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The Impact Of “Digital Marketing” Strategies on Tourist Decision-Making: A Case Study of Boutique Hotels

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Abstract

This study investigates how “digital marketing” tactics affect traveler decision-making. Given the hotel industry's rapid digital development, it is now crucial for specialized lodging providers to comprehend how internet marketing tools affect consumer behavior. The study used an exploratory research methodology and positivist research ethic to gather primary data via a structured survey, which produced 101 responses that were purposefully chosen. Important “digital marketing” components like influencer partnerships, social media advertisements, and online reviews were investigated for their impact on travelers' decisions regarding reservation, build trust, and perceive a business. SPSS was used during statistical analysis, enabling detailed interpretation utilizing both inferential and descriptive techniques. The findings of the study also focus on indicating that the “digital marketing” strategies, particularly those focusing on visual appeal, social media engagement, and reliable customer reviews, have a consistently positive influence on tourists' decisions to book boutique hotels.

Keywords: Tourist, digital, boutique, hotels, decision-making, marketing, customer, travel, social media.

Introduction

“Digital marketing” is strongly related to a significant portion of tourism studies. The need for innovation and the pursuit of individualised travel experiences are driven by several factors, including big data (Sharafuddin, Madhavan and Wangtueai, 2024). These technological advancements provide tools driven through machine learning, along with intelligent technology, the integration of the concept of the neuro-marketing, and a growing emphasis on the more general idea of long-term viability. According to the “Tourism Adaptable “digital marketing” Framework” (TADMF), language proficiency is crucial for the tourism sector to take advantage of “digital marketing” capabilities. The use of neuroscience concepts and methods to comprehend how customers behave and make choices is known as neuro-marketing. It makes use of instruments like “Functional magnetic resonance imaging” (fMRI), “electroencephalography” (EEG), along with eye tracking are used to record unconscious mental and the emotional reactions to marketing materials (Krabokoukis, 2025). By addressing emotions and psychological variables that are crucial in influencing tourist behavior, neuro-marketing provides a distinctive lens through which to improve marketing techniques in the tourism industry. Online presence becomes the main means of contact between prospective tourists as well as hotels or locations, and the hospitality sector is very competitive and diverse, necessitating interdisciplinary methods. To confirm its efficacy and show quantifiable gains within “key performance indicators” (KPIs), studies conducted using actual data are crucial.

Furthermore, additional investigations have concentrated exclusively on empirical evaluation using the TADMF in a range of tourism settings, including big vacation destinations and boutique hotels, metropolitan locations, and rural regions. All things considered, the suggested framework fills the gap between scholarly study and real-world implementation by meeting the demand for creative, client-focused approaches in the travel industry. Their flexibility guarantees relevance in a variety of settings, enabling lodging facilities and travel destinations to maintain their competitiveness in a world that is becoming more and more digital.

Aim:

The study aims to examine the impact of “digital marketing” strategies on tourist decision-making: a case study of boutique hotels.

Objectives:

- To determine the main “digital marketing” techniques boutique hotels employ to draw in and interact with visitors.
- To investigate the connection between travellers booking decisions along “digital marketing” initiatives in the areas of influencing marketing, SEO, as well as social media.
- To assess how visitors view “digital marketing” information and how it influences their trust, inclinations, and ultimate lodging decisions.

Literature Review

The hospitality business, comprising vacation rental properties and guesthouses, has become directly related to and plays a significant role in the larger tourist sector, per Industry Strategy 2021–2023. Thailand is considered one of the most popular countries in worldwide, and thus the industry plays a major part in the entire economy. This is due in part to the fact that the country is home to top-notch tourism destinations. Bangkok is a prominent and enduringly popular tourist destination, as evidenced by the numerous tourism accolades the city has received. Thailand's recreational and tourism industry, particularly tiny boutique hotels, has been negatively impacted economically by the COVID-19 outbreak. To satisfy the latest standard demands, such as contactless service, hotels like these have been

forced to come up with more creative and efficient ways to operate. Artificial intelligence, along with machine learning, are two examples of digital technology that have created new avenues enabling hotels to digitally transform their client services (Takuatung and Bussracumpakorn, 2024). By creating a "contactless" computer program in the context of a "new normal" benefiting both hotel guests and hotel owners, "machine learning and artificial intelligence" (AI) are going to help throughout the transformation of hotel management operations. Online as well as self-service registration at hotel systems enables the automatic collection of all required visitor information alongside minimal or no involvement from the front desk (Manoharan *et al.* 2024).

