Enhancing Hotel Room Bookings through Instagram Marketing

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Abstract

Tourism is a vital sector globally, encompassing travel, leisure, and associated industries that significantly bolster economies, especially in developed nations. Indonesia’s tourism potential holds promise for economic growth through increased visitor numbers and new destination developments. The hotel industry, a cornerstone of global tourism, adapts to technological advancements and shifting consumer behaviors to maintain competitiveness. This study investigates the efficacy of Instagram as a digital marketing tool in enhancing hotel room bookings, focusing on Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar. Methods included direct observation, engagement analysis, and stakeholder interviews. The findings underscore Instagram’s pivotal role in showcasing hotel amenities, promotions, and exclusive offers to a global audience, thereby fostering direct engagement and influencing booking decisions. Effective strategies and challenges in leveraging Instagram were identified, highlighting the importance of innovative content, real-time responsiveness, and adaptation to digital trends. Despite challenges such as market saturation and evolving consumer preferences, proactive measures like enhancing content quality and collaborating with influencers can amplify Instagram’s impact on room sales. Recommendations include continuous staff training, strategic partnerships, and analytics utilization to optimize marketing efforts and sustain growth in the competitive digital tourism landscape. This study contributes insights into leveraging Instagram for hotel marketing, emphasizing its role in driving profitability and enhancing brand visibility within the dynamic hospitality sector.

Keywords

Tourism, Hospitality Industry, Digital Marketing, Instagram

JEL Classification

L83, M31, O33
INTRODUCTION

Tourism represents one of the most substantial industries globally, encompassing all aspects related to travel and leisure, such as tourist destinations and associated enterprises. Its significance is steadily increasing on a worldwide scale, making significant contributions to the economies of developed countries (Bhandari & A Sin, 2023; Lontoh et al., 2020). According to the Tourism Law No. 10 of 2009 (DPR-RI, 2009), tourism refers to travel undertakings by individuals or groups to specific locations for recreational, personal growth, or exploration of unique attractions within a limited timeframe. Individuals participating in such travel activities are commonly known as tourists. The term "tourism" encapsulates the entirety of these activities related to tourism. This sector can enhance economic and social development in cities but also poses challenges to its sustainability, particularly through online-mediated tourist accommodations, which may compromise social sustainability (Martín-Martín et al., 2023).

The tourism potential in Indonesia, if managed effectively, can enhance the national economy, with visitor influx directly impacting revenue generation (Julianti et al., 2022; Wijayanti et al., 2022). Changes in travel behaviors and the emergence of new tourist destinations have been introduced within the tourism industry (Fan et al., 2023; Muchlis et al., 2024). The development of a region can bring forth new attractions for both domestic and international visitors (Akib et al., 2024). As new tourist destinations emerge and travel behaviors evolve, regions have the opportunity to cultivate fresh attractions that appeal to both local and international travelers, thereby diversifying and expanding the tourism landscape. This developmental approach not only enriches the visitor experience but also contributes to broader economic benefits by stimulating the hospitality and ancillary services sectors. Therefore, the evolution of travel behaviors and the emergence of new tourist destinations in Indonesia offer significant potential to diversify the tourism landscape, enhancing both visitor experiences and economic benefits through increased revenue generation and regional development.

The hospitality sector, particularly the hotel industry, plays a crucial role in global tourism by offering vital accommodation services to travelers. Recent advancements in technology and shifts in consumer behavior have transformed the landscape of hospitality services, compelling hotels to implement innovative approaches to attract and retain guests (Islahuddin & Arfin Muh Salim, 2022; Lim et al., 2024). Understanding these dynamics is essential for hotels striving to excel in a competitive market (Bilgihan & Ricci, 2024). This study aims to investigate the influence of digital marketing strategies, with a specific focus on Instagram, in enhancing hotel room bookings. Through an evaluation of Instagram's efficacy as a promotional tool, this research endeavors to reveal critical insights that can aid hotels (Islahuddin & Arfin Muh Salim, 2022), such as Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar, in optimizing their marketing endeavors to draw more guests and boost occupancy rates. The crucial role of the hospitality sector, particularly hotels, in global tourism necessitates understanding how recent technological advancements and shifts in consumer behavior are prompting innovative strategies to attract and retain guests. (Chen et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2021; Salim et al., 2012) highlighted how technological advancements affect strategies in the hospitality sector to attract and retain guests, which aligned with the topic of recent technological advancements and shifting consumer behavior in global tourism.
The primary outcomes of this study will illuminate the most effective strategies for leveraging Instagram’s platform for hotel marketing. It will scrutinize the specific techniques employed by Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar and assess their impact on room reservations. Additionally, the study will pinpoint the challenges and obstacles encountered by hotels in utilizing Instagram as a marketing mechanism, offering suggestions for overcoming these hurdles. The study's framework will commence with an outline of the current marketing trends in the hospitality industry, followed by an in-depth examination of Instagram's role in hotel promotions. Subsequent sections will present case studies and data analysis from Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar to showcase practical implementations and outcomes of digital marketing strategies.

