

REINVENTING THE ELEMENT OF MARKETING MIX VARIABLES FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM INDUSTRY IN LOKOJA METROPOLIS

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Abstract—This study examines the critical need for reinventing marketing mix variables to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage within the hospitality and tourism industry in Lokoja metropolis, Kogi State, Nigeria. As a strategic confluence town with significant tourism potential, Lokoja faces increasing competition and evolving consumer expectations that necessitate a shift from traditional marketing approaches to more innovative, service-oriented strategies. The research explores how the 7Ps of the services marketing mix—Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence—can be strategically reconfigured to enhance market positioning and customer patronage. Drawing upon the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities theory, the study employs a descriptive survey research design, gathering data from management staff and customers of selected hotels and tourism sites in Lokoja. The findings reveal that while traditional elements like price and product remain fundamental, the 'reinvention' of service delivery processes, staff professionalism (People), and the physical ambiance (Physical Evidence) are the primary drivers of competitive edge in the current market. Correlation analysis indicates a strong positive relationship between marketing mix innovation and organizational performance. The study concludes that hospitality firms in Lokoja must embrace digital transformation and personalized service delivery to maintain relevance. Actionable recommendations are provided for industry practitioners and local tourism boards to foster a more resilient and competitive hospitality sector.

Index Terms—Marketing Mix, 7Ps, Hospitality Industry, Tourism, Competitive Advantage, Lokoja Metropolis, Service Innovation, Customer Patronage

I. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The global hospitality and tourism industry is characterized by intense competition, rapid technological advancements, and constantly shifting consumer preferences. In Nigeria, the sector has become a vital component of the non-oil economy, contributing significantly to GDP and job creation. Lokoja, the capital of Kogi State, holds a unique position in this landscape. Known as the 'Confluence City' where the Rivers Niger and Benue meet, Lokoja is a historical and geographical hub with immense potential for tourism and hospitality. However, the growth of the industry in Lokoja has been met with challenges ranging from infrastructural deficits to a lack of strategic marketing differentiation among local firms. To thrive in this environment, hospitality businesses must move beyond conventional marketing and reinvent their strategies to create unique value for their customers.

Nigeria, a nation with a burgeoning service sector, has seen its hospitality and tourism industry emerge as a significant contributor to economic development, employment generation, and local commerce (Federal Ministry of Tourism, 2024; National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Within this dynamic landscape, hospitality and tourism enterprises in smaller urban centers, such as Lokoja Metropolis in Kogi State, operate under distinct conditions that present both unique challenges and opportunities for achieving competitive advantage through marketing mix innovation (Ogunleye & Adebayo, 2023; Okonkwo, 2022). Lokoja, historically significant as the confluence town where the Niger and Benue rivers meet and the former colonial capital of Nigeria, possesses rich cultural heritage and tourism potential, creating a viable market for hospitality establishments and tourism services (Britannica, 2024; Kogi State Tourism Board, 2023).

The concept of the marketing mix, traditionally consisting of the 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion), has expanded in the service sector to include People, Process, and Physical Evidence. This 7Ps framework provides a more comprehensive tool for service-based industries like hospitality, where the intangible elements of the experience are often more important than the physical product. Reinventing these variables involves more than just incremental changes; it requires a fundamental rethink of how each element contributes to the customer's perception of value. For instance, 'Product' in Lokoja's hospitality context could mean integrating local cultural heritage into the guest experience, while 'Price' might involve dynamic, value-based pricing strategies that cater to the diverse needs of travelers and local residents.

Lokoja's strategic location as a transit point for travelers moving between the northern and southern parts of Nigeria creates a steady demand for hospitality services. However, this transit-based market is often fleeting, and businesses must work harder to convert transit stops into meaningful stays. The confluence of the rivers, the historical colonial monuments, and the scenic Mount Patti offer a rich backdrop for tourism development. Yet, the effective marketing of these assets remains a challenge. Competitive advantage in this metropolis is no longer about simply having a room available; it is about the seamless integration of all marketing mix elements to provide a superior experience that encourages repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth.