Small hotels in areas that have been taken or deoccupied must devise plans to draw in domestic travellers and modify their services to meet the requirements of those who are temporarily displaced. Furthermore, modest hotels must concentrate on enhancing service quality, building infrastructure, and fortifying alliances with nearby businesses, along with activities to produce attractive tourist goods (Santa, Rodríguez Victoria and Tegethoff, 2025). Six essential categories have been selected for the hotel alongside the tourism industry, reflecting the effectiveness, sustainability, and quality of management of hotels in the areas of customer relationships, digitalisation, and CRM, enhancing environmental sustainability and implementing "green" practices, it is also responsible for the improvement of customer loyalty and service quality (Kolodiziev *et al.* 2024). This group comprised the research that looked into how CRM affected the caliber of relationships in the hospitality sector. The effect of managerial agility, creative thinking, and advanced data analytics skills on hotel performance following COVID-19. An internet-based instrument for performance enhancement and comparison analysis. The characteristics associated with a "smart" property and how they affect the intentions of guests. The preferences of customers for booking hotels online is a tool for supporting decisions that uses social media evaluations to assess the quality of services (Kolesárová *et al.* 2024). These studies emphasise how crucial service quality, along with technical innovation, is to the contemporary hotel sector, especially for small or boutique hotels.

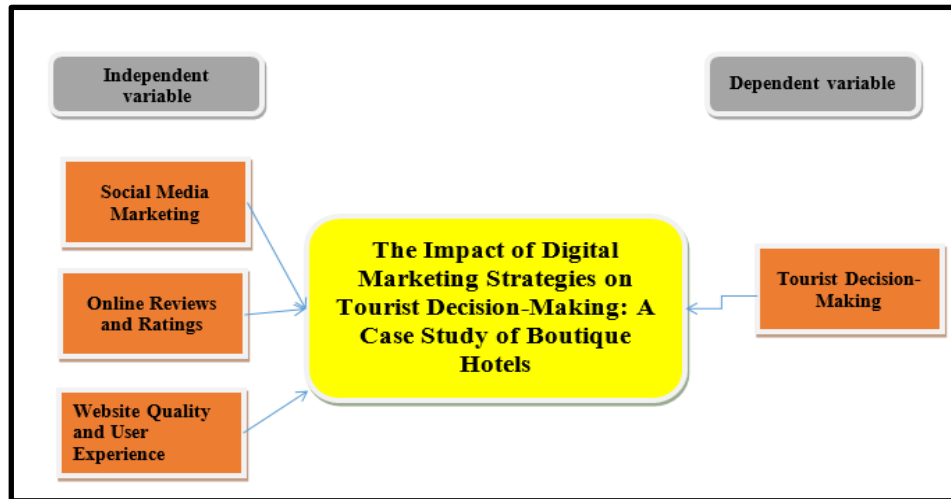


Figure 1: Conceptual framework
(Source: Self-developed)

Methodology

The effective research philosophy used in the present research includes *positivism*, which emphasizes objectivity using measurable data to comprehend how “digital marketing” methods affect travellers' choices in the setting of boutique hotels. The study's goal of employing statistical methods to investigate the correlations between “digital marketing” parameters along with customer spending, is in line with positivism. To learn more about the new trends and customer reactions regarding online marketing strategies, an *exploratory* study approach has been used. An exploratory method or design enables the discovery of novel and significant trends that impact traveler behavior, particularly within the boutique hotel industry, as online marketing serves as a dynamic and developing field. Targeted research questions result from the employment of exploratory studies in identifying knowledge gaps and missing information (Fuchs, Prideaux and Konar, 2024). The survey form has been created and given to people who had just made or were thinking about

making a reservation with an independently owned hotel to collect *primary information*.

Purposive sampling has been employed in the investigation to choose participants considering their applicability regarding the study's focus, which is tourists who engage using content from “digital marketing” when choosing where to stay. Purposive sampling guarantees that the selected participants have the particular traits, backgrounds, or expertise most pertinent to the study issue (Parvez, Eluwole and Lasisi, 2024). With **101 reliable responses** in all, there was an adequate amount of data to permit pattern recognition and simple statistical analysis. *SPSS software* was used to evaluate the data that was gathered. Key trends along with respondent characteristics were compiled using descriptive statistics, along the overall trend and intensity of the associations amongst “digital marketing” factors were ascertained using implied analysis techniques like correlations and regression evaluations (Tsapnidouet *al.* 2024).

