

# E-Marketing Adoption among Small Businesses in the Hospitality Industry in Kenya: The Institution Theory Perspective

Charles Owuor Omoga<sup>1</sup>, Dr. George Raburu<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Samuel Liyala<sup>1</sup>

Department of Information Systems and Technology, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology,  
Bondo, Kenya<sup>1</sup>

Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science  
and Technology, Bondo, Kenya<sup>2</sup>

Corresponding Author: Mr. Charles O. Omoga

**Abstract:** Small sized businesses play an important role in the growth of economies all over the world, yet they appear to be slow in adopting E-marketing technology to market their products and services which may lead to business failure. This study sought to investigate the interrelationship between Coercive, Mimetic and Normative pressures and e-marketing adoption intention. A cross sectional survey design was employed on a target population of 150 small businesses in the hospitality industry in Kisumu County-Kenya. Stratified random sampling method was used to generate the sample of 115 small businesses. Primary and secondary data were collected using questionnaire and already existing literature respectively. Instrument reliability assessment was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics using WarpPLS v.5 software. The results for Mimetic pressure indicate a positive relationship with e-marketing adoption intention ( $\beta=0.176$ ,  $p=0.019$ ). Normative pressure had a positive relationship with e-marketing adoption intention ( $\beta= 0.354$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). However there was no inter-relationship between coercive pressures and intention to adopt e-marketing ( $\beta= 0.106$ ,  $p= 0.133$ ). Policy makers may find these results useful for future policy formulations regarding adoption of e-marketing among small businesses.

**Keywords:** Institution theory, Mimetic pressures, Coercive pressures, Normative pressures, Small businesses, E-marketing adoption

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Small sized businesses play an important role in the growth of economies all over the world [1]. The contributions of small businesses include job creation; provision of varieties of product to customers; stimulation of competition; distribution of wealth and development of human resources [2]. In Kenya, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) represent 98% of businesses and also contribute 30% of jobs created [3]. Small businesses have distinctive characteristics such as managerial style, independence, ownership, having limited resources and the scale and scope of operations, centralized organizational structure, limited financial capacity, human resources restrictions and a lack of business expertise [4]. In these businesses, the key decision maker is the owner-manager hence the characteristics of the owner-managers are crucial in determining the innovativeness of the businesses [4]. As a result of the contributions of the small businesses in many economies of the world governments have strived to promote their growth in order to maintain and ensure their survival [5].

Recent developments in Information Technology have led to the emergence of many different technological innovations. Among the many innovations is the Electronic Marketing (E-Marketing) which can be viewed as "a new philosophy and a modern business practice involved with the marketing of goods, services, information and ideas via the Internet and other electronic means" [6]. [7] explained that any marketing in the Internet should be considered electronic marketing and mentioned the major forms of electronic marketing which included: Electronic marketing (marketing by email); Search marketing (marketing related to the Internet search results; Marketing websites, links and banners; Marketing in social networks. [8], defined it as: "Achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies". Organizations today have embraced the existence of global communities which have created a platform for E-Marketing. The platform allows organizations to personalize their customer needs hence established loyalty which is crucial in today's competitive world. Firms can embrace the use of E-marketing using different channels which bring them closer to clients by offering a wider scope of clients with better communication [9].

Studies have found that small and medium businesses have been slow in their adoption of Information Communications Technologies including E-marketing [10]. For example, in Australia majority of SMEs have been slow in adopting E-Marketing while those who had adopted had not moved beyond the basic level adoption[11].In Asia studies by [12] discovered that Malaysian SMEs in manufacturing sector were mostly using traditional methods while a few were at elementary level of adoption of e-marketing technologies. Similar studies in Malaysia indicated that most small and medium businesses were adopting e-marketing at a slow pace because they perceived I.T integration into their businesses as expensive, risky and complex endeavors [13].In Europe small and medium sized businesses make up a big percentage of the businesses [14] and about 61% of SMEs in general make use of social media (a subset of E-marketing), however this depended on the country being studied. For example in the United Kingdom about 90% use social media marketing; Spain about 54% and in Netherlands 78 % uses social media marketing [14].In Africa small business have not adopted E-marketing to a large extent because owners perceive E-marketing as irrelevant in their businesses as some think that most of their customers are not online or E-marketing is not effective enough while others think it's just a fad that will soon go away [15].

