8.0	35.68
36-40	15.0	15.53
41-45	20.0	29.13
Above 45	54.0	3.64
Highest level of education		
Secondary school certificate	1.0	1.7
Diploma	24.5	14.6
Bachelor's	61.0	69.9
Master's degree	13.0	13.6
Doctoral degree	0.5	0.2
Work experience		
Less than 1 year	4.0	3.2
2 years	5.0	3.4
3 years	20.0	3.9
4 years	30.0	23.5
5 years	21.0	25.8
6+ years	20.0	33.3

Age classification

The findings presented by Table 1 provide interesting insights into the age distribution of general managers and department heads. These findings shed light on how age may impact these two distinct groups in an organisational context. According to the research, there is a notable age gap between managers and department heads. The majority of managers (54%) fell into the 45 years old and older age group, indicating that a significant portion of this group had accumulated a wealth of professional experience throughout their careers. This suggests that hotels are staffed with seasoned personnel, a crucial factor in successfully implementing revenue-boosting strategies. Furthermore, the study suggests that the older staff's extensive experience is invaluable in providing mentoring, a vital aspect of the effective management of hotels. Overall, the findings suggest that both managers and department heads possess a considerable amount of experience, as evidenced by their age distributions. The research suggests that as individuals advance in their careers, they acquire valuable expertise, leadership abilities and knowledge through hands-on experience. These results support the notion that people tend to climb the corporate ladder as they gather more experience (Van Iddekinge et al., 2018). The higher percentage of managers who are 45 years old and older indicates that these professionals have probably spent a considerable part of their working lives in managerial roles. This could imply a pattern of slower career progression, or reflect the

organisations preference for retaining experienced individuals in managerial positions.

It is worth noting that a significant number of department heads, specifically the majority, fall within the age bracket of 31 to 45 years old. This suggests that organisations are consciously appointing younger professionals to leadership positions, perhaps as a means of promoting innovation and embracing novel perspectives. The results suggest a subtle correlation between age and leadership positions in a company. The composition of managers and department heads reflects diverse methods for cultivating leadership skills, potentially combining wisdom gained through experience with new and innovative perspectives. However, to fully harness these dynamics, it is crucial for organisations to create a culture that promotes the sharing of knowledge and collaboration among different age groups (Yeboah, 2023). It is worth mentioning that Larsson and Björklund (2021) highlight the impact of age on the leadership styles and attitudes of managers, specifically noting that younger and older managers approach consultation and participation in different ways. The findings of the study reveal that older managers tend to seek wider input and embrace a greater level of participation compared to their younger counterparts. This suggests that the chosen hotels are equipped with experienced staff of 41 years old and older who possess the capability to effectively implement revenue-maximising strategies.

Level of education

The findings of the study draw attention to a noteworthy trend surrounding the academic backgrounds of those in managerial and departmental leadership roles (Table 1). It became clear that a considerable majority of these positions were filled by individuals who held a bachelor's degree. More specifically, about 61% of managers and 69% of departmental heads had attained a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education. In contrast, only a small percentage possessed a secondary level education or lower, comprising less than 1.7% of the total. On the other hand, only a small minority of participants, less than 1%, possessed doctoral degrees, according to the results. These results provide valuable information about the capability of hotel staff to effectively execute revenue maximisation strategies. Furthermore, the majority of both groups of hotel staff held a bachelor's degree, which is considered sufficient for interpreting and implementing revenue maximisation strategies. This suggests that the interviewed managers and department heads were well-equipped to put into practice the adopted strategies for revenue maximisation in their respective hotels. Studies frequently examine the connection between formal education and the chances of rising to leadership positions. While a bachelor's degree is typically a requirement for managerial roles, the importance of advanced degrees may vary depending on the specific field and company. The literature often discusses the degree to which educational qualifications directly translate into leadership abilities and effectiveness. This study's results can spark conversations on whether leadership skills are exclusively obtained through formal schooling, or if they also develop through hands-on experience, guidance from mentors and learning on the job.