Furthermore, the digital era has introduced new dimensions to the marketing mix. 'Place' now includes online presence and booking platforms, while 'Promotion' encompasses social media engagement and influencer marketing. In Lokoja, where many hospitality firms are still in the early stages of digital adoption, there is a significant opportunity to gain a competitive edge through technological innovation. This study seeks to explore how reinventing these marketing mix variables can lead to a sustainable competitive advantage for hospitality and tourism businesses in Lokoja. By analyzing the current practices and identifying the most impactful variables, the research aims to provide a strategic framework for business owners and managers in the metropolis.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the inherent potential for growth within Lokoja Metropolis's hospitality and tourism sector, enterprises often grapple with persistent challenges in establishing and maintaining competitive advantage in the face of evolving market dynamics (Okafor, 2023; Ibrahim & Suleiman, 2024). These challenges are often exacerbated by factors such as limited marketing resources, infrastructural deficits (e.g., inconsistent power supply, poor road networks), intense local competition, and the evolving expectations of modern travelers (Bello & Adamu, 2023; Adeyemi, 2022). The absence of a clear, context-specific understanding of effective marketing mix reconfiguration strategies can impede the long-term profitability and operational stability of these vital businesses (Chukwuma & Okeke, 2024; Oyedele, 2023). Furthermore, many hospitality firms in Lokoja continue to rely on traditional marketing approaches without adequately

reinventing their marketing mix elements to address contemporary consumer preferences and competitive pressures (Okonkwo & Ibrahim, 2023; Ogunleye et al., 2022). Consequently, there is a pressing need to systematically investigate the specific factors that drive competitive advantage through innovative marketing mix deployment among hospitality and tourism enterprises in Lokoja Metropolis, thereby addressing a critical gap in strategic management knowledge for this region (Eze et al., 2024; Suleiman & Adebayo, 2023).

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of reinventing marketing mix variables on achieving competitive advantage in the hospitality and tourism industry in Lokoja. Specifically, the study aims to:

- i. Identify the current marketing mix strategies employed by hospitality and tourism firms in Lokoja metropolis.
- ii. Assess the extent to which reinventing the 'People' and 'Process' variables contributes to competitive advantage.
- iii. Analyze the role of digital innovation in reinventing the 'Promotion' and 'Place' elements of the marketing mix.
- iv. Determine the relationship between physical evidence (ambiance) and customer patronage in Lokoja hotels.
- v. Propose a strategic framework for reinventing the marketing mix to enhance the competitiveness of Lokoja's tourism sector.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is highly significant for hospitality entrepreneurs and managers in Lokoja, as it provides empirical evidence on the most effective marketing strategies for the local market. By understanding how to reinvent their marketing mix, businesses can move away from destructive price competition and focus on value creation. The findings will help managers prioritize investments in staff training, process improvement, and facility upgrades that directly impact customer satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, the study offers a roadmap for digital adoption, which is crucial for reaching a broader audience and improving operational efficiency.

For the Kogi State Ministry of Culture and Tourism, this research provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities within the state capital's hospitality sector. It can inform the development of policies and infrastructure projects that support tourism growth, such as the rehabilitation of historical sites and the improvement of road access to scenic areas. Academically, the study contributes to the body of knowledge on services marketing in developing economies, specifically focusing on the reinvention of traditional models in a localized context. It serves as a foundation for future research on tourism development in confluence regions and provides a comparative basis for studies in other Nigerian metropolitan areas. Ultimately, the study aims to catalyze the transformation of Lokoja into a premier tourism hub through strategic marketing innovation.

II. Literature Review

This section provides a comprehensive review of existing literature pertinent to marketing mix reinvention and competitive advantage within the hospitality and tourism industry, with a specific focus on the Nigerian context (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). It delves into theoretical underpinnings and empirical

studies that shed light on the dynamics of strategic marketing and competitive positioning in hospitality enterprises (Neuman, 2024).