In South Africa large businesses have embraced the Internet at different levels as smaller businesses are gradually being able to level the playing field against larger firms [16]. In Uganda many E-marketplaces have now been established, however, E-marketing in Uganda is still in its rudimentary form since companies still lack the essentials for online trade [17].In Kenya E-marketing has been predominantly the placing of dormant banner on a website. The interactivity of the internet captures the attention of the internet as the audience click and responds to queries online there by giving a feedback. Although E-marketing exists in many forms, few of these are used in Kenya [18].He adds that E-marketing in Kenya is mainly through individual websites which the firms have noted is not enough for marketing purposes on the internet. In conclusion, it has been noted in the literature that that most of the Small and medium businesses in general are in the basic levels of E-marketing adoption while some haven't adopted the innovation at all.

The slow adoption of e-marketing among Small businesses often leads to business failure [19]. The assumption by researchers that managers only aim at maximizing profits through efficiency and effectiveness maximization is common in information systems research. However, not everything that happens in organizations is explainable through the lenses of rational management action but rather it calls for accounting for 'irrationalities' coming from and within institutional perspective surrounding organizational players [21]. Few studies have investigated Information systems adoption especially E-marketing within the lenses of Institutional theory either individually or combined with other theories yet organizational decisions are driven not only by rational goals of efficiency, but also by institutional environments which include social factors and legitimacy concerns [22]; [23].Thus the institution theory as proposed by [24] has been underused despite its advantages [22];[23]. Of the few studies that used the Institutional theory, none focused on small businesses context. This study sought to fill this gap by investigating the relationship between Institutional pressures and E-marketing adoption by small businesses in the hospitality industry in Kenya in order to understand this phenomenon more clearly.

### **1.1 Study objective**

The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between Coercive, Mimetic, Normative pressures and E-marketing among small businesses in the hospitality industry in Kisumu County, Kenya.

### **1.2 Research question:**

Is there and relationship between Coercive, Mimetic and Normative pressures and adoption of E-marketing by small businesses in the hospitality industry in Kenya?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Institutional pressures and E-marketing adoption**

The assumption by researchers that managers only aim at maximizing profits through efficiency and effectiveness maximization is common in information systems research [25]; [21]. Other researchers have settled on a different view that not everything that happens in organizations is explainable through the lenses of rational management action but rather it calls for accounting for 'irrationalities' coming from and within institutional perspective surrounding organizational players [26]; [21]. According to[24]the Neo-institution theory and particularly organization isomorphism examines key external pressures including mimetic, coercive and normative pressures that make organizations conform to the actions and strategies of other organizations in the industry which they belong .In recent years, there has been new interest in the institutional theory and limited number of studies have adopted an institutionalist perspective to examine IS/IT-related phenomena such as IT innovation, IS development and implementation, and IT adoption and use[20]; [27].Since at the core of the institutional theory are the component of isomorphism which includes Mimetic, coercive and Normative pressures, they are discussed in the subsections 2.1.1 to 2.1.3

### **2.1.1 Mimetic pressures and E-marketing adoption**

According to [24] Mimetic Pressures refers to the bandwagon effect which means that progressively organizations become more similar to other organizations and imitate best practices adopted by other organizations. Mimetic isomorphism is the tendency of an organization to mimic or copy the actions of those organizations that are thought to have credible levels of legitimacy, and was identified as the institutional pressure most likely to contribute to continuance inertia [24]. There has been mixed results in the relationships between Mimetic pressures and innovation adoption. Mimetic pressures has been found to affect adoption across many information systems adoption with resultant positive relationships with the innovations studied (E-procurement- [27]; e-commerce- [28]; Cloud computing- [29]; Digital Technology- [30]). Within the E-marketing adoption studies there has been little attention by researchers with only few studies focusing on institutional isomorphic pressures like mimetic pressures. One example of such studies is by [31] whose results revealed no significant relationship between mimetic pressure and e-marketing adoption.