It is worth noting that the number of respondents holding master's or doctoral degrees in leadership roles was relatively modest, which may be attributed to research on career progression. It is commonplace for professionals to enter their

career paths with a bachelor's degree and then continue their education while employed. Thus, it is likely that those in later stages of their careers, such as mid-career and beyond, would be more likely to hold advanced degrees, resulting in their under-representation in the surveyed population of managers and department heads. According to the literature, advanced degrees play a significant role in developing expertise and specialisation. This means that individuals holding a master's or doctoral degree may be more commonly found in positions that require deep technical or specialised knowledge, rather than in general managerial or leadership roles. To support the growth of these individuals, organisations may provide leadership development programmes that specifically target those with higher educational qualifications. These programmes serve as a bridge between educational attainment and leadership positions, aiding those with advanced degrees in their journey towards leadership roles. Having individuals with diverse educational backgrounds on leadership teams leads to a wealth of different thoughts and perspectives (Rice-Bailey & Chong, 2023). When leaders with diverse educational qualifications are brought together, they can greatly improve problem-solving and decision-making (Burrell, 2023; Rice-Bailey & Chong, 2023).

Work experience

The study also explored the work experience of managers and department heads in hotels, presenting the results in Table 1. The findings reveal that a substantial percentage of department heads (59.1%) and general managers (41%) have over five years' experience. This expertise is crucial for effective revenue optimisation and strategic guidance. Notably, 91% of managers had more than three years' experience in their current roles, indicating stability and dedication. The contrast in experience between department heads and managers underscores the importance of long-term commitment in managerial positions. The results align with previous studies by Vives et al. (2018) and Walker (2019), supporting the notion that hotels prefer seasoned professionals with significant experience for managerial and leadership roles.

Strategies adopted to achieve optimum room occupancy during slack periods to maximise revenue

The objective of this research sought to establish the strategies adopted by the hotels to achieve optimum room occupancy during the slack periods and to maximise revenue. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the following statements regarding room occupancy maximisation strategies: (1) very low extent; (2) low extent; (3) no extent; (4) large extent; and (5) very large extent. The results are presented in Table 2. The results in Table 2 established that the departmental heads and managers in 3–5 star hotels agreed (mean = 4.38, SD = 0.98), and (mean = 4.58, SD = 0.84) that offering special rates or creating special offers for direct booking has to a great extent aided room occupancy. They also agreed (departmental heads: mean = 4.10, SD = 0.80; managers: mean = 4.63, SD = 0.71) that breaking segments into sub-categories and addressing them differently helps to optimise room marketing strategies to a great extent. They also agreed (departmental heads: mean = 4.24, SD = 0.93; managers: mean = 4.54, SD = 0.75) that collaborating with companies to create an alliance would help maximise room occupancy.

TABLE 2: Strategies adopted to achieve optimum room occupancy

Strategy	Departmental heads		Managers	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
1 Offer special rates, or create special offers for those who book directly through your website	4.38	0.98	4.58	0.84
2 Break segments into subcategories and address them differently to optimise marketing strategy	4.10	0.80	4.63	0.71
3 Collaborate with companies to create an alliance	4.24	0.93	4.54	0.75
4 Add new product features that improve user experience	4.48	0.83	4.64	0.63
5 Take creative approaches during events to attract people and businesses opportunities to maximise revenue	4.42	0.98	4.42	0.79
6 Training employees in room-selling skills	4.42	1.04	4.44	0.79
7 Introduce recreational facilities to increase revenue	4.53	0.77	4.29	0.93
8 Turning one-time visitors into repeat guests	4.50	0.86	4.64	0.66
9 Achieving optimum occupancy during festivals to maximise revenue	4.21	1.05	4.29	0.97
10 Maximise revenue through the use of online bookings	4.61	0.67	4.66	0.66

It was further established that (departmental heads: mean = 4.48, SD = 0.83; managers: mean = 4.64, SD = 0.63) adding new product features improved the user experience. Further, the results established that they agreed (departmental heads: mean = 4.42, SD = 0.98; managers: mean = 4.42, SD = 0.79). Taking creative approaches during events to attract people and businesses helps achieve optimum room occupancy. The respondents also agreed (departmental heads: mean = 4.42, SD = 1.04; managers: mean = 4.44, SD = 0.79) that training employees in room selling skills improves room occupancy. Also, they agreed (departmental heads: mean = 4.53, SD = 0.77; managers: mean = 4.29, SD = 0.93) that introducing recreational facilities increases room revenue. Further, turning one-time visitors into repeat guests helps maximise room sales (departmental heads: mean = 4.50, SD = 0.86; managers: mean = 4.64, SD = 0.66). They also agreed (departmental heads: mean = 4.21, SD = 1.05; managers: mean = 4.29, SD = 0.97) that achieving optimum occupancy during festivals helped to maximise revenue. Finally, the respondents agreed (departmental heads: mean = 4.61, SD = 0.67; managers: mean = 4.66, SD = 0.66) that online bookings helped to maximise room revenue. This aligns with the findings of a study conducted by Koo et al. in 2020, indicating that both 3-5-star hotels and other hotels in Ghana and beyond have the potential to significantly increase their revenue by implementing and activating online booking systems. In recent times, there has been a growing trend of utilising exclusive deals and special pricing for guests who book directly with the hotel. Extensive research has highlighted the potential benefits of this approach, including reducing reliance on third-party online travel agents and improving profit margins by incentivising direct bookings and eliminating costly commission fees (Nguyen et al., 2018). By utilising direct bookings, guests may perceive a greater level of special treatment or added benefits, leading to a stronger sense of brand loyalty. Recent studies have shown that employing price differentiation strategies, such as offering varying rates for different booking platforms or consumer segments, can positively impact hotel occupancy rates. In fact, price-conscious customers are more inclined to book directly with hotels if they feel they are receiving better prices or promotions (Sainaghi et al., 2021). By tailoring pricing tactics to different market categories, hotels can attract a more diverse range of visitors and ultimately increase their room occupancy rates.