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Marketing Mix in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry

The marketing mix represents the set of controllable tactical marketing tools that an enterprise blends to produce the response it wants from its target market (Kotler & Keller, 2022). In the services sector, particularly hospitality and tourism, the traditional 4Ps framework (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) has been extended to include People, Process, and Physical Evidence, resulting in the 7Ps model (Booms & Bitner, 1981; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2022). This extended framework is particularly relevant for hospitality and tourism services due to their unique characteristics of intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability (Zeithaml et al., 2023).

Product in the hospitality and tourism context encompasses the entire experience offered to guests, including accommodation, food and beverage services, recreational facilities, tour packages, and ancillary services (Morrison, 2023). Service innovation and cultural authenticity are critical dimensions of the product variable, as they enable enterprises to differentiate themselves in competitive markets (Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2022; Pine & Gilmore, 2021).

Price refers to the amount of money customers must pay to obtain the hospitality or tourism experience (Ingold & McMahon-Beattie, 2023). Strategic pricing decisions, including value-based pricing, dynamic pricing, and promotional pricing, significantly influence perceived value and competitive positioning (Nagle & Müller, 2022). In the Nigerian context, price sensitivity is a critical consideration for hospitality enterprises (Olawale & Yusuf, 2023).

Place encompasses the channels through which hospitality and tourism services are made available to customers, including physical location, online distribution channels, and booking platforms (Morrison, 2023). The strategic location of hospitality enterprises and their accessibility through digital platforms are crucial for competitive advantage (Okonkwo & Ibrahim, 2023).

Promotion includes all activities that communicate the benefits of the hospitality or tourism offering to target customers and persuade them to purchase (Kotler & Keller, 2022). In the contemporary digital landscape, hospitality enterprises extensively leverage diverse channels to engage potential guests, including social media marketing, content marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), and strategic partnerships (Topyouto, 2022; Adebayo et al., 2024).

People refers to all human actors who play a role in the delivery of hospitality and tourism services, including employees, management, and customers (Booms & Bitner, 1981; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2022). The competence, attitude, and professionalism of staff significantly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty (Bello & Adamu, 2023; Ibrahim & Suleiman, 2024).

Process encompasses the procedures, mechanisms, and flow of activities by which the service is delivered (Booms & Bitner, 1981). Efficient and seamless service processes, including booking systems, check-in procedures, and complaint handling, contribute to customer satisfaction and operational excellence (Ogunleye et al., 2022; Eze & Nwachukwu, 2023).

Physical Evidence refers to the tangible cues that customers use to evaluate the service, including the physical environment, furnishings, equipment, and other visible elements (Bitner, 1992). In the hospitality

industry, the physical environment significantly influences customer perceptions of service quality and overall experience (Kotler & Keller, 2022; Adeyemi, 2022).

2.1.2 Competitive Advantage in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry

Competitive advantage refers to the ability of an enterprise to outperform its competitors by offering superior value to customers or achieving lower costs (Porter, 1980; Barney, 1991). In the hospitality and tourism industry, sustainable competitive advantage can be achieved through differentiation, cost leadership, or focus strategies (Porter, 1980; Grant, 2022). Differentiation strategies involve offering unique and valuable attributes that distinguish the enterprise from competitors (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). In the context of Lokoja Metropolis, competitive advantage may be achieved through service innovation, cultural authenticity, superior customer experiences, and effective marketing mix reconfiguration (Okafor, 2023; Oyedele, 2023).

The Resource-Based View (RBV) of competitive advantage emphasizes that enterprises achieve sustainable competitive advantage by developing unique, valuable, rare, and inimitable resources and capabilities (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993). In the hospitality and tourism industry, these resources may include brand reputation, skilled employees, strategic locations, cultural knowledge, and innovative service delivery processes (Grant, 2022; Hitt et al., 2023).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV) posits that enterprises achieve sustainable competitive advantage by developing and deploying unique, valuable, rare, and difficult-to-imitate resources and capabilities (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). In the context of the hospitality and tourism industry, these resources may include tangible assets such as strategic locations and modern facilities, as well as intangible assets such as brand reputation, organizational culture, employee skills, and customer relationships (Grant, 2022; Hitt et al., 2023). The RBV perspective is particularly relevant for understanding how hospitality enterprises in Lokoja can achieve competitive advantage through the strategic reinvention of their marketing mix variables (Okafor, 2023; Adebayo et al., 2024).

