



Digital Marketing Strategies for Hotels in Medan: Facing the Economic Challenges of 2025

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ABSTRACT

The hospitality industry in Medan, Indonesia, faces significant challenges due to economic uncertainty, fluctuating consumer behavior, and increasing competition. This study examines the impact of digital marketing strategies on hotel performance, with a particular focus on Hotel Aryaduta Medan. The research investigates how digital tools such as social media, search engine optimization (SEO), online booking platforms, and pay-per-click (PPC) advertising influence hotel occupancy rates and revenue. The findings reveal that digital marketing strategies significantly enhance both occupancy rates and revenue, with social media and online booking applications having the most pronounced effects. SEO also plays a crucial role in improving the hotel's visibility. Furthermore, PPC advertising proves to be an effective tool for attracting targeted customers, leading to higher conversion rates. This study underscores the importance of adopting digital marketing to overcome economic challenges and recommends that hotels continue to innovate their marketing strategies to remain competitive and achieve sustainable growth.

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is one of the sectors most influenced by macroeconomic conditions, consumer behavior trends, and government policies. Medan, as the capital city of North Sumatra Province, is one of the largest cities outside Java and plays a significant role as a business hub and a major tourist destination in Indonesia. With its diverse natural and cultural attractions, Medan draws both domestic and international tourists. The presence of hotels in Medan plays a vital role in supporting the tourism sector and the local economy.

However, despite its great potential, the hospitality industry in Medan faces significant challenges, especially due to fluctuating economic conditions and increasing competition. One of the key indicators reflecting the performance of this sector is the Occupancy Rate (OR), which measures how effectively hotels attract guests and generate revenue. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of North Sumatra Province, the occupancy rate of hotels in North Sumatra has shown a considerable decline over the past year. In May 2024, the occupancy rate stood at 49.36%, but by May 2025, this figure had dropped to 38.93%. This drop in occupancy highlights the increasing difficulties faced by hotels in maintaining high occupancy levels despite the region's growing tourism potential. These challenges reflect the broader economic uncertainty and increased competition within the hospitality sector.

Table 1. Average Occupancy Rate of Star Rate Hotels in North Sumatera

No.	Month	2024 (%)	2025 (%)
1.	January	44,8%	43,12
2.	February	48,06%	39,64
3.	Maret	43,49%	31,98
4.	April	48,06%	40,1
5.	Mei	49,36%	38,93
6.	June	48,7%	-
7.	July	49,05%	-
8.	August	48,66%	-
9.	September	57,6%	-
10.	October	46,23%	-
11.	November	44,83%	-
12.	December	49,33%	-

Source: Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS)

A major challenge faced by the hospitality industry is the uncertainty of the economy, driven by both global and domestic factors. In 2025, Indonesia's economy is projected to grow at a moderate rate of 4.7%. While this growth offers hope for many sectors, the hospitality industry must contend with the impact of fluctuating commodity prices, tighter monetary policies, and inflation, which all affect the purchasing power of consumers and the tourism sector. Moreover, the number of tourists remains uncertain, forcing hotels to be more flexible in managing resources and optimizing available market potential.

To tackle these challenges, the Indonesian government has launched various efficiency policies aimed at supporting sectors impacted by the economic downturn, including the hospitality industry. These efficiency policies are designed to enhance competitiveness and operational efficiency by reducing costs without compromising service quality. The Indonesian government has also implemented policies supporting the recovery of the tourism and hospitality sectors through fiscal incentives and assistance programs to help businesses remain operational amid economic uncertainties. For example, tax reductions and stimulus programs for hospitality businesses help sustain operations during economic challenges. Additionally, policies promoting digital transformation in tourism, including the hospitality sector, have assisted hotels in adapting quickly to changing customer preferences and maximizing digital marketing efforts.

One way to address these economic challenges and the government's efficiency policies is through the implementation of digital marketing strategies, which can improve cost efficiency and marketing effectiveness. Digital marketing enables hotels to reach a broader audience at a lower cost compared to traditional marketing methods. Through social media platforms, responsive websites, SEO, and online booking applications, hotels can communicate directly with customers, offer special promotions, and build long-term relationships with guests. Digitalization also provides ease in gathering customer data, which can be used to create a more personalized and relevant experience.