In recent years, the growth of online travel agencies (OTAs) has revolutionised the hotel industry. However, this shift has also highlighted the importance of direct hotel bookings, as discussed in current literature (Agag & El-Masry, 2017). To stay ahead of the competition, hotels can implement targeted strategies such as offering discounted rates or extra perks to attract and retain customers who book directly. With the fierce competition between OTAs and direct booking methods, incorporating incentives and pricing strategies to boost hotel reservations and occupancy becomes paramount.

To mutually benefit both parties, it would be advantageous for hotels to establish alliances or partnerships with various companies, such as tour operators, event planners, or popular local attractions. These strategic alliances allow hotels to tap into new markets, expand their reach, and enhance their competitive edge (Oncioiu, 2019). Through collaboration, hotels can leverage the networks, client bases and resources of their partners to attract a larger clientele and increase occupancy rates. Joint promotional efforts, package deals and shared loyalty programmes are just some examples of how working together can add value for visitors and give them compelling reasons to choose one hotel over its competitors. According to the latest literature, departmental heads and managers are in agreement about the significance of segmenting markets into sub-markets and collaborating with businesses to optimise hotel occupancy. By employing these strategies, hotels can effectively target specific consumer segments through their marketing efforts and leverage alliances to boost visitor numbers and solidify their standing in the market.

Recent research has shed light on the vital role of constantly innovating and improving hotel offerings to meet the ever-changing desires and demands of guests. Introducing novel features, amenities, or technologies enables hotels to stand out from their rivals and to offer guests a one-of-a-kind, unforgettable stay (Dixit et al., 2019). Positive guest experiences can result in heightened satisfaction, glowing reviews and ultimately greater occupancy and customer loyalty. These findings reinforce the existing literature in the hotel industry, emphasising the importance of incorporating new product features to enhance the overall user experience as well as implementing creative strategies to attract both individuals and businesses during events. By continuously innovating and being creative in their event strategies, hotels can greatly enhance the overall guest

experience, boost occupancy rates, and achieve a higher level of competitiveness in the market. These events, whether they be conferences, exhibitions, or social gatherings, are valuable opportunities for hotels to attract both individual guests and business clients.

By implementing imaginative and original approaches during these events, hotels are able to differentiate themselves and generate a buzz among potential guests and businesses. This could include providing exclusive event themes, interactive activities, networking options, or partnerships with local vendors or event planners. Hotels have the potential to boost their visibility and attract guests by delivering unforgettable and captivating event experiences. These experiences can also lead to securing future bookings and optimising room occupancy both during and after the event.

According to research, the expertise of well-trained staff plays a crucial role in the hotel's success in converting prospective guests into bookings. Implementing comprehensive training courses that focus on enhancing staff's sales techniques, communication skills and knowledge of hotel inventory and amenities can significantly improve their ability to bring in bookings and positively impact hotel occupancy rates (Yimam, 2022). One way to boost direct bookings and increase hotel occupancy is by having proficient and personable staff members engaging with customers. Not only can they effectively communicate and promote upgrades or additional services, but they can also enhance the overall guest experience. The inclusion of various recreational amenities, such as swimming pools, fitness centres, spas and entertainment spaces, can also attract visitors and improve their stay. Research has shown that the availability of such activities influences guests' decisions and their willingness to pay a higher price. Additionally, by promoting longer stays, repeat bookings and positive word-of-mouth recommendations, these recreational amenities not only add value for guests, but also contribute to the hotel's overall income. Research has repeatedly shown that training staff in effective room-selling techniques and offering attractive recreational facilities are essential steps for hotels looking to boost occupancy rates and income. By investing in personnel training and providing enticing amenities, hotels can enhance the overall guest experience, drive direct bookings, and ultimately achieve higher room occupancy rates and revenue. This focus on customer loyalty and retention aligns with the widespread belief among hotel department heads and managers that converting one-time visitors into repeat customers is crucial for maximising room sales. Studies also highlight the significant value of customer loyalty and the financial benefits of repeat business (Yimam, 2022). To ensure that guests return for future trips, hotels can establish strong connections and offer exceptional experiences. Wai Lai (2019) suggest that building on these strategies can lead to increased room bookings, a rise in revenue and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

