

Innovative Potential in the Hospitality Industry: Trends in Georgia

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Hotel industry, innovative potential, digital technologies, artificial intelligence, benchmarking</p>	<p>The article examines the innovative potential in the modern hotel industry, focusing on the possibilities of applying innovative approaches and current trends in Georgia. In recent years, the number of hotels in Georgia has increased significantly; however, the sector still faces challenges related to service quality and the lack of efficient management systems. Many hostels, guesthouses, and short-term rental services are still unable to fully implement electronic process management. The study analyzes how small, medium, and large hotel enterprises utilize data analysis and visualization tools, which enable them to make rapid adjustments in hotel management and optimize operational processes. Research findings indicate that the insufficient use of such tools in Georgia often leads to a mismatch between service delivery and market demand. Furthermore, the paper emphasizes that the study of innovative potential is essential for the continuous improvement of service quality in the hotel industry. International practice demonstrates that hotels that regularly apply benchmarking analysis are more successful in implementing marketing strategies, enhancing service standards, and improving financial performance. For Georgia, as a developing tourism destination, this practice represents a critical component for achieving long-term growth and competitiveness.</p>
<p>JEL classification:</p>	<p>O3, L1</p>
<p>Received: 10.09.2025 Revised: 15.01.2026 Accepted: 15.04.2026</p>	<p>https://doi.org/10.46361/2449-2604.13.1.2026.154-164</p>

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<p>საკვანძო სიტყვები: სასტუმრო ბიზნესი, ინოვაციური პოტენციალი, ციფრული ტექნოლოგიები, ხელოვნური ინტელექტი, ბენჩმარკინგი.</p>	<p>სტატიაში განხილულია თანამედროვე სასტუმრო ბიზნესში ინოვაციური პოტენციალისა და ინოვაციური მიდგომების გამოყენების შესაძლებლობები და მიმდინარე ტენდენციები საქართველოში. ბოლო წლებში საქართველოში სასტუმროების რაოდენობა მნიშვნელოვნად გაიზარდა, თუმცა სექტორი ჯერ კიდევ აწყდება ხარისხიანი სერვისისა და ეფექტიანი მართვის სისტემების დეფიციტს. მრავალი ჰოსტელი, გესტჰაუსი და ბინის გაქირავების სერვისი ჯერ კიდევ ვერ ახერხებს პროცესების სრულად ელექტრონულად მართვას. ნაშრომში გადმოცემულია თუ როგორ იყენებენ მცირე, საშუალო და დიდი ზომის სასტუმრო ქსელები მონაცემთა ანალიზისა და ვიზუალიზაციის ინსტრუმენტებს, რომლებიც მათ საშუალებას აძლევს, სწრაფად მოახდინონ ცვლილებები სასტუმროების მენეჯმენტსა და მის ოპტიმიზაციაში. კვლევებით დასაბუთებულია, რომ საქართველოში მსგავსი ინსტრუმენტების</p>

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	<p>ნაკლებობა ხშირად იწვევს დისბალანსს მომსახურებასა და ბაზრის მოთხოვნებს შორის.</p> <p>გაანალიზებულია, რომ ინოვაციური პოტენციალის შესწავლა აქტუალურია სასტუმრო ბიზნესში მომსახურების ხარისხის მუდმივი გაუმჯობესების მიზნით. მსოფლიო პრაქტიკა აჩვენებს, რომ სასტუმროები, რომლებიც რეგულარულად ახორციელებენ ბენჩმარკინგის ანალიზს, უფრო წარმატებულად ახდენენ მარკეტინგული სტრატეგიების დანერგვას, ამალაგებენ მომსახურების სტანდარტებს და აღმოაჩენენ ფინანსურ მაჩვენებლებს. საქართველოსთვის, როგორც ტურიზმის განვითარებადი ქვეყნისთვის, ეს პრაქტიკა წარმოადგენს გრძელვადიანი ზრდის აუცილებელ კომპონენტს.</p>
JEL კლასიფიკაცია:	<i>O3, L1</i>
მიღებულია: 10.09.2025 რეგისტრირებულია: 15.01.2026 დამტკიცებულია: 10.04.2026	https://doi.org/10.46361/2449-2604.13.1.2026.154-164

Introduction

In Georgia, where the hospitality industry plays a significant role in the economic growth driven by tourism, the application of benchmarking results is particularly important. Research indicates that hotels which have adopted innovative approaches to improve their operations—specifically by observing market leaders and analyzing their best practices—have achieved notable improvements in service quality. In particular, these innovative approaches have led to a 20% increase in service efficiency, as well as a reduction in customer dissatisfaction through time optimization and more accurate market analysis (**Zadneprovskaya & Poddubnaya, 2021**).