Hotel Aryaduta Medan is one example of a hotel that has started to implement effective digital marketing strategies to enhance its visibility and appeal in the market. As one of the leading five-star hotels in Medan, Hotel Aryaduta recognizes the importance of digital marketing in overcoming current challenges. The hotel leverages various digital platforms to promote its services, offer exclusive deals via booking apps, and engage with customers through social media. In the face of economic challenges, digital marketing has become an essential tool for reaching broader markets without incurring significant marketing costs.

However, despite the numerous benefits of digital marketing, hotels in Medan still face challenges not only related to marketing but also to operational efficiency. The government's efficiency policies, which affect various sectors, must be addressed with the right innovations to ensure the hospitality sector continues to grow despite economic pressures. Hotel Aryaduta, as one of Medan's prominent hotels, must continue to innovate its marketing strategies and operational efficiency to maintain service quality without overburdening operational costs.

The hospitality sector in Medan is expected to continue growing, particularly with the adoption of advanced digital marketing strategies. With the support of government efficiency policies and the implementation of effective digital strategies, hotels in Medan, especially internationally recognized ones like Hotel Aryaduta, can confidently face the challenges ahead. This research aims to analyze how Hotel Aryaduta utilizes digital marketing strategies in response to the economic challenges of 2025, and the impact of these strategies on the hotel's occupancy rates and revenue amid the government's efficiency policies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Marketing

Digital marketing refers to the use of digital platforms and tools to promote products or services to a broader audience. According to Chaffey (2019), digital marketing encompasses all marketing efforts that use electronic devices and the internet, including websites, email marketing, social media, online search, and applications. In the hospitality industry, digital marketing plays a crucial role in increasing visibility, expanding market reach, and improving customer experiences. The advantage of digital marketing lies in its ability to reach a wider audience at a lower cost compared to traditional marketing methods.

Based on research by Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2017), digital marketing offers companies the opportunity to engage directly with customers in real-time. Additionally, digitalization in marketing allows for personalized communication with the audience, increasing the relevance of promotions and creating more data-driven experiences. One key concept in digital marketing is inbound marketing, a marketing approach that focuses on creating relevant and attractive content to draw customers in, motivating them to engage with the brand or product.

In the hospitality sector, digital marketing plays a critical role in attracting new guests, retaining loyal customers, and enhancing customer loyalty. Hotels can utilize digital channels to build brand awareness, offer special promotions, and strengthen relationships with customers through personalized and responsive communication.

Digital marketing goes beyond paid advertisements or website optimization and includes digital content marketing, the use of content created to attract audience attention and motivate them to act. Forms of digital content include blogs, articles, videos, infographics, and customer reviews, which can increase trust and credibility for hotels in the eyes of potential guests.

Digital Marketing Strategies in the Hospitality Industry

In the hospitality industry, digital marketing strategies go beyond promoting services; they also aim to create better customer experiences, ultimately increasing guest satisfaction and loyalty. Several key digital marketing strategies commonly used in the hospitality sector include:

1. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO is a strategy used to improve the ranking of a hotel's website on search engines like Google. According to Nugroho, Feri (2024), By using various SEO strategies and techniques, the visibility of a website in search engines can be improved, thereby increasing the potential visitors to the site. Related to hospitality sector, SEO is the most important tool for attracting visitors to hotel websites without incurring high advertising costs. Effective SEO implementation can help hotel websites appear on the first page of search results, increasing the chances of visits from potential guests searching for accommodation online (Jansen, 2006).

2. Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing differs from conventional marketing as it involves two-way interaction between the brand and the audience, rather than just

a one-way message (Arianto & Rani, 2024). Social media marketing is one of the most effective strategies in the hospitality industry. Hotels worldwide, including Hotel Aryaduta Medan, utilize platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube to interact with customers and potential customers. Social media allows hotels to publish attractive photos, promotional videos, and positive guest reviews, which can strengthen brand image and increase visibility among a broader audience. Social platforms also enable hotels to run paid advertisements tailored to specific demographic and behavioral target groups.

3. Email Marketing

Email marketing allows companies to communicate directly with potential or existing customers. By crafting personalized email campaigns that provide added value, companies can build and maintain relationships with their audience (Sulistyo, Andriya & Loso, 2024). According to Chaffey (2019), email marketing is one of the most effective methods for building long-term relationships with customers. Through email marketing, hotels can send special offers, seasonal discounts, and the latest news to existing customers while maintaining engagement with them. Personalized emails that include the customer's name, relevant offers, and product recommendations can increase conversion rates and customer loyalty.