A key method for achieving this is by consistently delivering top-notch services, tailoring marketing strategies to individual guests, and implementing loyalty programmes. The shared belief among departmental leaders and managers that reaching peak occupancy during festivals is crucial for maximising profits highlights the understanding that festivals and special events present valuable revenue-boosting opportunities for hotels. As festivals draw in large crowds, the demand for lodging also increases. To capitalise on this opportunity, hotels can

strategically align their marketing efforts, pricing tactics and operational planning with these popular events (Mair & Weber, 2019). By offering festival-specific packages, collaborating with event organisers, and adjusting prices to match demand, hotels can optimise their revenue during these peak times. Moreover, with the vast importance of digital platforms and online travel agencies in the hotel industry, it is apparent that the heads of various departments and general managers are in agreement that online reservations are crucial for maximising room revenue. By effectively utilising digital platforms, hotels can improve their online presence, attract a wider range of customers, and generate higher room revenue. With the rise of online booking platforms and the preference for digital bookings among travellers, it has become crucial for hotels to focus on their online channels. Research has shown that a seamless online booking experience, effective online marketing strategies and user-friendly hotel websites can significantly increase direct bookings and revenue (De Pelsmacker et al., 2018). Additionally, actively managing one's internet reputation and customer reviews can have a significant impact on booking decisions and can ultimately lead to increased sales.

According to recent research (Walker, 2019), implementing a few key strategies can greatly benefit hotels in terms of revenue and room sales. Specifically, focusing on increasing the number of return visitors, capitalising on festival seasons to maximise occupancy, and utilising online booking platforms have all been found to be effective methods. These findings are consistent with prior studies (Walker, 2019) and suggest that by prioritising customer loyalty, leveraging special events and utilising technology, hotels can unlock their full revenue potential. In fact, the study by Walker (2019) echoes these results, emphasising the significant impact that strategies such as online booking, offering competitive rates, partnerships with other businesses and improved services can have on maximising hotel revenue. According to Vouk (2018), successful hotels understand the importance of implementing effective reservation strategies, such as convenient room bookings, discounts and exceptional service from employees, to boost room sales. The departmental heads and managers in the sampled hotels also recognised this concept and utilised these tactics to maximise revenue. These findings highlight the significance of utilising special room rates, discounts and promotional offers to increase room occupancy in hotels.

The study findings on the use of special room rates and differentiated marketing for online room bookings were also posited by one of the key informants in an interview:

The hotel utilises its website for unit promotion, and the operators take on the responsibility of directly promoting room reservations. The establishment ensures optimal room occupancy as part of its self-management strategy (Key informant interview [KII-001], Volta region, 2022)

A member of the Ghana Hoteliers Association provided the following insights on online room reservations.

Online hotel reservations provide guests with the convenience of making bookings around the clock. This is particularly advantageous for international guests, as the online booking platform utilises automated processes, eliminating the need for manual operations. This not only streamlines the booking experience, but also removes the complexity of interacting with human

agents. As a result, individuals can make reservations at any time and receive prompt feedback (Source [KII-002], Accra region, 2022)

The key informant interviews provided valuable insights into a hotel's strategies for managing occupancy and advertising in the Volta region. By emphasising the promotion of their rooms on their website, the hotel is following the trend in the industry of utilising digital platforms for advertising purposes (Siakalli et al., 2017). This approach not only recognises the importance of having an online presence, but also allows the hotel to reach a wider audience and provide comprehensive information (Pereira & Almeida, 2014). Furthermore, the hotel's emphasis on directly promoting room reservations demonstrates a dedication to relationship marketing. This technique focuses on personalised communication to better understand guest preferences and improve overall customer satisfaction (Czinkota et al., 2021). Such a strategy aligns with the concept of establishing long-term connections with guests through tailored experiences.