Benchmarking, as an effective tool for improving service quality in the hospitality industry, enables hotels to continuously evaluate and enhance their services. The analysis of customer feedback and the integration of technological innovations are critical success factors, especially for small and medium-sized hotels. In the context of Georgia, the systematic use of benchmarking is essential for improving service quality, increasing customer satisfaction, and ensuring long-term business development.

In Georgia, through the implementation and application of modern innovative technologies, hotels are increasingly adopting digital tools that enable more effective management of customer flows and resources. This process allows management to identify cost components that require optimization and improve overall operational efficiency. Under such conditions, innovative approaches prove to be effective not only in reducing costs but also in enhancing service quality, particularly in small and medium-sized hotels. Most studies emphasize the growing level of competition in the hospitality sector and the need to develop diverse approaches to improving sales strategies in order to meet evolving customer demands. This requires continuous monitoring and market analysis, which can be effectively conducted through benchmarking. In particular, the adoption of new innovative approaches contributes significantly to increasing the overall success and competitiveness of the sector.

Literature Review

The development of hotel management in Georgia, particularly in terms of data analysis, is associated with several challenges. These challenges are mainly related to limited access to data and a lack of technological expertise. However, these barriers can be overcome through the sharing of international experience and the implementation of modern analytical systems (**Oses, N., Gerrikagoitia, J., & Alzua, A., 2016**).

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Data analysis represents a key instrument in the benchmarking process, enabling hotels to assess market development, analyze competitors' strategies, and determine optimal paths for growth (Osés, N., Gerrikagoitia, J., & Alzua, A., 2016). The prospects for the implementation of data analytics in Georgia are significant, and it is projected that by 2025, digital data analysis systems will be adopted by approximately 80% of hotels operating in the country. Given that modern tourists increasingly prioritize digital services and comfort, they are more likely to choose hotels that effectively integrate advanced technologies into their operations. In this context, benchmarking plays a crucial role in identifying operational gaps that hinder hotel development and competitiveness (Akhalaia, N., & Vasadze, M., 2016).

In the Georgian market, some researchers argue that the application of artificial intelligence in the hospitality industry is associated with ethical concerns, particularly regarding the protection of customer data. As is well known, AI systems collect and analyze customer information; however, studies indicate that approximately 40% of consumers require reassurance that their data is securely protected (Ositashvili, N., & Nadareishvili, N., 2021). The effective use of innovative technologies, benchmarking methods, and data analytics tools represents a critical factor in the development of Georgia's hospitality industry. Their widespread implementation will contribute to enhancing sectoral competitiveness, improving service quality, and strengthening the country's position in the international tourism market. The research process has revealed a number of conclusions and evaluations from both Georgian and international scholars, indicating that benchmarking is particularly beneficial when an organization seeks to improve its processes with minimal investment. However, its main limitation lies in the fact that internal organizational data may not be sufficient for developing effective strategies in relation to external competition. Furthermore, strengthening regulatory frameworks and increasing state support are critically important, especially for regional hotels that face challenges due to the relatively low influx of international tourists.

Research Methodology

The research employed methods of statistical observation and analysis. In order to establish the theoretical foundation of the study, the works of both Georgian and international scholars related to the development of the hospitality industry, innovation, and marketing management were reviewed and analyzed. The study also utilized various scientific publications, statistical data, reports from international and local organizations, internet resources, as well as the results of a marketing survey conducted by the authors.

In order to analyze the innovative potential of the hospitality industry in Georgia, a marketing study was conducted using an online survey method. The survey aimed to assess the level of innovation adoption within the hotel sector, the use of modern technologies, and the effectiveness of marketing activities. The collected data were processed and analyzed using statistical methods, which enabled the identification of existing trends in the sector and the evaluation of the impact of innovations on the competitiveness of the hospitality industry.