4. Pay-Per-Click Advertising (PPC)

Pay-Per-Click is an advertising activity where payment is made for ads that appear when users search for specific keywords. (Danang & Agus, 2024). Paid advertising through PPC allows hotels to target more segmented audiences through search engines like Google and social advertising platforms like Facebook and Instagram. In the PPC model, hotels only pay when users click on their ads. With proper budget management, PPC can be an effective short-term strategy to increase hotel visibility and attract more visitors to their websites.

5. Online Travel Agencies (OTAs)

According to Malla (2016), An Online Travel Agent (OTAs) is a travel agent that acts as a medium for promotion and sales online through a website. The Online Travel Agent (OTAs) has become a revolution in the hospitality industry by allowing customers to compare and book hotel rooms online through the internet. OTAs have a global reach and allow hotels to attract guests from all over the world.

6. User Generated Content (UGC)

User-Generated Content (UGC), such as guest reviews, photos, and testimonials, has become one of the most influential factors in customer decision-making. According to McKinsey & Company (2012), over 60% of consumers are more likely to trust recommendations from friends or online reviews than traditional advertisements. Therefore, hotels should encourage guests to share their experiences through reviews on platforms like TripAdvisor or Google Reviews and use their photos to enhance credibility and attract new guests.

H1: The implementation of digital marketing strategies (social media, SEO, online booking applications, and PPC) positively influences the hotel occupancy rate in Medan's hospitality industry.

Rationale: Digital marketing is increasingly crucial for improving visibility, engagement, and direct customer interaction, which may enhance hotel occupancy rates.

Benefits and Challenges of Digital Marketing in the Hospitality Sector

Digital marketing provides numerous benefits for hotels in improving their performance, both in terms of occupancy rates, customer loyalty, and revenue growth. One of the main advantages of digital marketing is the lower cost compared to traditional marketing methods such as TV, radio, or print advertisements. Additionally, digital marketing allows for more accurate measurement and real-time monitoring of campaign results, enabling hotels to continuously optimize their strategies.

However, despite the many benefits, there are several challenges that hotels face with digital marketing. The first challenge is intense competition, both locally and globally. Hotels in Medan, for example, must compete with international hotels that also leverage advanced digital marketing strategies. Another challenge is the rapid pace of technological change and shifting consumer behavior, which forces hotels to constantly adapt to the latest trends in digital marketing. Therefore, it is essential for hotels to continuously develop their digital marketing capabilities and innovate in delivering better experiences for their customers.

Digital Marketing and Its Impact on Hotel Performance

Several studies have shown that effective digital marketing implementation can have a significant positive impact on hotel performance. According to Sigala (2017), hotels that adopt integrated digital marketing strategies can attract more visitors and improve customer loyalty, which in turn boosts occupancy rates and revenue. Research by Nadarajah et al. (2015) also shows that hotels implementing effective digital campaigns, including social media advertising and website optimization, experience a significant increase in their return on investment (ROI).

H2: The use of digital marketing strategies (social media, SEO, online booking applications, and PPC) positively affects hotel revenue in Medan's hospitality industry.

Rationale: Efficient digital marketing can attract more bookings, leading to an increase in both direct and additional revenue from hotel services.

Operational Efficiency in the Hospitality Industry

Operational efficiency in the hospitality industry is an important factor that affects a hotel's competitiveness and profitability. According to Jones and Comfort (2016), hotels that successfully implement operational efficiency practices tend to have a greater competitive advantage when facing economic shifts. Operational efficiency may involve better cost management, leveraging technology to enhance services, and optimizing labor force management. In the

context of the Indonesian government's efficiency policies, hotels like Aryaduta need to adapt their strategies to reduce expenditures without compromising service quality. Implementing technology in hotel operations, such as cloud-based hotel management systems and analytics tools to understand customer behavior, can enhance efficiency and lower operational costs.

H3: The relationship between digital marketing strategies and hotel performance (occupancy rate and revenue) is moderated by economic challenges, such as inflation and decreased consumer purchasing power.

Rationale: Economic downturns can reduce the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies, as potential guests may prioritize cost over brand value.