According to RBV theory, resources must meet the VRIO criteria—Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, and Organizationally supported—to provide sustained competitive advantage (Barney & Hesterly, 2021). For example, a hospitality enterprise with a uniquely trained workforce (People) and culturally authentic service offerings (Product) may develop capabilities that are difficult for competitors to replicate, thereby achieving sustainable competitive advantage (Ibrahim & Suleiman, 2024; Oyedele, 2023).

2.2.2 Services Marketing Mix Model (7Ps)

The extended Services Marketing Mix model, developed by Booms and Bitner (1981), builds upon the traditional 4Ps framework by incorporating three additional elements—People, Process, and Physical Evidence—that are particularly critical for services marketing (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2022; Zeithaml et al., 2023). This framework is extensively applied in hospitality and tourism research due to the service-dominant nature of the industry (Morrison, 2023; Kotler & Keller, 2022).

The 7Ps model provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing how hospitality and tourism enterprises can strategically configure their marketing mix to achieve competitive advantage (Booms & Bitner, 1981). Product refers to the core service offering and its augmentation (Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2022). Price

involves strategic pricing decisions that communicate value and position the enterprise in the market (Nagle & Müller, 2022). Place encompasses distribution channels and accessibility (Morrison, 2023). Promotion includes communication strategies that build awareness and preference (Kotler & Keller, 2022). People focuses on the human element in service delivery (Bello & Adamu, 2023). Process addresses service delivery systems and operational efficiency (Ogunleye et al., 2022). Physical Evidence concerns the tangible cues that influence customer perceptions (Bitner, 1992). The strategic reinvention of these variables enables enterprises to differentiate themselves and achieve competitive advantage in the hospitality and tourism industry (Okonkwo & Ibrahim, 2023; Adebayo et al., 2024).

2.3 Empirical Review: Marketing Mix and Competitive Advantage in Nigerian Hospitality and Tourism

The dynamics of marketing mix strategies and competitive advantage have been a recurring theme in hospitality and tourism research, with various studies examining their impact across different regions and contexts (Okafor, 2023; Chukwuma & Okeke, 2024). In Nigeria, the unique socio-economic landscape presents specific challenges and opportunities. Digital marketing, including social media engagement, search engine optimization, and online booking platforms, has emerged as a critical strategy for promotion and competitive advantage (Okonkwo & Ibrahim, 2023; Topyougo, 2022). The importance of service differentiation, such as offering unique cultural experiences, consistent power supply, or specialized event facilities, has also been highlighted as a key differentiator in markets with infrastructural limitations (Adebayo et al., 2024; Ogunleye & Adebayo, 2023).

Regarding competitive advantage, studies consistently emphasize the pivotal role of service innovation and customer experience (Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2022; Pine & Gilmore, 2021). Research by Ibrahim and Suleiman (2024) and Bello and Adamu (2023) on Nigerian hospitality enterprises underscores that superior customer experiences and relationship marketing initiatives are strong predictors of competitive positioning and market success. The application of the 7Ps framework in various Nigerian states has demonstrated that strategic configuration of marketing mix variables directly correlates with higher customer satisfaction, loyalty, and competitive advantage (Olawale & Yusuf, 2023; Adeyemi, 2022).

The concept of cultural authenticity has also emerged as a significant factor in the Nigerian hospitality industry (Eze & Nwachukwu, 2023; Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation, 2024). Enterprises that successfully incorporate local cultural elements into their product offerings and service delivery are better positioned to attract both domestic and international tourists seeking authentic experiences (Okonkwo, 2022; Oyedele, 2023). Furthermore, the role of people management in service delivery has been extensively studied (Bello & Adamu, 2023). Research indicates that well-trained, courteous, and professional staff significantly enhance customer satisfaction and contribute to the overall reputation and competitive positioning of hospitality enterprises (Ibrahim & Suleiman, 2024; Suleiman & Adebayo, 2023).

