

## The Effect of Digital Marketing on Hotel Room Occupancy Rates: A Case Study of Santika Hotel in Bangka City

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### ABSTRACT

Digital marketing has become an important strategy to increase the occupancy rate of hotel rooms in the era of modern technology. This research aims to analyze the influence of digital marketing on room occupancy rates in star hotels in Bangka City. The research method used was a quantitative approach by collecting data through surveys of hotel guests and in-depth interviews with marketing managers. In addition, secondary data from reports of hotel occupancy rate were also analyzed to support the research results. The results show that digital marketing has a significant influence on hotel room occupancy rates. Factors such as the use of social media, search engine optimization (SEO), paid digital advertising, and online customer reviews have been proven to increase interest from potential guests and increase hotel occupancy. Social media, especially Instagram and Facebook, play an important role in building interactions with customers and creating strong brand awareness. Furthermore, positive reviews from online booking platforms also make a big contribution to potential guests' decision to choose to stay at the hotel.

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### INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing has become a key strategy in the hospitality industry to attract customers, to increase room occupancy rates, and to build a competitive brand image. In the digital era, customer behavior is increasingly influenced by easy access to information through social media, online reviews, and digital ordering platforms (Xiang et.al., 2023). Bangka City, as a developing tourist destination, faces tough competition in the hotel industry, especially in utilizing digital marketing to attract local and foreign tourists.

However, the use of digital marketing is often not optimal among industrial players in developing areas such as Bangka. A research conducted by Saputra and Nurmawati (2022) shows that the lack of a targeted marketing strategy results in inefficiency in the use of digital media. On the other hand, customer reviews and creative contents shared via social media have proven to be effective tools to increase customer loyalty (Pratama et.al., 2022).

This research focuses on Hotel Santika, one of the star hotels in Bangka City, which has implemented various digital marketing strategies, by using a quantitative approach and in-depth analysis. This research aims to analyze the influence of digital marketing on hotel room occupancy rates and identify the most effective digital marketing elements in increasing customer attraction.

This research contributes to provide strategic recommendations for hotel industry players in developing areas, focusing on the application of digital marketing that is more structured and based on empirical data.

## **Digital Marketing and the Hospitality Industry**

Digital marketing refers to all promotional efforts conducted through digital channels such as social media, SEO, digital advertising, email marketing, and online reviews. The hospitality industry has taken the advantage of using digital marketing to increase customer engagement, brand loyalty, and room occupancy rates. Saputra and Nurmawati (2022) reveal that digital marketing not only helps hotels reach a wider audience but also allows them to personalize customer experiences. This is very important because today's customers expect services that are relevant and tailored to their preferences.

In the hospitality context, digital marketing also helps hotels compete in the global market by creating a competitive advantage. Chaffey and Smith's (2022) research shows that integration between traditional and digital marketing strategies produces a more significant impact in increasing brand exposure compared to using traditional methods alone. For example, hotels that consistently optimize their digital presence have higher levels of customer loyalty (Rahayu, 2023).

## **The Role of Social Media in the Hospitality Industry**

Social media has become a major platform for the hospitality industry to interact with customers. Widyasari and Handayani (2022) state that Instagram and Facebook are the most effective platforms for visual promotions, especially in showcasing hotel facilities, services, and guest experiences. Contents focusing on attractive visuals such as aesthetic room photos or customers' testimonial videos can increase customer engagement by up to 30%.

Additionally, interactive features on social media, such as comments and direct messages, enable hotels to build closer relationships with their customers. This strategy strengthens customers' loyalty while increasing conversion opportunities (Kim and Ko, 2021). Prasetya et al. (2022) also finds that promotions on social media, especially through segmented campaigns such as "Staycation Deals," were able to increase hotel occupancy rates by up to 25%.

However, the success of social media as a promotional tool highly depends on consistency and creativity in delivering contents. Saputra and Nurmawati (2022) emphasize the importance of regular posting frequency and content relevance to the target audience.

## **Online Reviews and Customer Trust**

Online reviews are the key element in digital marketing because they influence customer perceptions toward a hotel. Pratama et al. (2022) reveal that positive reviews increase customer's trust by up to 40%, while negative reviews can decrease trust by up to 30%. Additionally, customers are more likely to choose hotels that respond actively to reviews, whether positive reviews or complaints.

Booking platforms such as TripAdvisor and Booking.com enable customers to read the previous guests' experiences, which often become a key determinant in booking decisions. Supriyanto (2023) adds that reviews that include detailed information about customer experiences help potential guests make more confident decisions. Therefore, actively managing customer reviews not only supports a hotel's online reputation but also increases the likelihood of booking.

## **SEO and Paid Digital Advertising**

SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is a digital marketing technique that aims to increase the visibility of a hotel website in search engines. Chaffey and Smith (2022) show that hotels that successfully optimize SEO can increase website traffic by up to 25%. In the case of Hotel Santika, SEO allows the hotel to appear at the top

of Google search rankings for keywords such as “best hotels in Bangka,” which directly increases brand visibility.

Paid digital advertising, such as Google Ads, is also a very effective tool in attracting new customers. Supriyanto (2023) shows that paid digital advertising campaigns can provide an ROI of up to 15% during the promotional period. The success of digital advertising depends on choosing the right target audience and attractive campaign design. For example, hotels can use ads with specific promotional content, such as discounts for first-time customers, to drive conversions.

However, the cost of digital advertising needs to be managed carefully. Rahayu (2023) highlights that an efficient digital advertising strategy can maximize marketing budgets while still achieving conversion targets. In this case, continuous evaluation of campaign performance is important to identify areas that need improvement.