At the forefront of the hotel's priorities lies the goal of maintaining maximum room occupancy, aligning with established principles of revenue management. In fact, according to Kubickova (2022), revenue management techniques such as strategic pricing and demand forecasting are vital for maximising both occupancy and revenue. This demonstrates the hotel's keen understanding of industry practices. Additionally, by utilising their website as a key marketing tool and personally engaging with guests to secure room bookings, the hotel embodies both traditional and current trends in the hospitality realm. These findings serve as further evidence of the hotel's alignment with proven strategies for successful marketing, guest satisfaction and revenue enhancement.

Special offers to maximise occupancy

Another focus of this study was to examine the different tactics used by 3-5 star hotels to increase their revenue. The data, displayed in Figure 1, reveals that discounts (54.46%) and gift vouchers (43.26%) were the most commonly utilised special offerings to drive room occupancy. Interestingly, the use of competition-based strategies was minimal (2.28%), indicating a clear preference within the hospitality industry for discounts and gift vouchers. These findings support the research of Vives and colleagues (2018) which highlights the positive impact of implementing special offers on room sales. According to Walker (2019), the use of gift vouchers and discounts has become a widely embraced tactic in the hotel industry for driving room

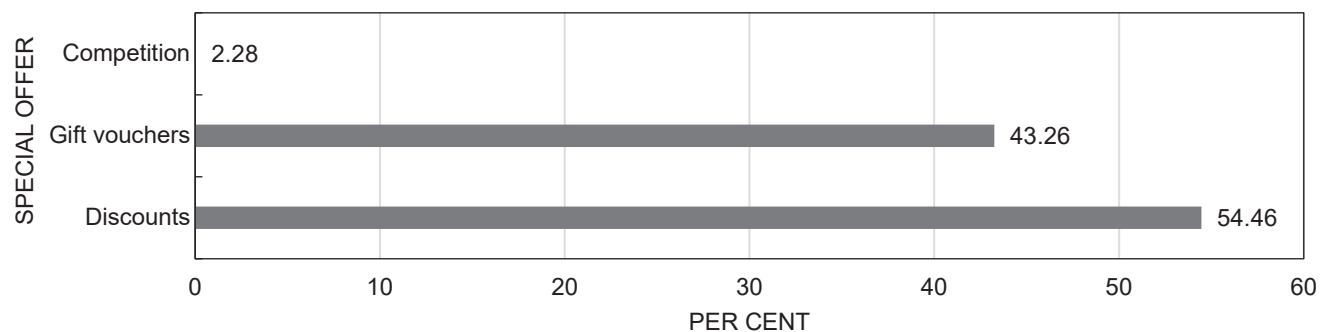


FIGURE 1: Special offers to increase room occupancy

sales. This reinforces the findings of previous studies and highlights the effectiveness of these strategies in attracting guests and maximising room occupancy rates. In fact, both Vives et al. (2018) and Walker (2019) echo this sentiment, further emphasising the significant boost in sales that can be achieved through the application of special offers in room reservations.

Market segmentation

After evaluating the study, it became crucial to identify market segments used by the selected hotels, supported by the focused segmentation analysis in Figure 2. The results revealed significant insights, with 51% of surveyed hotels catering to corporate clients, and 41% targeting group bookings. This trend aligns with Walker's (2019) emphasis on the strategic importance of these segments as top revenue generators. The overlap between the study and Walker's perspective stresses the critical need for hotels to tailor services to corporate and group preferences, resulting in enhanced experiences and substantial financial gains (Walker, 2019).

Reasons for creating strategic alliances with other stakeholders

The research also sought to uncover the motivations behind 3-5 star hotels in Ghana engaging in strategic partnerships with industry counterparts, as visually depicted in Figure 3. The study's findings reveal significant trends in the hospitality