### **2.1.2 Coercive pressures and E-marketing adoption**

Coercive pressures refer to pressures from organisations which the other organisations depend on for business and pressures from socio-cultural expectations in the society within which they are dependent [24]. Studies on coercive pressures have had mixed results. Studies by [31] investigated institutional pressures on social media adoption found that there was no relationship between coercive pressure and Social Media marketing adoption. Similar studies by [32] on SMEs adoption of e-marketing also revealed that customers' coercive pressures had an insignificant relationship with e-marketing adoption. Contrary results have been recorded in several studies although not within the e-marketing discipline and they include studies by [29] when he studied seventeen companies in Jordan to examine the impact of the institutional factors and adoption of cloud ERPs. The findings confirmed that coercive pressures had a positive impact on the adoption of cloud ERPs models.

### **2.1.3 Normative pressures and E-marketing adoption**

There has been mixed results in the relationships between normative pressures and innovation adoption. Normative pressures include pressure produced by members of social networks (trade associations, professional associations, accreditation agencies and channel members). Shared values and norms among network members inform the Strategic decisions made by organisations [24]. These normative pressures manifest themselves through professional, trade, business, and other key organizations [24]. [31], while investigating the roles of absorptive capacity and Institutional Pressures on social media marketing found that normative pressures had no direct effect on social media adoption. However studies investigating other technological innovations revealed positive relationships with the innovations they studied. For example, [20] found a positive relationship between normative pressures and E-Learning adoption among students; [28] studied the effect of normative pressures on the adoption of cloud ERPs in the Jordanian business institutions and found positive relationships [29] also found positive relationship with Cloud computing [30] found a positive relationship with adoption of Internet-Based Digital Technology. Apparently, studies focusing on the relationship between Institutional pressures (mimetic, coercive and normative pressures) and e-marketing have received little attention in the Information System adoption literature.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a cross sectional research design. This study further targeted a population of 150 small businesses in the hospitality industry in Kisumu County-Kenya from which a sample of 115 small business units were derived. The owner-managers of these small businesses were the respondents. Structured self administered survey questionnaire was used to collect the primary data from the study respondents. This questionnaire captured the demographic profile of respondent and data for the Institutional forces. The question items for the institutional forces were adapted from [33].

## **4. RESULTS**

### **4.1 Descriptive statistical results**

The analysis of survey response was done to determine the number of respondents who did or didn't respond. Out of a total of 115 respondents, 106 (92.17%) responded to the questionnaire while non respondents were nine in number. To avoid bias [34] recommends response rate of 70% and above for self administered questionnaires. The response rate was at 97.52 % which was above 70% hence acceptable for self administered questionnaires such as the one used in this study. From the descriptive data analysis, the survey recorded the most frequent education level for the owner-managers to be university graduates at 67.92% followed by diploma graduates at 16.04%; and 17 postgraduates at 11.32%. On the job role of the respondents, majority of the respondents indicated that they were managers of the hotels at 76.42% while 23.58% indicated that they were both owners and managers at the same time. From the analysis there were more male respondent than females: 98 males and eight (8) females at 92.45% and 07.55% respectively. On the age of the respondents, most respondents were between the ages of 40-49 years at 64.15%, followed by 30-39 age

brackets at 18.87% .The ages between 21-29 recorded a frequency count of four(4) at 3.77% while the ages between zero to twenty had no respondents at all. Univariate normality tests were run for all independent and dependent variables and skewness and kurtosis examined. Normative pressures had a skewness coefficient of -0.399; Mimetic pressures had a skewness coefficient of 0.076.The common rule-of-thumb for normality is skewness to be within the range of -3 and +3 and Kurtosis to be within the range of negative or positive eight(8) (35). For the kurtosis, Coercive pressures had a coefficient of 0.993; Normative pressures had -1.314 and Mimetic pressures had -0.715. The coefficients for the latent variables were within the acceptable range. The data analysis revealed that all reliability coefficients were equal to or above 0.7. For example Coercive pressures had (0.798); Normative pressures had (0.700); Mimetic pressures had 0.714 while Adoption of E-marketing (0.732). These results confirmed the internal consistency of managers’ questionnaire. Reliability should be 0.7 or higher or if it is an exploratory research, 0.6 or higher is acceptable ([36]. More conservatively the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients should be equal to or greater than 0.7 [37]. The more relaxed version of this criterion, which is widely used, is that one of the two coefficients should be equal to or greater than 0.7.