### **Integration of Digital Marketing Elements**

The previous study shows that digital marketing effectiveness often comes from a combination of elements such as social media, online reviews, SEO, and paid advertising. Widyasari and Handayani (2022) assert that hotels that strategically integrate these elements are able to increase room occupancy rates by up to 30% compared to hotels that only rely on one or two elements. Therefore, understanding how each element works and how they complement each other is important to optimize digital marketing results.

## **METHOD**

This research employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design to identify the influence of digital marketing on the room occupancy rate of the Santika Hotel in Bangka City. The data were collected through three main methods, namely surveys of hotel guests, in-depth interviews with marketing managers, and secondary data analysis from hotel occupancy reports.

### **1. Survey of hotel guests**

The survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire consisting of 20 questions related to customer experiences with digital marketing. The questionnaire covered aspects such as social media influence, online customer reviews, and digital advertising effectiveness. The respondents were selected purposively from hotel guests who stayed during the research period, with a total of 100 respondents.

### **2. In-depth interview**

An interview was conducted with the marketing manager of Santika Hotel to gain deeper insight into the digital marketing strategy implemented. This interview covered topics such as social media campaign planning, customer review management, and the use of SEO and paid digital advertising.

### **3. Secondary data**

The secondary data were obtained from a report of hotel occupancy rate during the period August 2023 to August 2024. This report was used to validate the relationship between digital marketing strategies and room occupancy rates.

The data were analyzed to measure the influence of the independent variable (digital marketing elements) on the dependent variable (room occupancy rate).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Influence of Social Media on Occupancy Rates

Social media has become a key element in Santika Hotel's digital marketing strategy. Based on the survey results, 70% of the respondents stated that promotions via social media, especially Instagram and Facebook, influenced their decision to book a room. The "Staycation Santika" campaign, which featured visual content such as short videos and images with aesthetic designs, succeeded in increasing occupancy rates by 15% over a two-month period. These findings indicate that social media is not only effective in building brand awareness but also creates emotional experiences that can influence consumer behavior.

The data obtained from interviews with marketing managers supported this, as social media is seen as a tool for interacting directly with customers, for example through comments and instant messaging features. This strategy is in line with the research conducted by Saputra and Nurmawati (2022), which emphasizes that interactions built through social media can increase customer loyalty. Additionally, using paid promotional features on Instagram, such as "Boost Post" allows hotels to reach a wider audience and to increase awareness of their products and services.

### The Impact of Customer Reviews on Ordering Decisions

Customer reviews on online booking platforms, such as TripAdvisor and Booking.com, play an important role in building customer's trust and influencing booking decisions. As many as 75% of respondents admitted that they always check customer reviews before deciding to book a room. The majority stated that positive reviews provided a sense of security and confidence that they would have an experience that met their expectations. On the other hand, negative reviews, especially those that are not responded to well by the hotel, can reduce the interest of potential guests by up to 20%.

Santika Hotel's marketing manager mentioned that they actively monitor and respond to customer reviews, especially on platforms with high traffic. Positive reviews are often used in marketing campaigns as customer testimonials, while complaints in negative reviews are responded to as a form of transparency and improvement efforts. Pratama et al. (2022) support this by asserting that a good online reputation can increase order rates by up to 40%.

### Effectiveness of SEO and Paid Digital Advertising

Search engine optimization (SEO) and paid digital advertising are other strategies that contribute significantly to increase room occupancy rates. SEO helps Santika Hotel website appear on the first page of Google search results for keywords such as "best hotels in Bangka" and "lodging near Bangka beach." Survey data show that 25% of respondents found the hotel through Google searches, with hotel website traffic increasing by 20% over the last six-month period. This strategy is in line with the findings of Supriyanto (2023), which show that the correct use of SEO can increase brand visibility by up to 40%.

Paid digital advertising also made a big contribution, with bookings increasing by up to 12% during the promotional period. Google Ads campaigns are focused on specific target markets, such as domestic tourists looking for a staycation experience. The marketing manager mentions that one of the main challenges is managing the budget for digital campaigns to remain efficient. With a well-planned strategy, the hotel is able to achieve significant ROI from digital advertising investments.

### The Relevance of Digital Marketing to Room Occupancy Rates

Overall, the research results show that digital marketing has a significant influence on the occupancy rate of Santika Hotel rooms. Elements like social media, online customer reviews, SEO, and paid digital advertising complement each other to create a strong appeal to potential guests. Strategically designed digital campaigns can increase the interest of new customers while maintaining the loyalty of existing customers.

These results are consistent with Widyasari and Handayani (2022), that an integrated digital marketing strategy can increase order conversions by up to 30%. Meanwhile, Prasetya et al. (2022) emphasize that a good online reputation is one of the most competitive differentiating factors in the hotel industry. Thus, Santika Hotel can utilize these findings to continue developing their digital marketing strategy to maintain sustainable growth.

### CONCLUSION

This research shows that digital marketing has a significant influence on room occupancy rates at the Santika Hotel, Bangka City. The main contributing factors are the use of social media, search engine optimization (SEO), paid digital advertising, and online customer reviews. Social media, especially Instagram and Facebook, have proven to be effective tools in building brand awareness and establishing interactive relationships with customers. A well-designed digital marketing campaign increases potential guests' interest in booking a hotel room.

Furthermore, customer reviews on online booking platforms play an important role in building customer trust, as positive reviews significantly influence potential guests' decisions. SEO strategies and paid digital advertising also support increased brand visibility and booking conversions.

This research provides practical insights for hotel managers, especially in utilizing digital marketing elements to increase competitiveness and room occupancy rates. With an integrated and data-based strategy, digital marketing can be the key to success in the hotel industry in the modern era.

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