Result

Reliability Analysis

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.864	15

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

The above tabular representation of reliability analysis shows a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.864 for 15 items, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the survey statements. In general, a “Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.7 is considered acceptable”, while values above the value of 0.8 reflect good reliability. This suggests that the items used in the questionnaire are well-aligned in measuring the same underlying

construct, in this case, the impact about “digital marketing” strategies on tourist decision-making. The high reliability score shows that the instrument is dependable for data collection and can produce consistent results across similar samples, enhancing the overall credibility of the findings of the study.

Frequency Analysis

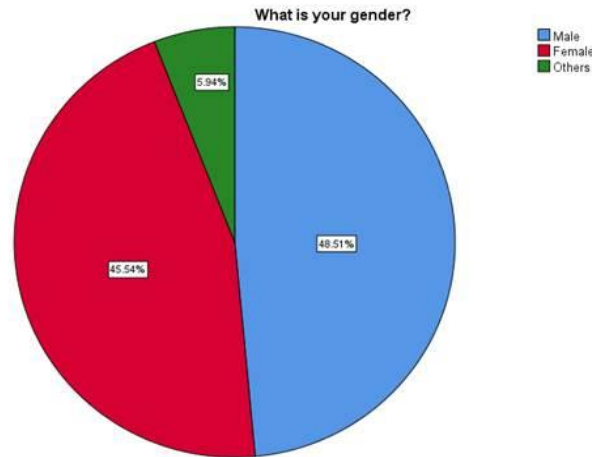


Figure 1: Gender Demographic

(Source: IBM SPSS)

The gender distribution across respondents indicates a nearly balanced sample, consisting 48.51% identifying as male and 45.54% as female. Additionally, 5.94% selected 'Others', reflecting inclusivity and gender diversity in the study. This balanced data indicates findings credibility, ensuring perspective from different gender identities is considered when exploring the

influences of the “digital marketing” strategies on tourist decision-making. Slight male dominance data is not biased data, and presence of non-binary participant also explores the evolving travel behaviour of different genders, in context of boutique hotel preferences and “digital marketing” influences.

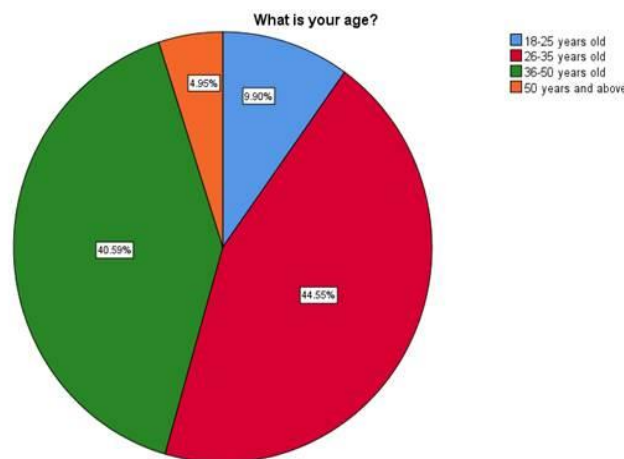


Figure 2: Age Demographic

(Source: IBM SPSS)

The age distribution illustrates that 44.55% of participants are fall within 26–35 years category, followed by 40.59% aged 36–50 years, showing representation of active, mid-career travellers. 9.90% of respondents are between 18–25 years, while 4.95% are aged 50 and above. This data emphasises that the majority of boutique hotel customers are significantly influenced by “digital

marketing” and fall within the young to middle-aged adult range. These age groups are generally more digitally engaged, which aligns well with the study's focus on online strategies. Lower representation from older age shows limited digital engagement or boutique hotel interest among this age group.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive Statistics		
	Mean	Std. Deviation
“digital marketing” strategies like hotel websites, social media content and online reviews influence the decision to book a boutique hotel.	4.52	.756
Exposure to boutique hotels by social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram increases brand awareness and visibility among tourists.	4.71	.589
Engaging the visual content of boutique hotels on social media enhances the	4.62	.847