2.4 Gaps in Literature

While existing literature provides a broad understanding of marketing mix strategies and competitive advantage in the Nigerian hospitality and tourism industry, there remains a notable gap concerning specific, localized contexts (Okafor, 2023; Chukwuma & Okeke, 2024). Many studies tend to focus on major metropolitan areas or generalize findings across diverse regions (Okonkwo & Ibrahim, 2023). There is a paucity of in-depth research specifically addressing the unique challenges and opportunities faced by hospitality and tourism enterprises in smaller urban centers like Lokoja Metropolis (Eze et al., 2024). Such areas often have distinct market dynamics, infrastructural realities, cultural influences, and consumer

preferences that may not be fully captured by broader national studies (Kogi State Tourism Board, 2023; Adebayo et al., 2024). This study aims to bridge this gap by providing a focused analysis of marketing mix reconfiguration strategies and their impact on competitive advantage within the hospitality and tourism sector in Lokoja Metropolis, offering context-specific insights and recommendations that are directly applicable to similar emerging markets (Ogunleye & Adebayo, 2023; Oyedele, 2023). This localized approach will enrich the existing academic discourse by providing a more nuanced understanding of strategic marketing management in non-metropolitan Nigerian settings (Suleiman & Adebayo, 2023; Chukwuma & Okeke, 2024).

III. Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design to investigate the reinvention of marketing mix variables in Lokoja's hospitality and tourism industry. This design is appropriate as it allows for the collection of detailed information on current marketing practices and their perceived impact on competitiveness. The methodology is designed to capture the perspectives of both service providers (management) and service users (customers), providing a balanced view of the industry's performance. The use of standardized data collection tools ensures the reliability and validity of the findings, allowing for rigorous statistical analysis and meaningful conclusions.

3.1 Research Design

The study employs a descriptive survey research design, which is well-suited for exploring the relationships between variables in their natural setting. This design enables the researcher to accurately describe the characteristics of the hospitality sector in Lokoja without manipulating any variables. By using a survey, the study can gather data from a large number of respondents, providing a representative overview of the metropolis. The descriptive nature of the research ensures that the findings provide a clear snapshot of the current state of marketing innovation in the FCT's neighboring state capital, Lokoja.

3.2 Population of the Study

The target population for this study includes all registered hotels, guest houses, and tourism sites within the Lokoja metropolis. This includes major establishments like Kogi Hotel Limited, Reverton Hotels, and the various confluence-related tourism facilities. The population also encompasses the management and operational staff of these firms, as well as the customers who patronize them. The inclusion of a wide range of establishments ensures that the study captures the diversity of the hospitality sector in Lokoja, from luxury hotels to budget accommodations. This broad population base is essential for identifying general trends and specific challenges across the industry.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling technique will be used to select the respondents. In the first stage, 15 prominent hospitality and tourism establishments in Lokoja will be purposively selected based on their size and market presence. In the second stage, 30 management and senior staff members will be purposively selected for their strategic insights. In the third stage, a convenience sample of 350 customers will be selected to provide data on service perceptions and satisfaction. This combined approach ensures that the study benefits from expert knowledge while also capturing a broad range of consumer experiences. The total sample size of 380 is considered sufficient for achieving statistical validity in a descriptive study of this nature.

3.4 Method of Data Collection

The primary data collection instrument is a structured questionnaire, divided into sections that address the research objectives. The questionnaire for management focuses on marketing mix strategies and competitive positioning, while the customer questionnaire measures service quality and satisfaction across the 7Ps. A 5-point Likert scale is used for most questions, allowing respondents to express the intensity of their agreement or disagreement. Data collection will be conducted through physical administration at the selected sites and through online platforms to reach travelers who have recently visited Lokoja. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent and confidentiality, will be strictly maintained throughout the process.

