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Digital Marketing Strategies To Increase The Competitiveness Of The Hospitality Industry

Asminar Mokodongan[1], Lisna Bantulu[2]

[1,2]Universitas Negeri Gorontalo

Email: asminar@ung.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to analyze digital marketing strategies implemented by the hotel industry to increase competitiveness amidst changing consumer behavior and the development of digital technology. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation of hotel digital marketing activities. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, coding, theme identification, and drawing and verifying conclusions. The results show that digital marketing strategies are implemented through the use of social media, content marketing, online travel agents (OTAs), electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), digital customer engagement, and online reputation management. Social media and visual content play a role in increasing brand awareness and expanding market reach, while customer reviews and ratings are important elements in building trust with potential customers. Responsive digital interactions also help hotels understand customer needs and build better relationships. However, the implementation of digital marketing strategies still faces obstacles such as limited human resource competency, consistency in content production, marketing creativity, and price competition on digital platforms. The study concludes that digital marketing strategies integrated with service quality can strengthen reputation, increase customer trust, expand the market, and create a sustainable competitive advantage for the hotel industry.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Competitiveness, Hospitality Industry, Social Media, E-WOM, Online Reputation

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INTRODUCTION

The hotel industry is a crucial sector supporting tourism and economic development, providing accommodation services that are essential for tourists. The development of the hotel industry is significantly influenced by changes in tourist numbers, room occupancy rates, travel patterns, and changes in consumer behavior in choosing accommodations (Suparwata et al., 2024). Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2024) indicates that the accommodation industry is a crucial component of Indonesia's tourism industry, which continues to grow in line with the increasing mobility of people and tourists. This situation has led to increasingly complex competition among hotels, requiring them to rely more heavily on strategic locations, pricing, facilities, and service quality (Meirayani et al., 2025). Hotels are also required to build competitive advantages through the use of digital technology to reach a wider consumer base. In this context, digital marketing is a strategic tool, enabling hotels to deliver product information, build customer relationships, and strengthen their brand image more quickly and flexibly (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

The development of digital technology has changed consumer behavior in searching for, evaluating, and purchasing hotel services. Consumers can now obtain information about hotels through websites, social media, online travel agents (OTAs), search engines, and various customer review platforms before making a booking. These changes have made digital information a crucial part of the consumer decision-making process. Vermeulen and Seegers (2009) found that online hotel reviews can enhance consumer consideration of a hotel, especially when the information provides insight into previous customer experiences. Similarly, (Ye et al., 2011) demonstrated that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) through user-generated content can influence traveler behavior and hotel booking decisions (Khairunnisa et al., 2025). Therefore, hotels need to develop digital marketing strategies that provide relevant, engaging, and easily accessible information that can increase potential customers' trust.

One important element in digital hotel marketing is the use of social media and online reputation management. Social media provides an opportunity for hotels to interact directly with customers, deliver promotions, introduce facilities, showcase customer experiences, and build long-term relationships with target markets. (Anderson, 2012) explains that hotel activity and reputation on social media are related to hotel performance, particularly through the influence of consumer reviews and perceptions. Meanwhile, (Levy et al., 2013) show that a hotel's response to customer reviews is a crucial part of online reputation management because it demonstrates the hotel's

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attention to its customer experience. In a competitive digital environment, hotels that are able to manage comments, reviews, and communicate with consumers quickly and professionally have the potential to build a more positive image than hotels that are passive in the face of digital interactions (Ardelia, 2025).

However, the use of digital technology does not automatically result in increased hotel competitiveness. Hotels need to have a planned, integrated digital marketing strategy based on market information. (De Pelsmacker et al., 2018) showed that a digital marketing strategy that includes digital planning, monitoring online reviews, using digital metrics, and responding to customers can contribute to hotel performance. This means that digital marketing is not only understood as the activity of uploading promotional content, but is a strategic process that involves analyzing consumer behavior, managing customer relationships, measuring campaign effectiveness, and managing reputation. In fact, (Cho et al., 2024) showed that online reviews also have a competitive effect on hotel demand because consumers not only pay attention to the reputation of the hotel they choose but also compare it with competitors. This condition requires hotel companies to continuously monitor the digital environment and develop strategies that can differentiate their products and services from competitors (Indri et al., 2024).