**4.1.1 Descriptive statistics for Coercive pressures measurement items**

The measurement scale for the Coercive pressures was composed of three items; the respondents were required to respond to questions on a seven point Likert scale. The results of the descriptive statistical analysis for Coercive pressures measurement items are captured in the table 1

Table 1 Coercive pressures measurement results

statements	SD	SLD	DA	N	A	SLA	SA
Many of my marketing activities require me to use e-marketing.	2 1.9%	20 18.9%	1 0.9%	2 1.9%	15 14.2%	22 20.7%	44 41.5%
Many marketing activities can be accomplished only when using E-marketing	5 4.7%	7 6.6%	20 18.9%	1 0.9%	15 14.2%	33 31.1%	25 23.6%
Business activities with my company, friends, and other businesses force me to use e-marketing.	1 0.9%	3 2.8%	12 11.3%	1 0.9%	20 18.9%	42 39.6%	27 25.5%

n= 106; Source: Research data (2018)

From the observations in table1, the first item measuring Coercive pressure had most respondents (44:41.5%) strongly agreeing that “many of their marketing activities required them to use E-marketing in their businesses”, followed by 22 respondents (20.7%) who slightly agreed then 15 respondents (14.2%) who agreed. Cumulatively, 81 respondents agreed to the first measurement item statement as compared to 23 respondents at 21.2% who disagreed. For the second measurement item most respondents(33:31.1%) slightly agreed that “many marketing activities could be accomplished only when using E-marketing”, followed by 25 respondents at 23.6% who strongly agreed then 20 respondents at 18.9% who disagreed.Cumulatively,73 respondents at 68.9% agreed with the second measurement item as compared to 32 respondents at 30.1% who disagreed with the statement. The third item measuring coercive pressures indicated that most respondents (42) slightly agreed that “business activities with their company, friends, and other businesses forced them to use E-marketing” at 39.6% followed by 27 respondents at 25.5% who strongly agreed and then 20 respondents at 18.9% agreed. Altogether, 89 respondents (83.9%) generally agreed with the third measurement item for coercive pressure.

**4.1.2 Descriptive statistics for normative pressures measurement items**

The measurement scale for the normative pressures was composed of three items. The respondents were required to respond to questions on a seven point Likert scale. Table 2 captures these results

Table 2: Results for the Normative pressures measurement

statements	SD	SLD	DA	N	A	SLA	SA
I have seen what others do using e-marketing	11 10.4%	10 9.4%	10 9.4%	2 1.8%	10 9.4%	21 19.9%	42 39.6%
Many people in my social network use e-marketing	7 6.6%	10 9.4%	8 7.5%	3 2.8%	20 18.9%	35 33.0%	23 21.7%
E-marketing is very visible in my social network	8 7.5%	10 9.4%	16 15.1%	0 0%	13 15.1%	31 29.2%	29 25.2%

n= 106; Source: Research data (2018)

The first item measuring Normative pressures had most respondents strongly agreeing that “they had seen what others were doing using e-marketing” at 39.6 % ( 42 respondents) while in the second item most respondents slightly agreed that “many people in their social network used e-.marketing” at 33 %.(35 respondents). The third item measuring normative pressures show that most respondents (31) slightly agreed that “E-marketing was very visible in their social network” at 29.2%.cumulatively,73 respondents at 68.9% agreed that E-marketing was very visible in their social network as compared to 34 respondents at 32.1% who disagreed.

**4.1.3 Descriptive statistics for Mimetic pressures measurement items**

The measurement scale for the Mimetic pressures was composed of three items .the respondents were required to respond to questions on a seven point Likert scale.