This research seeks to investigate the strategic utilization of social media platforms, particularly Instagram, in the hospitality industry. This research aims to explore how hotels can effectively use Instagram as a promotional tool to increase visibility and attract more guests, given the findings of previous research (Apollo, 2020; Liu et al., 2024; Santos & Almeida, 2022) revealing the increasing impact of digital platforms on consumer behavior. The focus of this research is on a case study of Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar to identify successful strategies in utilizing Instagram to increase room bookings and profitability. This research will emphasize the significant influence of Instagram on the hotel's marketing efforts, analyzing Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar's tactics in engaging the target audience and driving direct bookings. In addition, this research will also present a structured analytical framework that combines a thorough literature review on social media marketing in hospitality, empirical data collection, and case studies. This methodological approach aims to provide insights and recommendations for hotels looking to improve their digital marketing strategies through Instagram and similar platforms.

**METHOD**

This research was carried out at Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar between February and March 2024. The study concentrated on the observation and analysis of the hotel's utilization of social media, specifically Instagram, as a means to boost room sales. Techniques for gathering data comprised direct observation of social media posts, engagement with clientele, and discussions with key staff members from the hotel's marketing and management departments (Lexy J, 2019). The discussions were conducted utilizing a semi-structured interview protocol designed to delve into the strategies, obstacles, and achievements in leveraging Instagram for promotional purposes. The assessment employed qualitative approaches to decipher the efficacy of Instagram in stimulating reservations and enhancing guest involvement, offering valuable insights into modern digital marketing strategies in the hospitality industry.
worldwide audience. This platform facilitates direct interaction with potential guests, allowing for personalized engagements that can significantly impact reservation choices. Gaining an understanding of how hotels navigate the intricacies of Instagram, ranging from leveraging visual content to surmounting the difficulties of maintaining engagements and translating interactions into reservations, offers valuable insights into effective digital marketing approaches within the hospitality industry.

1. The Use of Instagram Social Media in Increasing Room Sales at Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar

The use of Instagram as a marketing tool has shown a significant impact on increasing room sales at Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar. Documentation data reveals a noticeable upward trend in the number of followers and interactions with content posted on the @whizprimesudirmanmks Instagram account.

![Figure 1. Instagram Front Page @whizprimesudirmanmks](image)

Source: Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar Instagram Official Account, 2024

The Instagram profile under consideration showcases 860 posts, 3,603 followers, and 846 accounts being followed, indicating a dynamic presence with a significant volume of shared content. Nevertheless, the number of followers implies continuous endeavors to broaden its viewership. From an analytical perspective, the ratio of followers to accounts followed hovers around 4:1, demonstrating a well-proportioned method of interacting with other profiles. A key aspect of improving interaction and engagement involves concentrating on high-caliber and pertinent content. Despite the considerable volume of posts, refining content marketing strategies could heighten visibility and audience involvement on the platform. In essence, although the profile displays active participation through its regular posts, there exists potential for expansion by augmenting follower numbers and enriching engagement through the enhancement of content quality and strategic approaches.

Analysis of the interview findings indicates that this strategy not only enhances brand awareness but also directly influences customers’ decisions to book rooms. These findings are consistent with previous research (Cahyani et al., 2021; Lontoh et al., 2020) demonstrating that visually appealing content increases user engagement on social media platforms, including Instagram. Content analysis of social media posts
reveals that posts featuring aesthetic photos and informative descriptions tend to receive positive responses from followers. The study (Li & Xie, 2020) found that the presence of images consistently yields a positive effect on user engagement on both Twitter and Instagram. Additionally, high-quality and professionally shot images tend to generate higher levels of engagement on these platforms. For example, in the case of Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar, photos featuring room renovations or special discounts offered for bookings made directly through Instagram are often the main attraction that can be seen from followers’ comments or “Likes”.

![Figure 2. Special discount program @whizprimessudirmanmks](Source: Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar Instagram Official Account, 2024)

Image 2 indicates that the performance of content analysis on social media posts exposes a trend whereby posts containing aesthetic images and informative explanations elicit positive reactions from followers. More specifically, posts that exhibit renovations of rooms or promote exclusive discounts offered for reservations made via Instagram directly tend to garner considerable interest. Such forms of content do not merely capture the visual attractiveness of the hotel’s offerings but also furnish valuable details that stimulate interaction and potentially boost direct reservations. This strategy is by contemporary tendencies in digital marketing, (Afrilia, 2018; Arfin Muhammad Salim et al., 2018; Nesterenko et al., 2023; Virani, 2024) underscoring the significance of visually pleasing content combined with coherent, persuasive communication to effectively captivate and transform social media followers into clientele.