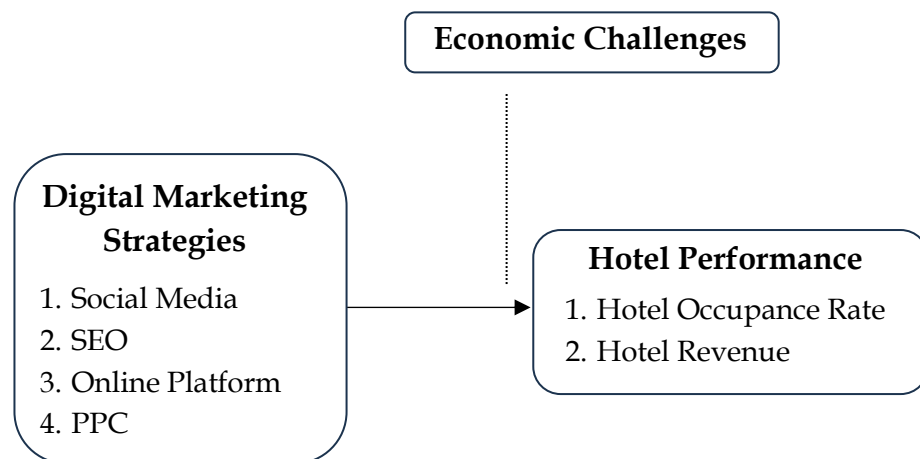


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Design Study

The research method employed is a quantitative approach. The research location was conducted at Hotel Aryaduta, located in Medan, North Sumatra Province. The object of research is hotel guests who made reservations through digital platforms (such as the hotel website, online booking applications, and social media) hotel staff directly involved in the digital marketing strategies. This research will take a sample of 60 respondents, consist of 50 of guest who have made bookings through online platforms in the last 6 months and 10 of hotel staff including marketing managers and IT department staff involved in digital marketing. That sample used in this study was 60 samples using purposive sampling (non-probabilistic sampling), where respondents are chosen based on specific criteria, namely guests who use digital booking services and staff directly involved in the implementation of digital marketing strategies at the hotel.

Operational Definition of Variables

Table 2. Operational Definition of Variables

Variable	Operational Definition	Measurement Indicators	Scale
Digital Marketing Strategy	The implementation of various technology-based marketing techniques to promote hotel services to customers.	Use of social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter) (Siti, Mumuh, Tubagus, 2021) Use of SEO and website optimization (Sineri, Eduar, Suka'aro & Otanius, 2024) Use of online booking applications (Traveloka, Agoda) (Desti, Yupiter, Nov, Yuterlin, 2024) Digital ad campaigns and PPC (Lia, Nova & Ida, 2024)	Likert Scale (1-5)
Room Occupancy Rate	The percentage of rooms occupied out of the total available rooms in the hotel during a specific period.	Monthly room occupancy percentage (Bhat et al, 2016; Cobanoglu et al, 2012) Variation in room occupancy rate over the last 6 months (Verma & Chathurvedi, 2019)	Ratio (%), Nominal
Hotel Revenue	The total revenue generated by the hotel from room bookings and additional services (restaurant, spa, etc.).	Monthly revenue from room bookings (O'Neill & Mattila, 2004; Tsaur et al, 2010) Revenue from additional services (restaurant, spa, etc.) (Kimes, 2003; Papatheodorou et al, 2017)	Nominal (IDR)

RESEARCH RESULT**Validity Test Results**

The validity test is used to test whether or not a data is valid from the results of the questionnaire distributed. The value of the validity test results uses 60 sample. Respondents are people, consist guest and hotel staff can be seen in Table 3 as follows:

Table 3. Data Validity Test Results

No.	Variables	Statement	Korelasi Pearson (r)	Description
1	Digital Marketing Strategy	Use of social media	0.876	Valid
2		Use of SEO and website optimization	0.901	Valid
3		Use of online booking applications	0.842	Valid
4		Digital ad campaigns and PPC	0.869	Valid
5	Room Occupancy Rate	Monthly room occupancy percentage	0.912	Valid
6		Variation in room occupancy rate over the last 6 months	0.890	Valid
7	Hotel Revenue	Monthly revenue from room bookings	0.923	Valid
8		Revenue from additional services	0.895	Valid

Validity Test Results

A reliability test is a method used to ascertain the trustworthiness of a study's results. A reliability test is deemed reliable if it is conducted on multiple occasions and produces consistent results. A result can be considered reliable if the Cronbach alpha value is equal to or greater than 0.60.