Research Results

One of the key factors influencing the development of the hospitality industry is its innovative potential, which is determined by the ability of organizations to adopt modern technologies, utilize data analytics systems, and effectively integrate best international practices. In this process, benchmarking plays a crucial role, as it enables organizations to evaluate competitors' performance, identify customer preferences, and make effective managerial decisions based on the insights obtained.

The development of innovative potential in the hospitality industry in Georgia has been significantly influenced by the adoption of digital technologies. For instance, in recent years, more than 60% of hotels operating in Georgia have implemented digital customer feedback platforms in practice. Particularly since 2020, internationally branded hotels operating in Tbilisi have actively adopted modern analytical tools and quality management systems, which has led to a substantial improvement in service quality and an increase in customer satisfaction levels.

Particular emphasis has been placed on the use of customer review systems on platforms such as Booking.com, which enable hotels to analyze customer feedback, identify strengths and weaknesses in service delivery, and implement appropriate changes to improve service quality. The growth of innovative potential is also closely linked to the use of modern data analysis and visualization tools. Data analytics allows hotels to comprehensively assess the

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competitive environment, compare their performance with other market players, and identify strategic directions for development (**Tchitotashvili, 2023**). Consequently, hotels that regularly conduct competitive analysis are able to adapt more rapidly to changing market demands.

Since the application of benchmarking in the Georgian market is still at a developmental stage, its potential remains significantly high. It is evident that the effective implementation of benchmarking will substantially enhance the competitiveness of both individual hotels and the tourism sector as a whole. In this context, the adoption of international standards, including ISO standards, is of particular importance, as it contributes to improving service quality and increasing the efficiency of organizational management.

In contemporary conditions, the use of artificial intelligence is considered one of the key directions for the innovative development of the hospitality sector. The integration of artificial intelligence into the benchmarking process enables hotels to analyze customer behavior, identify market trends, and develop personalized service offerings (**Bodea, Ferguson, & Garrow, 2009**).

The advancement of personalization significantly increases customer satisfaction and enhances service quality. However, in Georgia, the widespread adoption of such technologies is hindered by the insufficient development of technological infrastructure and the lack of qualified personnel, which necessitates the implementation of appropriate training and professional development programs.

The innovative potential of hotels is also reflected in the application of modern revenue management methods. Hotel revenue is not limited solely to room sales but also includes a range of additional services. The primary sources of revenue typically consist of room sales, which account for approximately 60–80% of total revenue, as well as food and beverage services, event organization, and various ancillary services (**Smith, 2020**). Equally important is the provision of supplementary services such as restaurants, bars, spa centers, swimming pools, conference halls, and other amenities, which contribute significantly to overall revenue generation and enhance the overall guest experience.

The active use of advanced technologies can assist hotels in achieving more efficient allocation of financial resources and improved cost control. In the hospitality industry, cost management has a direct impact on profitability, financial stability, and overall competitiveness (**Campos, 2025**). Therefore, the primary objective for hotels is to reduce costs without negatively affecting customer satisfaction. According to research findings, hotels can reduce internal costs by up to 15% through effective cost management practices (**Jones & Lockwood, 2021**).

It should be noted that statistical assessments of the innovative potential of tourism in Georgia are largely based on outdated data sources, and there is a lack of accurate quantitative and qualitative indicators reflecting the country's current level of innovative potential (**Kveladze, K., 2014**). According to data from the international accommodation booking platform Airbnb, in January 2025, the nationwide occupancy rate in Georgia reached 36%, representing an increase of 2.8% compared to the previous year. A total of 11,291 accommodation units are listed on the platform across the country, of which 5,167 are located in Tbilisi. Additionally, the platform recorded a 6.4% increase in occupancy growth (**National Tourism Administration of Georgia, 2025**).