perceived attractiveness of the property in the travellers' minds.		
Social media influencer promotions play a crucial role in establishing credibility and trust for boutique hotels among the target audience.	4.50	1.026
Frequent and consistent activity on social media by boutique hotels strengthens online presence and influences tourist preferences and interests.	4.40	1.068
High ratings and online reviews enhance the perceived reliability and quality of boutique hotels for prospective travellers.	4.44	1.014
Low ratings and negative reviews reduce the likelihood of boutique hotel selection through potential tourists.	4.42	1.003
User-generated content like personal experiences and detailed reviews influences the process of decision-making of travellers considering boutique hotels.	4.43	1.033
Consistent ratings and high review volumes across platforms build trust and influence booking choices for boutique hotel customers.	4.47	1.025
A visually appealing and well-designed website develops a strong first impression and enhances the perceived professionalism of boutique hotels.	4.58	.897
Organised information and clear navigation on a boutique hotel's website enhance efficiency and ease of booking process.	4.48	.923
Mobile responsiveness and fast-loading pages contribute positively to overall user experience of boutique hotel websites.	4.62	.798
Availability of customer testimonials, detailed images and virtual tours on the website increases confidence in choosing boutique hotel accommodations.	4.62	.760
Valid N (listwise)		101

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis presented in Table 2 provides insights into respondents' perceptions of “digital marketing” strategies influencing boutique hotel booking decisions. The highest mean score of 4.71 was observed for the statement regarding social media exposure increasing brand awareness and visibility, indicating that visual platforms like “Instagram and Facebook” play a vital role in attracting tourist attention. Statements related to engaging visual content, website aesthetics, and mobile responsiveness also recorded high means (4.58–4.62), highlighting the strong influence of online presentation on traveller perception. Furthermore,

user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, also ranked highly (mean: 4.43–4.47), underlining the importance of peer opinion for decision-making.

The lowest mean value of 4.40 was still significantly high, suggesting overall strong agreement across all statements. Standard deviations ranged from 0.589 to 1.068, illustrating moderate variability in responses, with slightly more variation seen in items involving influencer promotions and review reliability. Overall, these findings underscore the strategic importance of digital platforms in shaping consumer preferences in the hospitality sector.

Correlation Analysis

Correlations		
		“Digital marketing” strategies like hotel websites, social media content and online reviews influence the decision to book a boutique hotel.
“Digital marketing” strategies like hotel websites, social media content and online reviews influence the decision to book a boutique hotel.	Pearson Correlation (r)	1
Exposure to boutique hotels by social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram increases brand awareness and visibility among tourists.		.521**
Engaging the visual content of boutique hotels on social media enhances the perceived attractiveness of the property in the travellers' minds.		.436**
Social media influencer promotions play a crucial role in establishing credibility and trust for boutique hotels among the target audience.		.325**
Frequent and consistent activity on social media by boutique hotels strengthens online presence and influences tourist preferences and interests.		.421**
High ratings and online reviews enhance the perceived reliability and quality of boutique hotels for prospective travellers.		.351**

Low ratings and negative reviews reduce the likelihood of boutique hotel selection through potential tourists.		.408**	
User-generated content like personal experiences and detailed reviews influences the process of decision-making of travellers considering boutique hotels.		.274**	
Consistent ratings and high review volumes across platforms build trust and influence booking choices for boutique hotel customers.		.378**	
A visually appealing and well-designed website develops a strong first impression and enhances the perceived professionalism of boutique hotels.		.222*	
Organised information and clear navigation on a boutique hotel's website enhance efficiency and ease of booking process.		.484**	
Mobile responsiveness and fast-loading pages contribute positively to overall user experience of boutique hotel websites.		.430**	
Availability of customer testimonials, detailed images and virtual tours on the website increases confidence in choosing boutique hotel accommodations.		.330**	

Table 3: "Correlation Analysis"

The "correlation analysis" in Table 3 highlights the strength and direction of relationships between various "digital marketing" strategies and tourists' decisions to book boutique hotels. All independent variables show positive along with statistically significant correlations through dependent variables, indicating that as "digital marketing" effectiveness increases, so does the likelihood of tourists choose boutique hotels. The strongest correlation is with exposure to boutique hotels through social media platforms ($r = .521$), followed by clear navigation on hotel websites ($r = .484^{**}$) and engaging visual content on social media ($r = .436^{**}$), suggesting that visual and interactive content greatly influences consumer behaviour.