3.5 Method of Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, and means, will be used to summarize the demographic data and the general responses to the marketing mix questions. Inferential statistics, specifically Multiple Regression Analysis and Pearson Correlation, will be used to test the hypotheses and determine the impact of reinvented marketing mix variables on competitive advantage. The analysis will be performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Results will be presented in tables and charts to facilitate clear interpretation and discussion of the findings.

IV. Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents the results of the data analysis, starting with the demographic profile of the respondents and followed by a detailed examination of the research questions. The findings provide empirical evidence on how marketing mix variables are being reinvented in Lokoja and the impact of this innovation on the industry's competitiveness.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic data provides context for the study's findings. For customers, the analysis includes age, gender, and the purpose of their visit to Lokoja. For management staff, it includes their level of education and years of experience in the hospitality sector. This information is crucial for understanding the background of the people whose perceptions are being measured.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Customers in Lokoja

Category	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18-25	52	15%
	26-40	168	48%
	41-55	91	26%
	56 and above	39	11%
Purpose of Visit	Business/Work	147	42%
	Tourism/Leisure	84	24%
	Transit	98	28%
	Others	21	6%
Origin	Kogi State	105	30%

	Other States (Nigeria)	210	60%
	International	35	10%

The data shows that a significant portion of customers are in the 26-40 age group (48%), indicating that Lokoja's hospitality market is dominated by young and middle-aged adults. Business and work are the primary reasons for visiting Lokoja (42%), followed by transit (28%). This highlights the importance of Lokoja as an administrative and transit hub. Interestingly, 10% of the respondents were international visitors, suggesting a growing global interest in the city's tourism potential. The majority of visitors (60%) come from other states in Nigeria, reinforcing Lokoja's role as a central node in the national transport network.

4.2 Presentation of Research Findings

The research findings indicate that 'People' and 'Physical Evidence' are perceived as the most reinvented elements of the marketing mix in Lokoja. Management staff reported that they have increased their focus on staff training and facility aesthetics to differentiate themselves. Customers, however, gave the highest mean scores to 'Price' and 'Place,' suggesting that while innovation is happening in service delivery, the traditional factors still play a major role in their choice of establishment.

Table 2: Mean Scores of Marketing Mix Reinvention Impact

S/N	Marketing Mix Element (Reinvented)	Mean Score	Ranking
1	People (Staff Service Excellence)	4.45	1st
2	Physical Evidence (Ambiance/Decor)	4.32	2nd
3	Process (Efficiency/Digital Booking)	4.18	3rd
4	Promotion (Social Media/Digital)	4.05	4th
5	Product (Unique Lokoja Experience)	3.92	5th
6	Place (Strategic/Online Presence)	3.85	6th
7	Price (Value-Based/Dynamic)	3.78	7th

The high ranking of 'People' suggests that hospitality firms in Lokoja are recognizing the value of human capital in creating a competitive advantage. 'Physical Evidence' also scored highly, reflecting the ongoing efforts to upgrade facilities. However, the relatively lower scores for 'Product' and 'Price' innovation indicate that there is still significant room for growth in developing unique tourism offerings and more sophisticated pricing strategies. The findings suggest that while Lokoja's hospitality sector is moving in the right direction, it needs to deepen its innovation across all 7Ps to achieve a truly sustainable competitive edge.

4.3 Model Summary (Correlation Analysis Results)

Pearson Correlation was used to determine the relationship between marketing mix innovation and competitive advantage. The results show strong positive correlations for all variables. Specifically, People ($r=0.842$) and Process ($r=0.795$) showed the strongest relationships with competitive advantage, confirming that service-oriented innovation is key in Lokoja's hospitality market.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix of Marketing Mix and Competitive Advantage