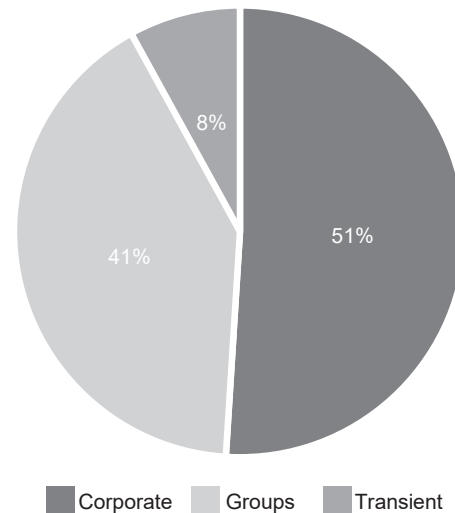


FIGURE 2: Market segmentation

sector regarding alliances with various stakeholders. Notably, 45% of surveyed hotels actively pursued partnerships to harness public feedback, acknowledging its influence on enhancing their offerings. Additionally, 39.5% formed alliances to collaboratively establish and uphold high standards for products and services, reflecting a clever approach to ensuring consistent quality. Intriguingly, in the sample, over 15.5% of hotels opted for franchising when entering new markets, showcasing a strategic expansion method through established partnerships. These results underscore the multifaceted role of strategic alliances in the hotel industry, acting as catalysts for improved service quality, market growth and strategic alignment. This resonates with Culpan's (2008) research, highlighting how such alliances combine financial resources and leverage human and capital assets, fostering mutually beneficial outcomes for all involved organisations.

Improving the user experience of hotel products and services

In addition, the study aimed to determine how hotels enhance the overall satisfaction of customers with their products and services. The results are displayed in Figure 4. The study uncovered valuable insights into the methods utilised by hotels to elevate user experiences. Interestingly, a significant portion of hotels (47.4%) utilised public feedback responses as a means to gather user perspectives. Another 40.5% prioritised understanding user behaviour, while 12.1% made use of customer advisory boards. These findings highlight the significance of utilising user feedback to refine and improve services, supporting the concept proposed by Mitchell (2020). According to Weidenfeld (2018), user feedback plays a crucial role in the continuous improvement efforts of hotels, which closely aligns with the findings of this study. Similarly, Walker (2019) highlights

the importance of closely examining customer behaviour to create effective strategies that cater to their preferences and fulfil their needs. The convergence of these perspectives further emphasises the key role that guest feedback, understanding of user behaviour and strategic responsiveness play in enhancing user experiences in the hospitality industry.

Other strategies for increasing room occupancy

The study delved into hotel strategies for boosting room occupancy rates, revealing key tactics outlined in Table 3. Price incentives (55.8%) emerged as crucial, aligning with industry practices and previous studies (Weidenfeld, 2018; Andini & Koesrindartoto, 2020). Social media (29.3%) and product samples (14.9%) indicate the growing impact of online platforms and event promotion. Recreational amenities (e.g. swimming pools and gyms) contribute significantly to revenue (Kandampully et al., 2015). Loyalty programmes and trust-building initiatives (45%) aim to cultivate customer loyalty (Clotney et al., 2008). During peak seasons, promotions (50%) and partnerships (39%) are deployed to enhance revenue (Xiang et al., 2015). Incorporating user-friendly interfaces and cross-selling opportunities into online booking strategies can prove effective (Sigala, 2019). Customer satisfaction emerges as a revenue driver, linking positive experiences to increased ratings and sustained growth (Lee et al., 2016). These findings emphasise a holistic approach to revenue maximisation in the competitive hospitality landscape, integrating digital platforms, strategic bundling and customer-centric practices.

A Ghana Hoteliers Association respondent had this to say about other strategies to increase room occupancy.

Hotels have devised a number of strategies to attract guests. Such strategies comprise hosting events,

