



Optimization of Digital Marketing Strategies to Enhance Competitiveness and Patient Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Advances in information technology have driven hospitals to adopt digital marketing strategies as a means of strengthening competitiveness and improving patient-centered services. This study aims to analyze how the optimization of digital marketing strategies contributes to hospital reputation, patient trust, and perceived service quality. A qualitative case study design was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews involving key informants, including the Head of Information Technology, hospital staff, and the digital marketing team. The findings reveal that effective digital marketing extends beyond promotional activities by prioritizing transparency of health information, interactive and responsive communication with patients, and consistency in institutional branding. These strategies are operationalized through the integrated use of social media platforms, official hospital websites, and health applications connected to internal hospital information systems. The study demonstrates that a patient-centered digital marketing strategy directly enhances patient satisfaction and trust, which subsequently strengthens patient loyalty and reinforces the hospital's competitive advantage in the healthcare market. Therefore, this study recommends the development of a continuous evaluation framework to ensure that digital marketing strategies remain adaptive to regulatory changes, technological advancements, and evolving patient expectation.

Keywords: Hospital Digital Marketing Strategy, Patient Satisfaction, Case Studies, Qualitative.

ABSTRAK

Mengadopsi strategi pemasaran digital sebagai cara untuk memperkuat daya saing dan meningkatkan layanan yang berorientasi pada pasien. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana optimasi strategi pemasaran digital berkontribusi terhadap reputasi rumah sakit, kepercayaan pasien, dan kualitas layanan yang dirasakan. Desain studi kasus kualitatif digunakan, dengan data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam yang melibatkan informan kunci, termasuk Kepala Teknologi Informasi, staf rumah sakit, dan tim pemasaran digital. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pemasaran digital yang efektif melampaui aktivitas promosi dengan memprioritaskan transparansi informasi kesehatan, komunikasi interaktif dan responsif dengan pasien, serta konsistensi dalam branding institusi. Strategi ini diimplementasikan melalui penggunaan terintegrasi platform media sosial, situs web resmi rumah sakit, dan aplikasi kesehatan yang terhubung dengan sistem informasi internal rumah sakit. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa strategi pemasaran digital yang berorientasi pada pasien secara langsung meningkatkan kepuasan dan kepercayaan pasien, yang pada gilirannya memperkuat loyalitas pasien dan memperkuat keunggulan kompetitif rumah sakit di pasar layanan kesehatan. Oleh karena itu, studi ini merekomendasikan pengembangan kerangka evaluasi berkelanjutan untuk memastikan bahwa strategi pemasaran digital tetap adaptif terhadap perubahan regulasi, kemajuan teknologi, dan ekspektasi pasien yang terus berkembang.

Kata Kunci: Strategi Pemasaran Digital Rumah Sakit, Kepuasan Pasien, Studi Kasus, Kualitatif.

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has driven fundamental changes in the delivery of healthcare services, including hospital marketing strategies. Digital transformation is no longer viewed as an option, but rather as a strategic necessity for healthcare institutions to survive and grow amid increasingly intense competition. Hospitals are not only required to provide high-quality medical services but must also be able to effectively manage digital channels to expand the reach of information, build institutional image, and establish sustainable relationships with patients. Digital transformation in hospital management has become a key element in strengthening competitiveness and increasing public trust in healthcare institutions (Handrean et al, 2025).

Digital marketing enables hospitals to disseminate information about their services more broadly, rapidly, and interactively than conventional marketing. Through the use of social media, official websites, and other digital platforms, hospitals can establish two-way communication with patients, provide health education, and consistently strengthen their institutional image. Thus, digital marketing functions not only as a promotional tool but also as an integral part of a patient-oriented service strategy and patient experience (patient-centered care) (Julianti, Sjaaf, & Sulistiadi, 2022).