Table 3: Results for the Mimetic pressures measurement

statements	SD	SLD	DA	N	A	SLA	SA
Businesses around me who use e-marketing have more prestige than those who do not	10 9.4%	3 2.8%	2 1.8%	0 0%	24 22.6%	20 18.9%	47 44.3%
Businesses around me who use e-marketing have a high profile	9 8.5%	14 13.2%	14 13.2%	5 4.7%	10 9.4%	40 37.8%	23 22.6%
Using e-Marketing is a status symbol for businesses around me	10 9.4%	4 3.8%	7 6.6%	0 0%	25 23.6%	32 30.2%	28 26.4%

n= 106; Source: Research data (2018)

The first item measuring Mimetic pressures had most respondents (47 respondents at 44.3%) strongly agreeing that “businesses around them who used e-marketing seem to have more prestige followed by 24 respondents at 22.6%. Cumulatively, 91 respondents at 85.8% agreed with the first statements measuring mimetic pressures. In the second item most respondents (40 respondents at 37.8%) slightly agreed that “many marketing activities could be accomplished only when using E-marketing, 23 respondents at 22.6% strongly agreed with the second statement. Overall, 73 respondents (68.9%) agreed with the statement as compared to 37 respondents (34.9%) who disagreed. The third item measuring mimetic pressures indicated that cumulatively most respondents (85)agreed that “using e-Marketing is a status symbol for businesses around them” at 80 % while 21 respondents at 19.8 % disagreed.

**4.1.4 Descriptive statistics for Intention to adopt E-marketing measurement items**

The measurement scale for the intention to adopt E-marketing was composed of three items. Table 4 presents the findings.

Table 4: Results for E-marketing adoption intention measurement items

statements	SD	SLD	DA	N	A	SLA	SA
My organization intends to adopt E-marketing	5 4.7%	0 0%	2 1.8%	0 0%	8 7.5%	61 58.5%	30 28.3%
My organization is likely to take steps at adopting E-marketing in the future	7 6.6%	10 9.4%	12 11.3%	0 0%	40 37.8%	26 24.5%	11 10.4%
My organization would highly recommend the adoption of E-marketing for other enterprises	5 4.7%	2 1.8%	7 6.6%	1 0.9%	60 56.7%	22 20.7%	9 9.4%

n= 106; Source: Research data (2018)

The first item measuring E-marketing adoption intention had most respondents (61) slightly agreeing that their “organization intends to adopt E-marketing” at 58.5 %, while in the second item most respondents (40) agreed that their “organization were likely to take steps at adopting E-marketing in the future” at 37.8%. The third item measuring adoption of e-marketing most respondents (60) at 56.7 % agreed that their “organization would highly recommend the adoption of E-marketing for other enterprises.

**4.2 Path analysis**

This section presents the findings from the analysis of direct relationships between the independent and the dependent latent variables in the model. The path analysis involved using an algorithm in which factor scores were estimated by

averaging all the indicators associated with the latent variables. P-values were calculated through the process of Resampling. Table 5 shows the results of the path analysis.

Table 5: Path analysis results

Latent variables	(beta estimates)	- P-values	S.E	Significance of path coefficient P<0.05
Coercive pressures	0.106	0.133	0.093	Insignificant
Normative pressures	0.354	<0.001	0.087	Significant
Mimetic pressures	0.176	0.019	0.092	Significant
E-marketing Adoption intention				

Research data (2018)

This study examined relationship between Institutional isomorphic pressures and intention to adopt E-Marketing. Under Institutional pressures there were three latent variables namely: Coercive, Normative and Mimetic pressures. The results for Coercive pressures indicate an insignificant relationship with intention to adopt E-Marketing ( $\beta= 0.106$ ,  $p= 0.133$ ); For Normative pressures, the results indicate a positive relationship with intention to adopt E-Marketing ( $\beta= 0.354$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) while results for Mimetic pressures indicate a positive relationship with intention to adopt E-Marketing ( $\beta=0.176$ ,  $p=0.019$ ). A path coefficient is regarded as significant if its confidence interval does not include the value of zero or if the p-value is below the pre-defined  $\alpha$ -level [40]