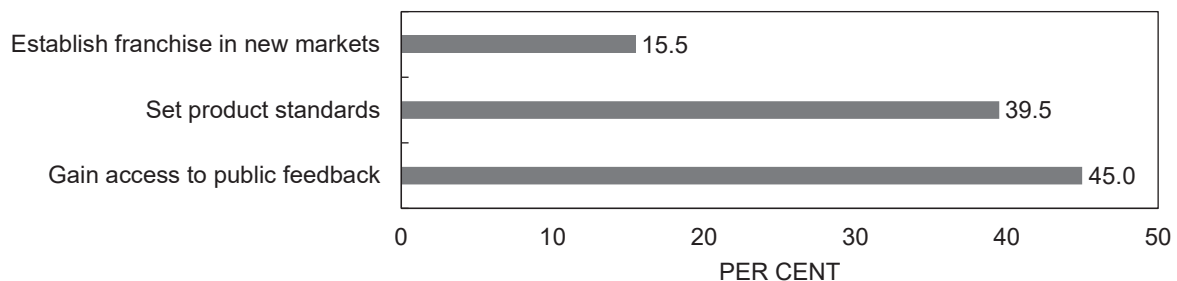


FIGURE 3: Reasons for strategic alliances

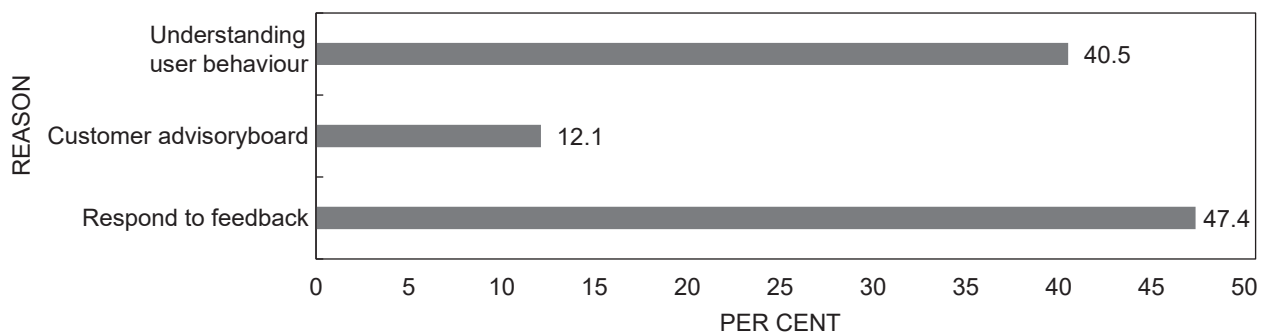


FIGURE 4: Improving the user experience

TABLE 3: Other strategies for room occupancy

Strategy	n	%
1 Ways used to attract customers to hotel events		
•Product sample distribution	74	14.9
•Discounts	278	55.8
•Social media	146	29.3
2 Recreational centres that generate revenue in the hotel		
•Swimming pool	329	52.8
•Animal park	31	5.0
•Gymnasium	263	42.2
3 Strategies for turning one-time customers into repeat customers		
•Run high value promotions	66	10.2
•Build trust with customers	291	45.0
•Loyalty programme	290	44.8
4 Strategies to increase occupancy during festivals		
•Organise events	76	11.6
•Tie up with local businesses	253	38.6
•Promotions and offers	327	49.8
5 How to increase revenue through online booking		
•Focus on customer satisfaction	107	16.7
•Offer a better booking experience than competitors	305	47.5
•Sell other hotel products	230	35.8

encoring repeat guests, providing a platform for online booking and offering product and service promotions. These strategies have significantly increased room occupancy, especially when discounts are offered to guests staying in hotels. (KII-003], Bono region, 2022)

This view supports our findings that selected hotels adopt a variety of strategies to increase optimum room occupancy to maximise revenue.

Factor analysis

Factor analysis was done to obtain a common construct in each of the items under adopted strategies for optimum room occupancy strategies to maximise revenue, and also used in the regression analysis to determine their collective influence on revenue maximisation. The findings were presented in Tables 4 and 5. The results in Table 4 show the test of assumptions and the appropriateness of the use of the factor analysis procedure, as well as the number of factors retained. The principal factor analysis was conducted on each of the sections as presented in the questionnaire, with the orthogonal rotation (varimax) method (Kaiser, 1974). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequacy of the analysis in each of the sections. The cut-off point of the KMO test, according to Kaiser (1974), is 0.6, which is average. The likelihood ratio test on the sphericity of the section (Kaiser, 1974), as indicated in Table 4, suggests that the correlations between items were sufficiently large for the principal factors. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigen values for each component in the data, and as specified by

TABLE 4: Preliminary test of assumptions

Section	n	KMO	Sphericity test	Factors retained
Strategies adopted to achieve optimum room occupancy	10	0.9014	1903.44*	1
Revenue maximisation	10	0.6554	861.35*	1

* $p < 0.001$

Kaiser (1974), the minimum eigen value of 1 was used as the basis for the retention of factors in the models.

Factor loading on optimum room occupancy

The factor loading in Table 4 indicates that the weight of the observed variables (items) on the latent variables are represented in the following tables, categorised by the major sections in the questionnaire, which were designed to answer the research questions of the current study. Based on Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), who considered a factor loading of 0.3 to be a moderate correlation, the results in Table 5 were obtained with blank items, indicating very weak factor loading (0.6) for that particular item. As shown in the results, the only factor is a linear combination of all but two items, which also accounts for 97.03% of the variance. That means the variance is accounted for by all but two items.