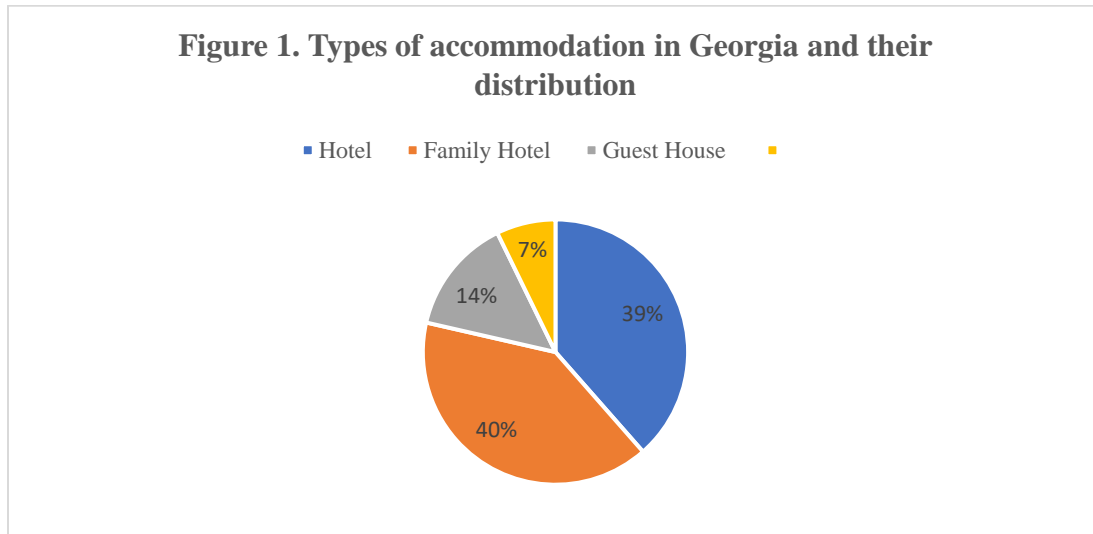
Over the past few years, the number of hotels in Georgia has increased significantly; however, the sector still faces challenges related to the provision of high-quality services and the implementation of well-structured management systems. Many hostels, guesthouses, and short-term rental services are still unable to fully manage their operations electronically. In response to these challenges, a startup has emerged in the market that has simplified and addressed this issue. The startup Arealy has been operating in the Georgian market since 2017 and has developed an integrated hospitality management system. Initially adopted by a limited number of hotels, it is now partnered with major platforms such as Booking.com, Expedia, and Hostelworld. Through the Arealy system, hotel and hostel managers are able to manage multiple distribution channels in real time within a single unified platform (**Bank of Georgia, 2023**).

The distribution and structure of accommodation types in Georgia vary significantly (see Figure 1). In particular, the largest share—40%—is represented by family-type hotel networks, while traditional hotels account for 39%. Guesthouses comprise 14% of the total, whereas other types of accommodation represent only 7%. The number of accommodation units has been steadily increasing over the years. Based on this growth trend, it can be inferred that

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the expansion in accommodation capacity may soon significantly exceed the growth rate of visitor stay duration. According to available data, a total of 3,198 accommodation establishments are registered in Georgia, comprising 53,759 rooms and 128,015 beds (PMCG Research, 2024).



Source: National Bank of Georgia, based on research data on the tourism and hospitality sector in Georgia.

The data presented in the diagram indicate that the accommodation sector in Georgia is characterized by a diverse structure, where both hotels and small-scale family-run accommodation units play a significant role. This structure contributes to meeting the needs of different segments of the tourism market. At the same time, ensuring the sustainable development of the sector requires improving service quality, increasing compliance with international standards, and implementing modern management practices. Ultimately, these measures will enhance the competitiveness of the country's tourism industry in the global market.

The growing popularity of online platforms such as Booking.com and Airbnb enables hotels not only to increase their sales but also to improve service quality. The use of these platforms is particularly important in the benchmarking process, as they allow hotels to more effectively evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their competitors (see Figure 2). An analysis of accommodation distribution by regions in Georgia shows that the Adjara region holds the leading position with 1,593 accommodation units. It is followed by Tbilisi with 1,473 units, Imereti with 264 units, while the Racha region has the lowest number, with only 22 accommodation units.