Based on these conditions, digital marketing strategies are a crucial approach to enhancing the competitiveness of the hospitality industry. Hotel competitiveness in the digital era is determined not only by the ability to provide rooms at competitive prices, but also by the ability to build brand awareness, increase customer engagement, create positive digital experiences, manage online reputations, and optimize various digital marketing channels. (Casalo et al., 2015) explain that online hotel rating systems can influence consumer booking behavior, making digital reputation a crucial asset for hospitality companies. Therefore, hotels need to integrate social media, websites, OTAs, e-WOM, content marketing, and customer review management into a comprehensive marketing strategy. This strategy is expected to not only increase the number of visits and bookings but also strengthen the hotel's position in market competition. Therefore, research on "Digital Marketing Strategies to Enhance the Competitiveness of the Hospitality Industry" is important to analyze how the use of various digital instruments can become a business strategy in building competitive advantage and improving the performance of the hospitality industry.

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METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of the digital marketing strategies implemented by the hotel industry to enhance competitiveness. Research data were obtained through in-depth interviews with hotel management, marketing staff or digital marketers, and hotel customers, who were purposively selected based on their involvement and experience in marketing activities and the use of hotel digital services. In addition to interviews, data were collected through observations of hotel digital marketing activities and documentation in the form of social media content, websites, online travel agent (OTA) platforms, customer reviews, and digital promotional materials. Data analysis was conducted interactively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification, with a coding process to identify key themes such as social media utilization, content marketing, electronic word of mouth, online reputation management, digital customer engagement, and strategies for dealing with competition. Data validity was tested through triangulation of sources and techniques, namely comparing information from management, marketing staff, customers, observation results, and documentation, to obtain a credible picture of how digital marketing strategies are used to strengthen the competitiveness of the hotel industry .

RESULT

The research findings show that digital marketing strategies have become a crucial part of the hotel industry's efforts to increase competitiveness. Interviews with hotel management, marketing staff, and customers revealed that digital marketing facilitates hotels' introduction of products and services to a wider audience. Hotels utilize various digital channels, such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, websites, Google Business Profile, and online travel agents (OTAs) to convey information about hotel facilities, room rates, promotional packages, locations, and various activities. The use of digital media is considered capable of increasing market reach because hotel information can be accessed by consumers without being limited by location or time. Furthermore, the use of visual content in the form of photos, videos, reels, and storytelling about facilities and stay experiences is a widely used strategy to attract the attention of potential customers (Atmoko, 2018).

The second finding shows that social media and content marketing are key instruments in building hotel brand awareness. Marketing teams not only upload information about prices and promotions, but also create content showcasing the hotel's

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atmosphere, room facilities, restaurants, swimming pools, customer activities, and surrounding tourist destinations. This strategy aims to create a visual image of the experience customers will have when choosing a hotel. Based on observations of digital activity, visual and informative content tends to be used more intensively because it is considered to provide a more realistic picture of the products and services offered. This finding indicates that digital marketing strategies in the hospitality industry have shifted from mere sales promotions to communication strategies oriented towards creating experiences and relationships with consumers (Cahyadi & Setiawan, 2025).

The next finding relates to electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and online reputation. The results show that customer reviews and ratings on digital platforms are important considerations for potential customers before making a booking. Hotel management actively monitors customer reviews and strives to respond to both positive and negative comments (Kesumawatie et al., 2018). Positive reviews are used to strengthen the hotel's reputation, while negative reviews serve as a source of evaluation to improve service quality. Several customers also stated that they compare ratings, comments, customer photos, and previous guest experiences before making a hotel selection. Thus, digital reputation is a crucial asset that can either strengthen or weaken a hotel's competitiveness.