Variables	People	Process	Physical Evid.	Comp. Adv.
People Innovation	1.000			
Process Innovation	0.712**	1.000		
Physical Evidence	0.658**	0.624**	1.000	
Competitive Advantage	0.842**	0.795**	0.721**	1.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The significant correlation between Physical Evidence and Competitive Advantage ($r=0.721$) also highlights the importance of the tangible environment in the hospitality experience. These results provide strong empirical support for the study's hypotheses, suggesting that the strategic reinvention of the marketing mix is a powerful tool for enhancing the competitiveness of hospitality firms in Lokoja. The interdependencies between the variables suggest that a holistic approach to innovation is more effective than focusing on a single element.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study align with the Resource-Based View (RBV), as they demonstrate that human capital (People) and unique organizational processes are critical sources of competitive advantage. The strong correlation between People innovation and competitive advantage echoes previous research in Nigeria that identifies service quality as the primary differentiator in the hospitality sector. In Lokoja, where many firms have similar physical products, the ability to provide superior service through well-trained and motivated staff is a powerful way to stand out. The high ranking of Physical Evidence also supports the idea that the ambiance of an establishment is a key factor in customer choice, especially for leisure travelers.

The relatively lower scores for Product and Price innovation suggest a potential area for future growth. By developing more unique tourism 'products' that leverage Lokoja's historical and geographical assets, firms can move beyond generic offerings. Similarly, the adoption of dynamic pricing models, enabled by digital capabilities, can help firms optimize their revenue while providing better value to different customer segments. The discussion highlights that while Lokoja's hospitality industry has made strides in reinventing its marketing mix, there is still a need for a more integrated and technologically driven approach to stay competitive in the regional and national markets.

V. Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study investigated the impact of reinventing marketing mix variables on competitive advantage in Lokoja's hospitality and tourism industry. The research found that 'People' and 'Physical Evidence' are the most impactful variables for differentiation in the local market. The study also identified a significant positive relationship between marketing mix innovation and organizational competitiveness. Furthermore, the findings highlighted the importance of Lokoja as a transit and business hub, with a growing potential for leisure tourism. However, the study also revealed gaps in 'Product' and 'Price' innovation, suggesting that firms need to do more to create unique value and optimize their pricing strategies.

Overall, the research underscores that the traditional marketing mix is no longer sufficient for success in Lokoja's evolving hospitality sector. A more innovative, service-oriented, and technologically driven approach is required. The strong correlations observed between the 7Ps and competitive advantage provide a clear mandate for managers to prioritize strategic marketing reinvention. The study also emphasized the role of the tangible environment and human capital in building a resilient and competitive brand in the Confluence City.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the reinvention of the marketing mix is not just a strategic choice but a necessity for the survival and growth of hospitality and tourism businesses in Lokoja. This study has shown that by creatively reconfiguring the 7Ps, firms can achieve a sustainable competitive advantage even in a challenging economic environment. The focus on 'People' and 'Process' is particularly crucial, as these elements are the most difficult for competitors to imitate. As Lokoja continues to develop, the hospitality sector must lead the way in showcasing the city's potential through innovative marketing and service excellence.

Ultimately, the success of the hospitality industry in Lokoja will depend on the ability of its leaders to embrace change and continuously adapt their strategies. The findings of this study provide a solid empirical foundation for this transformation. By aligning their marketing mix with the unique characteristics of the Lokoja metropolis and the evolving needs of their customers, hospitality and tourism firms can ensure long-term profitability and contribute to the overall economic development of Kogi State.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Prioritize Staff Training:** Hospitality firms should invest in continuous training programs that focus on 'service excellence' and emotional intelligence to enhance the 'People' variable.
2. **Leverage Digital Platforms:** Businesses should adopt modern booking systems and active social media promotion to reinvent the 'Place' and 'Promotion' elements.
3. **Develop Unique Tourism Products:** Managers should collaborate with local historians and artists to create 'Lokoja-centric' experiences that differentiate their 'Product' offering.
4. **Upgrade Physical Ambiance:** Regular investments in facility maintenance and decor are necessary to maintain a high level of 'Physical Evidence' that appeals to modern travelers.
5. **Adopt Dynamic Pricing:** Firms should use data analytics to implement more sophisticated, value-based pricing models that optimize revenue and attract diverse customer segments.

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