Figure 2. Distribution of Accommodation Listings on Booking.com by Location in Georgia

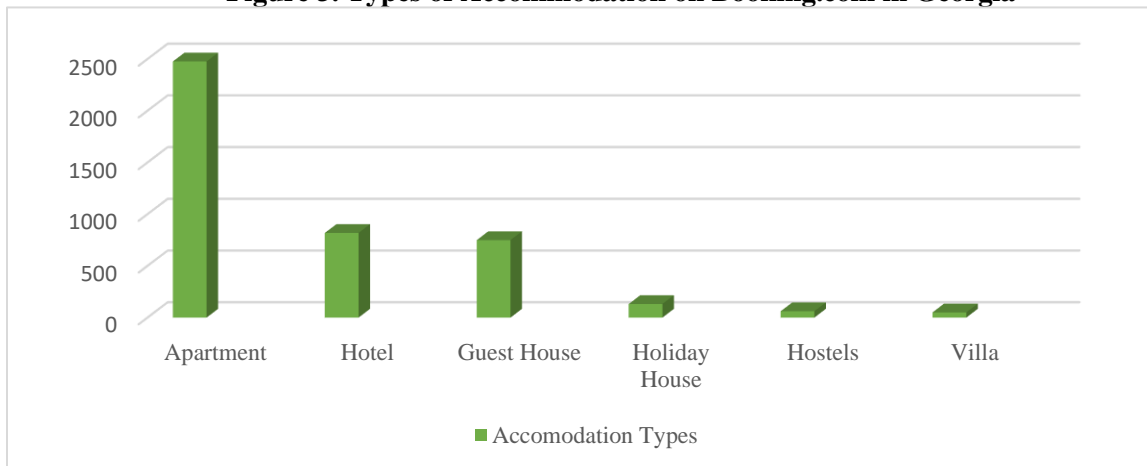


Source: Data obtained from the official website of Booking.com.

The presented data indicate that the development of tourism infrastructure in Georgia is primarily concentrated in the most active tourist regions.

According to the distribution of accommodation types (see Figure 3), apartments are the most popular, accounting for 2,476 units. This is followed by hotels with 818 units and guesthouses with 749 units. Holiday homes account for 131 units, hostels for 61, and villas for 50. The latter category remains at an early stage of development, with relatively low demand at present.

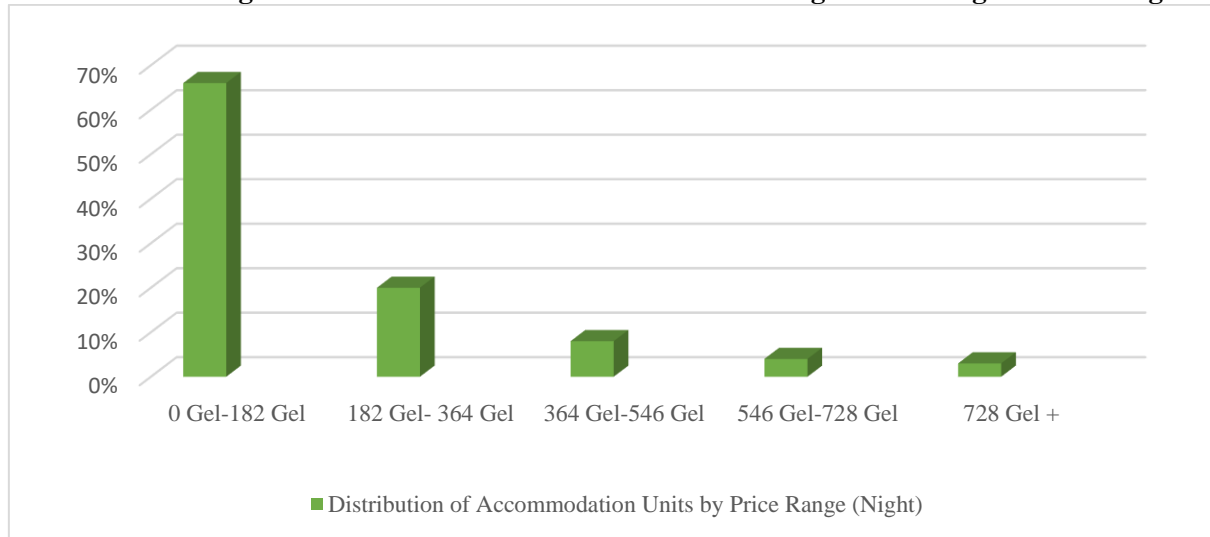
Figure 3. Types of Accommodation on Booking.com in Georgia



Source: Data obtained from the official website of Booking.com.