### 5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results for Coercive pressures indicate an insignificant relationship with e-marketing adoption intention ( $\beta= 0.106$ ,  $p= 0.133$ ). Coercive pressures refer to pressures from organisations which the other organisations depend on for business and pressures from socio-cultural expectations in the society, therefore this means that although there were pressures from organizations with which the small businesses depend on for business it was not enough to exert any significant effect of E-marketing adoption. Studies that have found similar results include [31] while studying social media as an innovation. For Normative forces the results indicate a positive relationship with e-marketing adoption intention ( $\beta= 0.354$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Possible reason could be that most respondents have seen what other competitors do with E-marketing and thus there is an obligatory feeling to join what other competitors like medium and large firms are already doing. Furthermore considerable pressure from members of the social network like Kisumu Hotels Association in which the surveyed businesses belong may result in small businesses adopting technologies like e-marketing. This pressure can lead them into adopting E-marketing as a condition to belong to that organization. Studies that have found similar results include [31]); [30] and [20]. Normative pressures include pressure produced by members of social networks (trade associations, professional associations, accreditation agencies and channel members). The results for Mimetic pressures indicate a positive relationship with E-marketing adoption intention ( $\beta =0.176$ ,  $p=0.019$ ). The findings from this study therefore means that an increased pressure to imitate other significant market leaders in an industry would lead to increased likelihood of adoption of an innovative system like E-marketing so as to be competitive. A plausible explanation could be that the respondents may have intended to adopt E-marketing because their perception that their competitors who have adopted E-marketing were having a high profile status and had more prestige than those who did not. Similar results have been found by [29] when he studied companies in Jordan to examine the impact of the institutional factors (mimetic pressures) and the organizational context on the adoption of cloud ERPs.

### 6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Coercive pressures had an insignificant relationship with e-marketing adoption intention. Coercive pressures refer to pressures from organisations which the other organisations depend on for business and pressures from socio-cultural expectations in the society, therefore this means that although there were pressures from organizations with which the small businesses depend on for business it was not enough to exert any significant effect of E-marketing adoption. This study also concludes that there is a positive relationship between Mimetic pressures and E-marketing adoption intention. These findings show that an increased pressure to imitate other significant market leaders in the hospitality industry would lead to increased intention to adopt E-marketing so as to be competitive. The respondents intended to adopt E-marketing because their perception that their competitors who have adopted E-marketing were having a high profile status and had more prestige than those who did not. This study also concludes that for Normative pressures have a positive relationship with e-marketing adoption intention. Most respondents had seen what other competitors do with E-marketing and thus there is an obligatory feeling to join what other competitors like medium and large firms are already doing. Furthermore considerable pressure from members of their social

network resulted in small businesses intending to adopt e-marketing. This pressure could lead them to adopt E-marketing as a condition to belong to that organization. This study has contributed to Information systems literature by expanding our understanding of small business adoption of E-marketing from the Institution theoretical perspective. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no research has been undertaken in the existing literature that focused on small business adoption of E-marketing based on Neo-Institution theory either individually or combined with other theories or models. This study thus filled this gap by studying E-marketing adoption by small businesses within the lenses of Institution theory. This is because organizational decisions are driven not only by rational goals of efficiency, but also by institutional environments which include social factors and legitimacy concerns [23]. This study also makes practical contributions to the industry. First, this study illuminates our understanding of E-marketing adoption by small business. The insights from the findings in this study may be helpful to vendors and innovators alike in their pursuit toward promoting of E-marketing among small businesses. The findings from this study should also broaden our understanding of Information Systems adoption factors and contributes to academic discourse on adoption of the new Information technologies in developing countries.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Vendors of E-marketing applications should create awareness among small businesses on the advantages of e-marketing and especially on newer technologies like the provision of software as a service (SAAS) using cloud technologies. The vendors of e-marketing technologies should also promote the advantages the early adaptors of e-marketing have enjoyed so as to stimulate the need to mimic them by other businesses that have not adopted e-marketing. The Government should also invest in the necessary I.T. infrastructure to allow E-marketing and payment services to be conducted.

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