Simple linear regression on correlation between optimum room occupancy and maximisation of hotel revenue

A simple linear regression was generated to determine how strong the relationship was between strategies adopted to ensure optimum room occupancy and the maximisation of hotel revenue: Table 6 presents the results. Findings from Table 6 show a simple high degree ($R = -0.823 = 82.3\%$) of correlation between strategies adopted to ensure optimum room occupancy. The R^2 indicates the extent to which the total variation in hotel revenue (the dependent variable) can be explained by the optimum room occupancy (the independent variable). The generated ANOVA had $p < 0.05$, which indicates that statistically, the model

TABLE 5: Factor loading on optimum room occupancy

Variable	Factor 1	Uniqueness
Offer special rates, or create special offers for those who book directly through your website	0.7066	0.5007
Break segments into sub-categories and address them differently to optimise marketing strategy		0.6541
Collaborate with companies to create an alliance	0.7089	0.4974
Add new product features that improve user experience	0.6779	0.5405
Take creative approaches during events to attract people and business opportunities to maximise revenue	0.8027	0.3556
Train employees in room-selling skills	0.8091	0.3454
Introduce recreational facilities to increase revenue	0.6861	0.5292
Turning one-time visitors into repeat guests	0.7058	0.5019
Achieve optimum occupancy during festivals to maximise revenue		0.8451
Maximise revenue through the use of online bookings	0.6910	0.5225
Proportion of variance explained	0.9703	

TABLE 6: Simple linear regression on the relationship between strategies adopted to ensure optimum room occupancy and maximisation of hotel revenue

Model	R	R ²	Adjustable R ²	SE of estimate
1	0.823*	0.752	0.749	873.789

* $p < 0.05$

significantly predicts a good fit for the data. The findings imply that optimum room occupancy strategies adopted by 3–5 star hotels in selected regions of Ghana resulted in the maximisation of revenue. This observation is consistent with an observation by SiteMinder (2021) that underscored that optimisation of room occupancy in hotels is one of the surest ways of increasing revenue.

Conclusion

This study focused on revealing the strategies employed by hotels to increase room occupancy and revenue during slack periods. It highlighted key tactics such as offering specialty rates for direct bookings, catering to different market segments and forming alliances with other companies. Additionally, the study emphasised the importance of new product features, event planning, employee training and enhanced recreational facilities. Leveraging loyal, repeat guests and online bookings emerged as crucial factors. These findings were consistent with existing literature, validating the effectiveness of these strategies in driving revenue growth. The study's analyses revealed a strong connection between the identified strategies and revenue maximisation, highlighting the critical role of proactive measures in hotels, such as implementing strategic pricing, marketing efforts and improved service offerings, during slower periods to increase room occupancy and ultimately boost revenue.

This study provides useful information about how different types of hotels are managed. The findings show that 3-star hotels were quite common in the area studied. This is probably because they are more affordable than hotels with higher ratings, as previous research found about hotel classifications in sub-Saharan Africa. The ages of managers and department heads told an interesting story. Most managers were 45 years or older, so they had a lot of experience in running hotels. At the same time, many department heads were between 31 to 45 years old. This suggests that hotels required or utilised new ideas from younger staff too. By having managers and staff of different ages, hotels could take the best from experience and fresh thinking.

However, women were still under-represented in leadership roles at hotels, showing systemic issues and biases in these workplaces. These results emphasise how important it is to create welcoming and fair work cultures so that all experienced leaders can contribute fully while addressing the lack of women managers. By encouraging knowledge sharing, teamwork and equal chances, hotels can improve using strategies to increase profits while developing a more inclusive and dynamic team. Thinking about these views highlights the many sides to optimising revenue in hospitality and shows the need for comprehensive plans involving both operational methods and cultural changes in organisations.

Recommendations

Hotel managers should prioritise collaboration with stakeholders to enhance product features and amenities, such as recreational facilities, to drive customer retention and capitalise on event marketing opportunities. By fostering partnerships with local businesses, tourist attractions and event organisers, hotels can leverage synergies and cross-promotional opportunities to attract guests during slack periods. Additionally, continuous

enhancement of product features, coupled with targeted marketing efforts tailored to specific customer segments, can improve the overall guest experience and increase loyalty. Investing in online booking optimisation and social media marketing further amplifies the hotel's visibility and reach, ultimately maximising revenue potential. Therefore, hotel managers should focus on aligning these strategies to effectively optimise room occupancy and drive revenue growth.

Suggestions for further research

The study reveals that factors linked to room occupancy significantly affect revenue maximization ($R^2 = 0.899$) for 3-star hotels in Ghana. However, 11.1% remains unaccounted for, suggesting the need for further research to explore and understand additional factors influencing revenue optimisation in this context.

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