Regarding daily accommodation prices (see Figure 4), the majority falls within the lowest price range, with 66% of accommodations priced at up to 182 GEL. The price range of 182–364 GEL accounts for 20%, followed by 364–546 GEL at 8%, 546–728 GEL at 4%, and only 3% of accommodations priced at 728 GEL and above.

Figure 4. Distribution of Accommodation Listings on Booking.com in Georgia



Source: Data obtained from the official website of Booking.com.

The combined analysis of the above-presented diagrams indicates that the tourism market in Georgia is characterized by regional concentration, a high share of apartments and small-scale accommodation units, and a primary focus on the mid- and low-price segments. These trends highlight the existing opportunities for the development of tourism infrastructure, particularly in the direction of improving service quality and expanding the premium segment. Such developments would contribute to enhancing the competitiveness of Georgia’s tourism sector in the international market.

It should be noted that for a country such as Georgia, innovative potential is particularly evident in areas such as gastronomic (culinary), ethnocultural, mountain and ski tourism, ethnic tourism, nostalgic tourism, and related fields (**Maziashvili, N., 2023**). Accordingly, it is essential to promote tourism development across different regions of the country in line with international tourism standards and evolving market demands. Clearly, the level of interest among visitors is high, which in turn contributes to the growth and expansion of the hotel industry. However, under such conditions, it is crucial to ensure the accurate assessment of Georgia’s tourism innovative potential, as well as the reliability and validity of statistical data used in the sector.

In the context of the rapid development of modern technologies, technological tools have become essential for the hospitality industry in optimizing costs and increasing profitability. Accordingly, researchers suggest that hotel businesses should take into account several key technological trends that contribute to improving service quality and enhancing competitiveness. These trends primarily include cloud-based software platforms and services (Cloud / Software as a Service – SaaS), mobile technologies, social media integration, personalized systems, integrated management systems, and globalization (**Marketer.ge**).

Software platforms and IT services represent a relatively new, yet rapidly evolving direction within the hospitality industry. Such systems significantly reduce operational costs while ensuring the delivery of high-quality services to guests. At the same time, the use of information technologies substantially decreases the time required to perform various processes. Tasks that previously required several months to complete can now be executed within a

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matter of days through modern systems. Accordingly, the implementation of such technologies in the hotel industry is considered a positive and progressive trend.

Mobile technologies—including smartphones, tablets, and other portable devices—play a significant role, particularly for small and medium-sized hotels. Their use enables businesses to improve service quality, increase operational efficiency, and enhance competitiveness in the market.

Social media has become a crucial tool for marketing communication in the hospitality industry. Platforms such as TripAdvisor, Facebook, and Twitter serve as primary sources of information for consumers when selecting leisure and accommodation options. These platforms enable hotels to monitor customer feedback in real time and respond promptly to potential issues, which positively impacts the company's image and reputation.

Personalized service systems are gaining increasing importance in the modern hospitality industry. Customers increasingly expect individualized services, ranging from personalized welcome messages displayed on television screens to additional in-room services tailored to their preferences. The processing of such data is made possible through integrated hotel management systems, which allow management to analyze guest preferences and offer customized services. This, in turn, enhances customer satisfaction and increases the likelihood of repeat visits.

Integration represents a critical component of modern hotel management. Hotel operations encompass multiple functions, which are often managed through different software systems. The integration of these systems enables management to access information within a unified platform, process data more efficiently, generate analytical reports, and make more accurate decisions regarding financial performance and business development. This process significantly simplifies both internal management and communication with customers.

In the context of globalization, international connections have become increasingly important in the hospitality industry. The implementation of technological systems facilitates the adoption of international standards, the provision of multilingual services, and the more effective fulfillment of the diverse needs of customers from different countries.

As research indicates, the use of digital benchmarking platforms in the country's hotel sector is expected to exceed 80%, contributing both to improved service quality and increased customer loyalty. The innovative application of benchmarking represents not only a tool for enhancing operational efficiency but also a strategic instrument for positioning Georgia's hotel sector in the international market. As noted, "the integration of digital technologies into the benchmarking process creates a significant competitive advantage, ensuring the sustainable development of the country's tourism sector" (Khmiadashvili, 2019).