Various studies have shown that digital marketing strategies play an important role in enhancing hospital competitiveness through the creation of patient-oriented value. The integration of informative content, responsive communication, and convenient access to digital-based services, such as online registration and appointment scheduling, has been shown to improve perceptions of service quality, patient loyalty, and patient satisfaction. The use of social media, search engine optimization (SEO), and content marketing also strengthens patient engagement and fosters long-term relationships between hospitals and patients, thereby strengthening hospitals' position amid competition in the healthcare industry (Purwadhi et al., 2024; Wijaya & Achadi, 2024; Irawan et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, the implementation of digital marketing in the healthcare sector continues to face various challenges. Limited human resource competencies, inadequate integration of internal communication systems, and suboptimal utilization of digital media often hinder the effectiveness of the strategies implemented. In addition, ethical issues, data security, and public trust are major concerns given the sensitive and trust-based nature of healthcare services (Shafik, 2025).

For maternal and child hospitals, optimizing digital marketing strategies has become increasingly important in line with growing public demands for service quality, ease of access to information, and personalized service experiences. Patients and their families are increasingly dependent on digital media when making healthcare decisions. Therefore, the integration of personalized marketing, digital innovation, and improvements in service quality contributes significantly to patient engagement, loyalty, and satisfaction, while simultaneously strengthening the hospital's institutional image (Hapsari & Asaari, 2025; Nurfitriani et al., 2022; Mujtahidah, 2025).

In this context, digital marketing presents a strategic opportunity for RSIA Sitti Khadijah Gorontalo to enhance its competitiveness by strengthening its institutional image, expanding the reach of its services, and increasing patient interaction. However, the utilization of digital marketing at this hospital still reveals a gap between its potential and actual practices, due to factors such as limited competencies, intense digital competition, and challenges related to data security and patient privacy. This condition underscores the need for a comprehensive study to formulate a contextual, effective, and sustainable digital marketing strategy (Purwadhi et al., 2024; Rahman & Mardiana, 2024; Anwar & Anisdysarathi, 2025).

This study aims to analyze and optimize the digital marketing strategy at RSIA Sitti Khadijah Gorontalo in order to enhance competitiveness and patient satisfaction, thereby providing a basis for formulating strategic recommendations for the development of patient-oriented and sustainable hospital digital marketing.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design to examine the optimization of digital marketing strategies in enhancing competitiveness and

patient satisfaction at Siti Khadijah Hospital, Gorontalo. This approach was selected because it enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of digital marketing practices based on the experiences and perceptions of the actors directly involved. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants selected purposively, including Information Technology staff, the Head of Patient Services, and the hospital's Digital Marketing team. The interviews were conducted on Monday, October 27, 2025, using a semi-structured interview guide.

Supporting data were obtained through observation and a review of documents related to the hospital's digital marketing activities. Data were analyzed thematically. The interview data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed through an open coding process to identify key concepts. Subsequently, relevant codes were grouped into categories and themes through axial coding. These themes were then interpreted to describe the patterns, meanings, and relationships among the findings related to the optimization of digital marketing and patient satisfaction.

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation by comparing information obtained from different informants, as well as supporting data from observations and documentation. In addition, limited clarification was sought from the informants to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the interpretation of the research findings.

RESULTS

The analysis of the interview data generated several main themes describing the implementation and challenges of optimizing digital marketing at Siti Khadijah Hospital, Gorontalo. These themes included the focus of promotional content, digital marketing governance and coordination, utilization of digital platforms, implementation challenges, strategy evaluation, and implications for patient trust and visits.

Service-Based Promotional Content Focus

The findings indicate that the development of promotional content is strongly influenced by the characteristics of the hospital's primary services. As a hospital with a flagship maternal and child healthcare program, its digital content is primarily focused on maternal and child health education. This focus serves as a strategic foundation for determining the types of information disseminated to the public. One informant explained that the content developed aims to provide education while simultaneously introducing the hospital's flagship services to the community. This approach demonstrates that digital marketing is not merely understood as a commercial promotional activity but also as a means of public education relevant to patients' needs.