The research also shows that digital interaction with customers is a factor supporting increased competitiveness. Hotels utilize direct messaging features on social media, WhatsApp, social media comments, and communication channels on booking platforms to provide information and answer customer questions. A quick and friendly response is crucial in building customer trust before booking (Naibaho & Ritonga, 2024). These interactions also enable hotels to understand consumer needs, such as requests for specific amenities, pricing information, check-in and check-out times, and special needs during their stay. Thus, digital media serves not only as a one-way communication channel but also as a means of building relationships between hotels and customers (Faridah et al., 2026).

Recent findings indicate that digital marketing strategies contribute to increasing hotel competitiveness through market expansion, image strengthening, increased customer trust, and the ability to differentiate themselves from competitors. Hotels that consistently demonstrate excellence through digital media have a greater chance of attracting consumers. However, the study also identified several obstacles, including limited human resources with digital competencies, consistent content creation, the ability to produce creative content, price competition on OTAs, and the demand to

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respond quickly to customer reviews (Deo et al., 2023). Therefore, the success of digital marketing is determined not only by the number of platforms used, but also by the hotel's ability to integrate content strategy, customer communication, reputation management, digital promotions, and ongoing performance evaluation.

Table 1. Key Findings of Digital Marketing Strategy

Digital Strategy	Research Findings	Contribution to Competitiveness
Social Media Marketing	Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are used for promotion and communication	Increase reach and brand awareness
Content Marketing	Photos, videos, reels, storytelling, and hotel facility content	Attract attention and build positive perception
Online Travel Agent	Hotels leverage OTAs to reach a wider market	Simplify ordering and improve market access
Electronic Word of Mouth	Customer ratings and reviews are actively monitored	Increase trust and reputation
Digital Customer Engagement	Interaction via messages, comments and WhatsApp	Strengthening customer relationships
Online Reputation Management	Hotels respond to both positive and negative reviews	Helps maintain image and trust
Digital Promotion	Package offers, discounts and promotions through digital channels	Increase attractiveness compared to competitors

Overall, the research findings show that digital marketing strategies play a role in shaping the competitiveness of the hotel industry through three main mechanisms: increasing hotel visibility, strengthening trust and reputation, and enhancing customer interaction. Consistent use of digital technology enables hotels to be more responsive to changes in consumer behavior and competitive dynamics. However, this strategy needs to be supported by good service quality, as expectations formed through digital media must align with customer experiences when using hotel services.

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CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that digital marketing strategies play a crucial role in enhancing the competitiveness of the hotel industry. The use of social media, content marketing, online travel agents (OTAs), electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), and online reputation management can expand marketing reach and increase hotel visibility amidst increasingly fierce competition. Social media is used not only as a promotional tool but also as a medium to build brand awareness, convey information about facilities and services, and create closer interactions with customers.

Furthermore, customer reviews and ratings on various digital platforms are crucial factors in building trust among potential customers. Reputation management through responses to both positive and negative reviews can serve as a source of evaluation and strengthen a hotel's image. Fast, informative, and responsive digital interactions also help hotels understand customer needs and build better relationships with them. Therefore, the success of digital marketing depends not only on the intensity of promotions but also on the hotel's ability to create consistent digital experiences and service.

This study also shows that the implementation of digital marketing strategies still faces several obstacles, such as limited human resource competency, consistency in content production, creativity in developing promotional materials, price competition on OTA platforms, and the demand for rapid customer response. Therefore, hotels need to develop an integrated digital strategy by improving human resource competency, optimizing content quality, utilizing customer data, and evaluating the effectiveness of each marketing channel. Ultimately, a consistently managed digital marketing strategy supported by good service quality can strengthen reputation, increase customer trust, expand the market, and create a sustainable competitive advantage for the hotel industry.

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