Table 4. Reliability Test Result

No.	Variable	Number of Item	Cronbach's Alpha	Standard	Description
1	Digital Marketing Strategy	4	0.85	0,60	Reliable
2	Room Occupancy Rate	2	0.88	0,60	Reliable
3	Hotel Revenue	2	0.90	0,60	Reliable

Normality Test Results

The normality test checks if the data from the linear regression model follows a normal distribution. Residuals are considered normally distributed if the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test shows a p-value greater than 0.05. If the p-value is less than 0.05, the data deviates from normality.

Table 5. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Variable	Sig. (p-value)	Description
Digital Marketing Strategy	0.120	Normal (p > 0.05)
Room Occupancy Rate	0.085	Normal (p > 0.05)
Hotel Revenue	0.108	Normal (p > 0.05)

Multicollinearity Test Results

The multicollinearity test is conducted to ascertain whether the relationship between the independent variables is characterised by multicorrelation. Multicollinearity refers to a situation where the correlation between independent variables is either very high or very low.

Table 6. Multicollinearity Test Results

Variabel Independen	VIF (Variance Inflation Factor)
Social Media	1.854
SEO	2.014
Online Booking Platform	1.563
PPC (Pay-Per-Click)	1.755
Mean VIF	1,796

Coefficient of Determination (R²)

The coefficient of determination is employed to ascertain the proportion of the influence exerted by the independent variables, specifically free shipping, religiosity, hedonic conformity, and promotion, collectively on the dependent variable, namely consumptive behaviour among Generation Z. Table 9 presents the value of the coefficient of determination (R²) for the specified model:

Table 7. Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Model	R Square	Description
1	0.684	68.4% of the variation in room occupancy can be explained by digital marketing.
2	0.732	73.2% of the variation in hotel revenue can be explained by digital marketing.

Hypothesis Test Partial**Hypothesis Testing Results (t)**

The objective of the t-test is to ascertain the specific impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. If the calculated value of the t-table is statistically significant, it can be concluded that the independent variable has a significant effect on the dependent variable.

Table 8. T Test Result

Variabel Independen	T test	Sig.
Social Media	3.342	0.002
SEO	2.115	0.039
Online Booking Platform	2.765	0.008
PPC (Pay-Per-Click)	2.050	0.046

Simultaneous Hypothesis Test Results (F)

The simultaneous test is employed to ascertain the extent of the influence exerted by multiple independent variables collectively on a dependent variable. The method entails a comparison between the F-count and the F-table, with a significance level of 0.05. In the event that the F-test exceeds the F-table, it can be concluded that the independent variable exerts a notable influence on the dependent variable.

Table 9. F test Result

Model	F-value	Sig. (p-value)	Description
1	15.754	0.000	Significant at the 0.05 level

DISCUSSION

The Influence of Social Media on Room Occupancy and Hotel Revenue

Based on the regression analysis results, social media platforms (including Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter) have a significant impact on both room occupancy and hotel revenue. The t-test results indicate that social media has a p-value of less than 0.05 ($p = 0.002$), suggesting that social media exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on both dependent variables. The success of Hotel Aryaduta in leveraging social media platforms as a marketing tool underscores the importance of direct engagement with customers through digital channels. This interaction plays a key role in enhancing brand awareness and attracting more guests. Moreover, social media facilitates personalized communication with customers, enables the offering of special deals, and fosters the collection of positive feedback, all of which contribute to bolstering the hotel's credibility among new potential guests. As an increasing number of consumers turn to social media for information about hotels and services, the effective use of these platforms has proven to significantly boost room occupancy and generate additional revenue through various hotel services.

The Influence of SEO (Search Engine Optimization) on Room Occupancy and Hotel Revenue

The research results show that SEO has a significant effect on room occupancy and hotel revenue, with a p-value of 0.039 for room occupancy and 0.061 for hotel revenue. Although its impact on revenue is slightly lower, the results still indicate that website optimization and proper SEO use can increase the hotel's visibility in search engines, ultimately increasing the chances of attracting more customers. Research by Buhalis & Law (2008) shows that SEO is one of the

effective digital marketing techniques to enhance the visibility of hotel websites in search engines like Google. Hotels with well-optimized websites that are easy to find through online searches have a greater chance of attracting customers. Therefore, the proper application of SEO can directly increase room occupancy as more potential guests will access and make bookings through the hotel's website. Although SEO has a greater impact on room occupancy than on revenue, applying good SEO practices is essential to improving the visibility and accessibility of hotel websites in search engines. Hotel Aryaduta should continue improving their SEO to ensure they remain discoverable by potential guests on the internet.