Digital Marketing Governance and Coordination

Digital marketing management is still relatively simple because the digital marketing unit has only recently been established. The entire process, from planning and content creation to publication, is handled by a single social media administrator who also coordinates with the IT team, marketing department, and director. This condition indicates limitations in the organizational structure of digital marketing. On the other hand, it also reflects a strong control mechanism, particularly through the director's approval before content is published. This validation is considered important to ensure that the content is consistent with the hospital's values, objectives, and institutional image.

Utilization of Digital Platforms and Content Control

The digital platforms used include Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, with the primary objective of providing health information and education to the public. All content, particularly content related to maternal and child healthcare services, must receive management approval before publication. The absence of content directly involving patients reflects the hospital's cautious approach to maintaining ethics, privacy, and institutional reputation. This indicates that ethical considerations constitute an important component of the hospital's digital marketing strategy.

Challenges in Digital Marketing Implementation

Several major challenges in implementing digital marketing were identified, including limited content resources, healthcare professionals' workload, and the uneven availability of service activities that could be developed into promotional materials. These conditions affect the frequency and variety of content that can be produced. In addition, the hospital does not yet have a structured digital data security management system. Security measures are primarily administrative, such as restricting access to official accounts and prohibiting the use of unofficial accounts. Nevertheless, to date, no misuse of accounts impersonating the hospital has been identified.

Strategy Planning, Evaluation, and Adaptation

Digital marketing planning is conducted by gathering information from service departments, such as physician schedules, clinic lists, and types of services. This information is updated regularly and published through digital media to ensure that the public receives accurate and up-to-date information. Strategy evaluation is conducted routinely by monitoring social media traffic and through weekly and monthly internal meetings. Although the hospital does not yet have quantitatively measurable performance indicators, it has utilized digital analytics as a basis for reflecting on and improving promotional strategies.

Impact on Patient Trust and Visits

The findings indicate that digital marketing focusing on education, information transparency, and content consistency contributes to increased public trust. Easily accessible service information through Instagram and the hospital website facilitates patients in planning their visits, which ultimately contributes to an increase in the number of patients. Consistency between digital promotion and actual service delivery is maintained through routine evaluation and improvements to the service system, such as the implementation of an online queue system. These efforts strengthen the integrity of digital information and help ensure that patient expectations remain realistic.

Table 1. Summary of Themes, Key Findings, and Supporting Quotations.

Theme	Key Finding	Representative Quotation	Informant
Promotional content focus	Digital marketing content is directed toward flagship maternal and child healthcare services using an educational approach.	"The type of promotional content is based on maternal and child healthcare services because this hospital's program focuses on mothers and children. Therefore, the content is more focused on mothers and children. The content is primarily directed toward educating the public about maternal and child healthcare services."	Informant 1 (Digital Marketing Team)
Digital marketing governance	Digital marketing management remains limited and is handled by a single administrator with cross-unit coordination.	"The digital marketing team was only recently established, so the person managing the social media accounts also creates and posts the content. There is only one social media administrator."	Informant 1 (Digital Marketing Team)
Utilization of digital platforms	Social media is used as the primary means of education and information, with strict oversight from management.	"The platforms used are Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Maternal and child healthcare content must receive approval from the director before being posted."	Informant 1 (Digital Marketing Team)

Implementation challenges	Limited human resources and service activities hinder continuity in content production.	"In the midwifery department, the content has to be created by nurses and midwives. If they are busy, it is difficult to produce content."	Informant 1 (Digital Marketing Team)
Data security and digital reputation	Data security is not yet systematically structured but is maintained through access restrictions and content control.	"There is actually no specific data security management system, except that access is held by the responsible personnel. Content that is inappropriate to post will not be posted."	Informant 1 (Digital Marketing Team)
Strategy planning	Content is designed based on patients' information needs and the hospital's current conditions.	"The strategies we use are based on patients' needs. Many patients ask whether general patients can receive services here, so that is what we communicate through our content."	Informant 1 (Digital Marketing Team)
Evaluation and adaptation	Evaluation is conducted routinely through social media monitoring and internal meetings.	"There is definitely an evaluation every month; in fact, the IT team and management conduct evaluations every week."	Informant 2 (IT Team)
Trust and service consistency	The accuracy of digital information is important for maintaining patient trust.	"The hospital's social media content must reflect the actual services provided. Misleading information can damage patient trust."	Informant 2 (IT Team)
Impact on patient visits	Accurate and regularly updated digital information increases patient visits.	"The information on Instagram that is most up-to-date regarding clinics and physician schedules has increased patient visits."	Informant 3 (Patient Services Department)
Patient feedback	Service evaluation is conducted through digitally based patient feedback.	"We monitor patient feedback through links and QR codes. If there are suggestions, they are followed up immediately."	Informant 3 (Patient Services Department)