The Georgian market also includes online platforms such as Hotsale.ge, which offer discounted deals on various types of accommodation, including three- and five-star hotels, premium-class apartments, cottages, and private residences. The platform provides users with information about popular tourist destinations in Georgia, including resorts such as Batumi, Kobuleti, Bakuriani, Svaneti, and Racha.

The hotel market in Georgia is predominantly characterized by small and medium-sized enterprises, while international chain hotels account for approximately 13% of the market share (Katsitadze et al., 2019). An example of marketing innovation can be observed in the practices of the international hotel chain Marriott International. Since 2014, the company has implemented mobile applications that enable virtual check-in and check-out systems. This innovation allows guests to complete registration and departure processes via mobile devices without the need to wait in queues. Such an approach represents not only a marketing innovation but also a process innovation, as it significantly enhances operational efficiency and improves the overall customer experience.

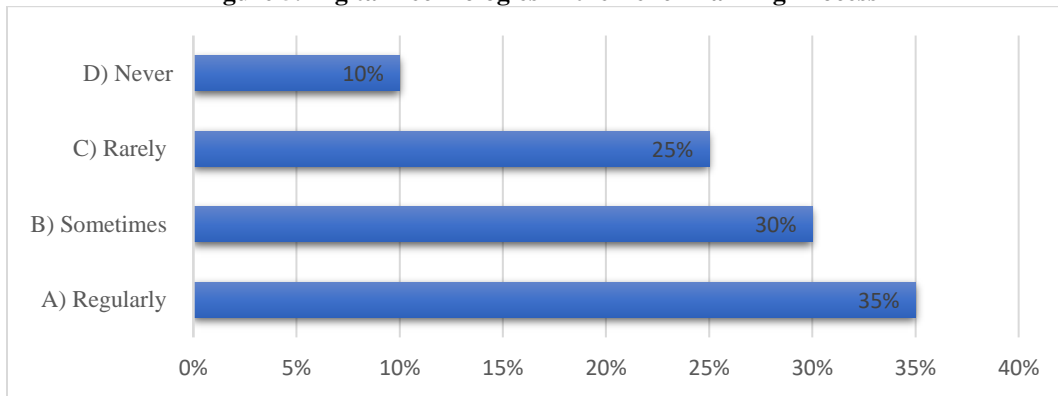
In Overall, the implementation of innovations in Georgia's hotel industry is important not only in terms of product development but also across marketing, organizational, and process innovations. Such an approach enables both international hotel chains and small-scale accommodation providers to maintain competitiveness and secure their respective market positions (Katsitadze et al., 2019).

Digital technologies remain one of the most significant aspects in the development of the hospitality industry. The results obtained within the framework of this research, which examined the use of digital technologies, indicate that 35% of respondents regularly use digital tools, 25% use them occasionally, while 30% use them rarely. Additionally, 10% of respondents reported that they never use digital technologies in the benchmarking process (see Corresponding author. ms.ananoshanidze@gmail.com



Figure 5). These findings demonstrate that, despite global trends toward digital transformation, there are still notable barriers to the full adoption and effective use of technological solutions in Georgia.

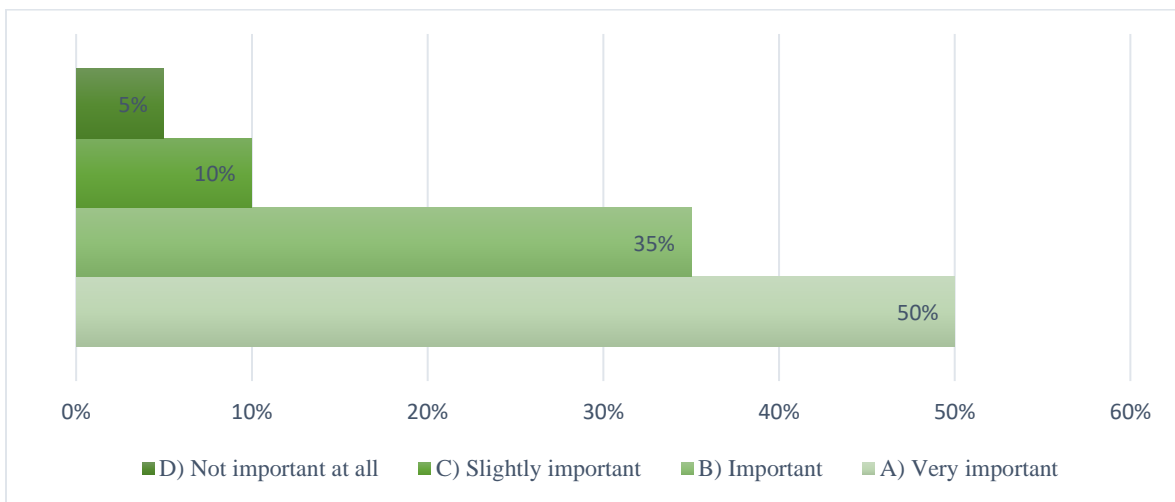
Figure 5. Digital Technologies in the Benchmarking Process