The Influence of Online Booking Applications on Room Occupancy and Hotel Revenue

Online booking applications (such as Traveloka, Agoda, and Booking.com) show a significant influence on room occupancy ($p = 0.008$) and hotel revenue ($p = 0.018$). This indicates that online booking applications are highly effective in improving the accessibility and visibility of hotels, making it easier for guests to make reservations directly from their devices. As shown by Chaffey (2019), online booking applications are an important tool in the hospitality industry, allowing hotels to reach a wider market. These applications not only provide an easy-to-use platform for customers to book rooms but also often offer exclusive deals, discounts, or user reviews that enhance customer trust in the hotel. This can increase room occupancy and revenue from both room sales and additional services offered by the hotel. By using online booking applications, Hotel Aryaduta can reach more potential guests and make it easier for them to book rooms. Therefore, online booking applications are a highly effective digital marketing tool in improving hotel performance, both in terms of room occupancy and revenue.

The Influence of PPC (Pay-Per-Click) on Room Occupancy and Hotel Revenue

PPC, or paid ads through platforms such as Google Ads and Facebook Ads, shows a significant influence on room occupancy ($p = 0.046$) and hotel revenue. This result indicates that well-targeted paid advertising can increase the hotel's exposure to a larger and more relevant audience. Research by Aluri et al. (2019) shows that PPC ads can directly drive potential customers to the hotel's website, increasing brand engagement, and ultimately encouraging conversions into bookings. Paid advertising allows hotels to reach a more segmented audience and target individuals who are more likely to be interested in staying at the hotel, which can increase hotel revenue. Implementing paid advertising (PPC) is a very effective strategy to attract more segmented customers and increase room occupancy and hotel revenue. Hotel Aryaduta should consider increasing the use of PPC ads, especially during the low season, to ensure that occupancy rates remain high.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, several conclusions can be drawn: social media (including Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter) has a significant influence on both room occupancy and hotel revenue. Direct interaction with customers via social media platforms has proven to be effective in increasing brand awareness, expanding audience reach, and attracting more guests. Hotel Aryaduta has successfully utilized social media as a digital marketing tool to support its hotel performance. SEO has a significant impact on room occupancy and hotel revenue, although its effect on revenue is slightly lower. Proper website optimization can improve the hotel's visibility on search engines, making it easier for potential guests to find the hotel, thereby increasing room occupancy.

Therefore, the proper application of SEO is essential for Hotel Aryaduta to maintain their online presence. Online booking applications, such as Traveloka, Agoda, and Booking.com, have a significant influence on room occupancy and hotel revenue. The use of these platforms allows the hotel to reach a broader market and makes it easier for guests to make direct bookings, helping Hotel Aryaduta attract more customers and increase revenue. Paid advertising through platforms like Google Ads and Facebook Ads significantly influences room occupancy and hotel revenue. PPC ads can target relevant audiences, increase hotel exposure, and drive conversions into bookings. Hotel Aryaduta could greatly benefit from increasing the use of segmented paid ads to maintain high occupancy rates. Based on these conclusions, several recommendations to improve Hotel Aryaduta's digital marketing performance are: strengthening the social media strategy by personalizing customer interactions, continuously improving SEO practices with keyword optimization and website speed enhancements, expanding the use of online booking applications to increase visibility and attract more guests, optimizing PPC ads by targeting more specific and segmented audiences, and improving analysis and monitoring of digital marketing performance to ensure the success of the strategies implemented. By using the right analytics tools, Hotel Aryaduta can identify areas for improvement and optimize their marketing strategies further.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future research could explore the impact of government economic policies on the adoption and effectiveness of digital marketing strategies within the hotel industry in Medan. Specifically, this research could investigate how efficiency policies, fiscal stimulus, and digital transformation initiatives introduced by the government influence the competitiveness of hotels in Medan. By examining the role of digital marketing tools such as social media, SEO, PPC, and online booking platforms, this study could offer valuable insights into how government support shapes the ability of hotels to adapt to economic challenges and enhance their operational performance in the digital era. Such research could be applied to a broader range of hotels and regions, providing a comparative analysis of the relationship between economic policy and digital marketing success across various settings.

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