DISCUSSION

This study shows that the implementation of digital marketing at Siti Khadijah Hospital, Gorontalo, represents a strategic response to increasing competition in healthcare services in the digital era. However, the findings indicate that digital marketing functions not only as a promotional instrument but also as a mechanism for building trust, managing patient expectations, and strengthening institutional reputation. Thus, this study expands previous perspectives that tend to view hospital digital marketing primarily as a functional tool for increasing visibility toward a more holistic and strategic perspective.

Digital Marketing as an Instrument for Building Trust and Transparency

The focus of digital content at Siti Khadijah Hospital on maternal and child health education and real-time updates on service information reinforces the role of digital marketing as an instrument of transparent health communication. This finding is consistent with the literature indicating that digital marketing in healthcare services functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a strategic medium for improving communication, patient engagement, and the quality of service delivery (Wijaya & Achadi, 2024; Nadiyah & Prayoga, 2024). Through the utilization of social media, websites, and digital applications, hospitals can provide accurate, relevant, and

timely information, thereby strengthening patient trust and fostering more sustainable relationships (Sahara & Prayoga, 2024).

In the context of maternal and child healthcare services, digital marketing plays an increasingly strategic role because it enables hospitals to reach mothers and families more broadly while providing contextual and easily accessible health education. Previous research has shown that the use of social media, including educational activities such as Instagram Live, can effectively increase engagement among pregnant women and strengthen health literacy, ultimately contributing to greater trust in healthcare facilities (Indrayani et al., 2024; Ihsan & Aminah, 2025). Thus, digital marketing not only supports service visibility but also serves as a means of strengthening transparency, managing expectations, and building hospital reputation.

However, these benefits are accompanied by challenges. The implementation of digital marketing in healthcare services faces issues related to data security, patient privacy, and regulatory compliance. In addition, variations in patients' digital literacy and disparities in access to technology also influence the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies (Setyawati & Ernawaty, 2024). Therefore, hospitals need to adopt a balanced approach between optimizing digital marketing and strengthening ethical governance and data protection to ensure that the transparency established through digital media genuinely strengthens patient trust and the sustainability of hospital competitiveness.

Limitations in Digital Governance and Their Implications for Strategic Maturity

Limitations in digital governance are a key factor hindering the maturity of hospital digital marketing strategies. The literature indicates that unclear governance structures, limited stakeholder involvement, technological resource constraints, and organizational cultural barriers are major causes of failure in integrating digital marketing into business strategies (Byrne, 2024; Chowdhury, 2024; Koczerga, 2024). Their effects can be seen in weak digital marketing management, high dependence on a single administrator or IT team, and the absence of structured evaluation systems and performance indicators, resulting in digital strategies that tend to be reactive and unsustainable (Chaffey, 2010; Yilmaz, 2021).

Consistent with these findings, this study shows that digital marketing management at Siti Khadijah Hospital, Gorontalo, remains at an early stage of digital maturity. This is characterized by the absence of a clearly defined digital marketing organizational structure, limited stakeholder involvement, and suboptimal integration of digital strategies with organizational objectives. This finding supports Septeria and Ali (2025), who found that many hospitals have utilized social media but are not yet supported by mature governance and performance-based evaluation systems. An important contribution of this study is its emphasis that limitations in digital governance not only reduce promotional effectiveness but may also create strategic risks, such as information inconsistency, disproportionate workloads, and limited sustainability of digital marketing strategies.

