

The Influence of Search Engine Optimization on Consumer Decision-Making in E-Commerce in the Hotel Sector in Matara District, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) on consumer decision-making in the e-commerce hotel sector in the Matara District, Sri Lanka. The study concentrates on three important dimensions of SEO, on-page SEO, off-page SEO, and technical SEO, and examines their impact on consumers' hotel booking decisions. A quantitative research design was adopted using a structured questionnaire distributed to 150 respondents and after screening 140 respondents who had prior experience in online hotel booking was selected. Data were analysed using SPSS software, which involved descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. The results indicate that the three dimensions of SEO have a strong positive influence on consumer decision-making, with technical SEO being the most important predictor, then on-page SEO and off-page SEO. The findings also confirm that consumers value the usability of websites, online reviews and relevance of the content highly when making hotel booking decisions. The research is based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) that assist in explaining the influence of digital marketing factors on consumer behaviour in online settings. The study has added to the current literature by offering empirical data in the context of a developing country and has offered practical implications to hotel managers and digital marketers to improve their SEO strategies to increase online presence and customer interaction. In general, this study shows that SEO is a very important factor in the development of contemporary consumer behaviour in the hospitality sector.

Keywords: *Search Engine Optimization, E-Commerce, Hotel Industry, Digital Marketing.*