Comprehending the significance of pertinent visual content and active engagement, Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar can utilize insights from content analysis to enhance its social media marketing strategy. Through a focus on posts that showcase aesthetically pleasing images of room upgrades and provide informative details regarding exclusive discounts offered for direct reservations via Instagram, the hotel can effectively captivate and involve its followers. This method not only improves the visual attractiveness of their services but also fosters direct engagement, potentially resulting in heightened conversion rates. According to (Wooley et al., 2022) Visual Attention Theory, humans tend to respond more strongly to images or visuals than text or words. As such, visually appealing and relevant content has the potential to capture users’ attention more effectively. In addition, in Visual Psychology,
according to (Crouzet & Serre, 2011; Muhammad Salim et al., 2017; Wooley et al., 2022) elements such as color, composition, and visual aesthetics can influence individual emotions and perceptions. Aesthetically pleasing and informative images can evoke positive feelings and interest in users, increasing the likelihood of further interaction or actions such as making reservations. By consistently presenting engaging content that resonates with its target audience, Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar can further refine its marketing approach and ultimately reach elevated sales objectives. Therefore, understanding the importance of relevant visual content and active engagement, Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar can utilize insights from content analysis to enhance its social media marketing strategy. By focusing on posts that showcase aesthetically pleasing images of room upgrades and provide informative details regarding exclusive discounts offered for direct reservations via Instagram, the hotel can effectively captivate and engage its followers, potentially leading to increased conversion rates.

Based on these findings, recommendations include strengthening the marketing strategy through social media, particularly Instagram, with a focus on captivating and interactive visual content. Collaborating with local influencers or users with a large following can also be an effective strategy to expand promotional reach and build a positive online reputation. By leveraging the latest features of the Instagram platform, such as Stories or IGTV, the hotel can creatively reach potential audiences and increase engagement with followers. This approach will not only directly increase room sales but also strengthen Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar's position in an increasingly competitive digital tourism market.

2. Challenges in Using Instagram Social Media to Increase Room Sales at Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar

Data analysis revealed several challenges faced in using Instagram social media to increase room sales at Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar. One of the main obstacles identified is the need for continuous innovation in marketing strategies to remain competitive in an increasingly saturated market. The shift in consumer behavior towards digital media as their primary source of information necessitates content that is constantly updated and relevant to current trends. The social media team must show great creativity and agility in responding quickly to any interaction or inquiry from potential customers to uphold the hotel's positive image and increase engagement. Active interaction with potential customers is also very important in building strong relationships and fostering trust in the services offered. In line with (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2020; Lim & Rasul, 2022) Customer engagement (CE) is a crucial marketing concept, further strengthened by the increasingly widespread influence of social media.

Occupying a niche in digital marketing research within the hospitality sector, this study at Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar aims to explore the efficacy of Instagram as a tool to enhance room sales. By analyzing the hotel's Instagram strategy, including content creation, engagement tactics, and response management, this research reveals that visually appealing posts featuring room upgrades and exclusive discounts directly influence guest booking decisions. Challenges identified include the need for continuous innovation to maintain competitiveness in a saturated market and the imperative for agile, creative responses to customer interactions. Recommendations emphasize strengthening content quality, leveraging influencer partnerships, and utilizing Instagram features like Stories and IGTV to expand reach
and engagement. This structured approach not only enhances room sales but also positions Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar strategically in the dynamic digital tourism landscape.

These findings underscore the importance of adaptive marketing strategies tailored to the dynamic digital landscape. Research by (Rathore, 2020) highlights the significance of real-time engagement and personalized content in digital marketing to enhance consumer engagement. Moreover, (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Murambi & Onwards Orpah Chivivi, 2022) argue that rapid response times to customer queries can significantly impact customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, addressing these challenges involves enhancing creativity in content creation, improving response times to customer inquiries, and continuously monitoring and adapting to evolving digital trends to remain relevant and effective in Instagram marketing strategies.

This study identifies key challenges faced by Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar in leveraging Instagram social media to increase room sales. Despite these challenges, proactive measures such as enhancing content creativity and responsiveness to customer interactions can effectively overcome these hurdles. Moving forward, recommendations include investing in ongoing staff training to enhance digital marketing skills, fostering collaborations with influencers to expand reach, and leveraging analytics tools to track performance metrics and optimize marketing efforts effectively. By addressing these challenges strategically, the hotel can navigate the competitive landscape and achieve sustainable growth in room sales through Instagram marketing initiatives. To substantiate these findings empirically, further research employing a quantitative approach is necessary. Quantitative studies can test relationships between variables such as types of posted content, posting frequency, interaction rates, and their impact on CE indicators like user engagement, customer retention, and sales conversion. This approach aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding and stronger generalizability regarding how Instagram influences marketing strategies and customer interactions in the current digital context.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study has shed light on the significant role of Instagram social media in enhancing room sales at Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar, while also addressing the challenges encountered in leveraging this platform effectively. Instagram's emphasis on visual content has proven instrumental in attracting and engaging potential guests, as evidenced by the increasing followers and interactions observed on the @whizprimesudirmanmks account. By strategically showcasing aesthetically pleasing images and offering informative descriptions about room renovations and exclusive booking discounts, the hotel successfully captured the attention of its target audience and stimulated direct reservations.

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