Source: The diagram is based on data obtained from the author’s marketing research.

The same study also revealed that artificial intelligence (AI) and automation tools are still rarely used in Georgia. However, international experience demonstrates that the integration of AI into operational processes significantly reduces costs and improves customer interactions. For instance, chatbots that operate on a 24/7 basis assist customers continuously, thereby not only increasing service efficiency but also reducing the workload of personnel (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Attitudes Toward the Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Benchmarking Process



Source: The diagram is based on data obtained from the author’s marketing research.

Approximately 50% of respondents identified artificial intelligence (AI) as a “very important” tool, highlighting its critical role in optimizing the hospitality sector. The application of AI in the benchmarking process is considered a mechanism for reducing costs and improving operational efficiency. The findings of this study indicate that the hotel sector in Georgia is still in a developmental stage, which, at the same time, creates significant opportunities for the integration of advanced technologies. A portion of respondents noted that the primary barrier to technology adoption is infrastructural limitations. These include both limited access to modern software solutions and the lack of high-quality internet services, particularly in regional areas of Georgia. As a result, regional hotels are often unable to fully utilize existing market opportunities, which ultimately hinders their growth and development.

The results of the study indicate that 62% of respondents believe benchmarking significantly improves the quality of hotel services, while 25% consider its impact to be minimal. This suggests that benchmarking is more actively applied in higher-tier hotels that are focused on enhancing customer experience. Regarding the need for changes in benchmarking methodologies, 40% of respondents stated that digital tools should be implemented, while 30% emphasized the importance of improving staff qualifications. These findings highlight that both innovative approaches and the involvement of qualified personnel are essential for the effective application of benchmarking in the hospitality sector.

The comparative analysis of the research results demonstrates that benchmarking in Georgia is perceived as an effective, yet still underutilized tool. The existing literature supports these findings and emphasizes the necessity of integrating technological solutions, engaging qualified personnel, and adopting international standards.

The hotel sector in Georgia should strengthen the application of benchmarking practices in order to compete effectively in international markets and improve service quality. As a result, benchmarking can become a key driving force not only for the development of the hotel sector but also for the broader advancement of the tourism industry as a whole.

Conclusion

Thus, for the active application of benchmarking, it is essential to conduct an in-depth analysis of modern innovative potential and to implement appropriate incentive mechanisms. This approach will enable small-scale hotels in the country to manage their businesses more effectively and ensure sustainable development.

To enhance the competitiveness of the hospitality industry, it is crucial to integrate artificial intelligence and automation tools, which contribute to improving service quality and reducing operational costs. In this context, innovative approaches—such as data analytics, artificial intelligence, and the adoption of international standards—play a significant role in strengthening the benchmarking process. In order to support the development of Georgia’s hotel industry and improve its competitiveness in the international market, it is necessary to thoroughly assess innovative potential and implement approaches that promote the sharing of international best practices and ensure the sustainable development of the sector as a whole. Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance benchmarking practices and increase competitiveness in Georgia’s hotel sector:

- Implementation of innovative technologies – The hospitality sector should widely adopt data analytics systems, artificial intelligence, and automation tools, which will improve service quality and increase operational efficiency.
- Increase in technological investments – Through collaboration between the public and private sectors, it is necessary to increase investment in technological infrastructure, which will facilitate the adoption of innovative approaches and support informed decision-making in the hotel industry.

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