Additionally, mobile responsiveness, online reviews, and social media activity all show moderate correlations (ranging from $.330^{**}$ to $.430^{**}$), reinforcing the remarkable importance of user experience and social proof in influencing tourist choices. Interestingly, even user-generated content and low ratings ($r = .274^{**}$ and $.408^{**}$ respectively) significantly affect decisions, underscoring the influences of peer feedback. The lowest yet still significant correlation is with website design aesthetics ($r = .222^{*}$), indicating it has influence but to a lesser extent. Overall, the results affirm that "digital marketing" elements collectively playing an remarkable role in shaping tourists' booking decisions in the boutique hotel segment.

Regression Analysis

Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.717 ^a	.514	.447	.562
a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Marketing, Online Reviews and Ratings, Website Quality and User Experience				

Table 4: Model Summary

The model summary in Table 4 reveals that the multiple regression model explains a significant proportion of the variance in tourist decision-making. The "R value of 0.717" indicates a strong positive relationship between the combined predictors, "Social Media Marketing, Online Reviews and Ratings, and Website Quality and User Experience", and the dependent variable.

The R Square value of 0.514 signifies that 51.4% of the variation in booking decisions for boutique hotels is explained by the "digital marketing" strategies considered. The Adjusted R Square of 0.447 accounts for model complexity and sample size, confirming the model's reliability. The standard error of 0.562 suggests moderate prediction accuracy.

ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	29.372	12	2.448	7.744	.000 ^b
	Residual	27.816	88	.316		
	Total	57.188	100			
a. Dependent Variable: Tourist Decision-Making						

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Marketing, Online Reviews and Ratings, Website Quality and User Experience

Table 5: ANOVA

The ANOVA results in Table 5 assess the overall significance of the regression model. The “F-value of 7.744 with a significance level (p-value) of 0.000” indicates that the model is statistically significant, meaning that the combination of predictors, Social Media Marketing, Online Reviews and Ratings, and Website Quality and User Experience, collectively influence Tourist Decision-Making. The regression sums of squares (29.372) compared to the residual sum (27.816) further supports that a substantial portion of the variance in tourist decisions is explained by the model. Since the “p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected”, confirming model effectiveness.

Discussion

Digital technologies, notably social media, have been revolutionising the hospitality industry hotel market for almost a certain time now. Understanding the way to make use of social media successfully effectively a promotional tool is crucial for firms that objective to acquire and engage customers, build a company reputation, along remain competitive. Despite its prominence, growth is always something to discover about efficient social media advertising methods for hospitality. The tourism business heavily relies upon social media to feed its sales as well as its marketing strategy. Boutique hotels, widely known for their tiny size and individual personality, offer people a distinctive lodging experience. These facilities intentionally position themselves in favorable places, which allows them to fully encourage guests to engage themselves in regional customs. Although boutique hotels emphasise excellent services over quantity, they sometimes also be unexpectedly cheap. At the power source similar time, boutique resorts give customised, unforgettable stays which emphasise individuality and originality. Positive evaluations become social proof, confirming the property's excellent service and lodging claims. Potential visitors are more inclined to believe the hotel's claimed amenities and feel secure making a reservation when they read a lot of great reviews. Positive evaluations constitute social proof, confirming the hotel's excellent service and cleanliness promises. Potential visitors are more inclined to believe the hotel's claimed amenities and feel secure making a reservation when they read a lot of great reviews. Potential tourists' propensity to select a boutique hotel has considerably diminished due to low ratings and unfavorable reviews. Travel decisions are heavily influenced by online reviews, particularly those that are critical. Before making a

reservation, prospective visitors frequently use such feedback to assess the standard and dependability of a hotel.

Conclusion

From the above study, it found that advertising and consumer interaction in the age of technology, the hospitality industry, specifically boutique hotels in particular, has confronted difficulties. The hotel sector today has an amazing tool for communicating with its intended audience, establishing a lasting relationship with “customers, and influencing brand perception” thanks to the common usage of social networking platforms. Using social media effectively has helped a business become more visible, influence customer choices, and establish a positive brand image. In numerous industries, especially the boutique hotel business sector, social networking sites like the likes of “Instagram, Facebook, along with Booking.com”, have emerged as crucial channels for clients to express their experiences, get recommendations, and provide feedback.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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