Integration of Digital Marketing and Patient-Centered Care

The findings of this study support the view that hospital digital marketing should be understood as an integral component of a patient-centered care strategy (Nadiyah & Prayoga, 2024). Easily accessible service information, updated physician schedules, and responses to patient feedback through digital media demonstrate that digital marketing functions as a bridge between hospital management and the patient experience. However, this study also shows that digital marketing that is not aligned with actual service capacity has the potential to undermine patient trust. Therefore, integration among the marketing, IT, and service teams is crucial for maintaining consistency between the hospital's digital image and patients' actual experiences, while ensuring that marketing strategies genuinely support service quality.

Evaluation of Digital Strategies: From Activity-Based to Performance-Based Approaches

Although digital marketing evaluation at Siti Khadijah Hospital is conducted routinely, this study shows that such evaluation remains largely descriptive and is not yet based on measurable performance indicators. This finding is consistent with Septeria and Ali (2025) and Van Den Berg and Oosterveer (2025), who reported that many healthcare institutions have not yet integrated

data-driven approaches into digital marketing evaluation. Analytical tools can provide insights into user interactions, map user journeys, and personalize content to optimize marketing strategies (Verma, 2025). In addition, data-driven decision-making has been shown to improve marketing precision and operational efficiency through customer segmentation, campaign effectiveness, and customer lifetime value management (Rosário & Cruz, 2025). Therefore, a data-driven evaluation system is an important prerequisite for the sustainability of digital marketing strategies, although Rani and Meghana (2025) indicate that difficulties in measuring return on investment (ROI) remain a major obstacle to determining the contribution of digital marketing to organizational performance.

This study extends the work of Purwadhi et al. (2024) by demonstrating that without clear performance targets, defined key performance indicators (KPIs), and structured evaluation methods, digital marketing management tends to be reactive and insufficiently integrated with the hospital's strategic objectives. Therefore, as suggested by Korelova (2025), hospitals need to develop evaluation methods that incorporate multiple digital metrics so that marketing strategies are no longer focused solely on activities but are genuinely performance-based and capable of contributing to competitiveness and patient satisfaction. Strategic alignment and systematic integration, as emphasized by Rani & Meghana (2025) and Mujtahidah (2025), constitute important foundations for this transformation.

Theoretically, this study enriches the healthcare marketing literature by emphasizing that hospital digital marketing is a multidimensional process encompassing promotion, education, organizational governance, and trust management within a patient-centered care framework. Practically, the findings imply that hospitals need to establish a clear digital marketing structure, define digital performance indicators, and integrate digital marketing with the service delivery system. Without these measures, digital marketing risks becoming merely a communication activity without a significant long-term strategic impact on competitiveness and patient satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that optimizing digital marketing strategies plays an important role in improving competitiveness and patient satisfaction at Siti Khadijah Hospital, Gorontalo. The utilization of social media and digital platforms serves not only as a means of promoting healthcare services but also as a medium for communication, health education, and the development of an institutional image oriented toward patients' needs. These findings provide practical contributions to hospital management in designing more structured and patient-centered digital marketing strategies, while also strengthening the hospital marketing literature that emphasizes the importance of integrating digital marketing with service quality.

However, this study has limitations, as it was conducted at a single hospital using a qualitative approach. Therefore, the findings cannot be broadly generalized and do not quantitatively measure the impact of digital marketing on hospital performance indicators. Based on the findings, the hospital is recommended to develop a more systematic and sustainable digital marketing strategy by emphasizing patient engagement, strengthening human resource capacity in digital marketing, and consistently providing relevant health education content.

In addition, integration between digital promotion and offline activities is needed, accompanied by periodic evaluation of information accuracy and digital marketing performance through monitoring patient interactions and feedback. Future research is recommended to employ a mixed-methods approach and expand the research context to multiple healthcare settings to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of hospital digital marketing across different healthcare environments.

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