

Impact of Digital Marketing on Hospital Marketing Strategies: A Comprehensive Literature Review



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Abstract

Background: Digital marketing leverages digital technology to build stronger relationships with markets and promote products and services through online channels in a cost-effective manner. It encompasses a variety of strategies, including Search Engine Marketing (SEM), Email Marketing, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), social media, Display Advertising, Referral Marketing, Affiliate Marketing, Content Marketing, and viral marketing. **Methods:** This study employs a descriptive literature review methodology to investigate the impact of digital marketing on hospital marketing. Four key articles were reviewed, focusing on the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in enhancing hospital promotional activities and service quality. **Results:** The literature analysis reveals several benefits of digital marketing in healthcare settings, including attracting new patients, expanding business reach, increasing customer trust, and strengthening patient loyalty. Studies by Prasetyo and Sulistiadi (2019) identified challenges and strategic plans for digital marketing in dental hospitals, while Rony and Panuju (2018) highlighted its use for online registration and marketing in RS PHC, Surabaya. Sembiluh and Sulistiadi (2022) demonstrated the advantages of

digital marketing during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Burhan and Sulistiadi (2022) showed its significant influence on hospital promotional activities. **Conclusion:** Digital marketing plays a vital role in hospital marketing by enhancing patient engagement and improving the overall brand image. For hospitals to remain competitive and effectively communicate with their target audience in the digital era, continuous innovation and strategic implementation of digital marketing are essential.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Hospital Marketing, Patient Engagement, Healthcare Promotion, Online Advertising.

Introduction

Digital marketing harnesses digital technology to build deeper connections with target markets and promote products and services through online channels. By leveraging integrated, targeted, and scalable communications, digital marketing provides a personal and cost-effective way to reach consumers (Lindawati et al., 2020). Its diversity has expanded over time, with common practices including Search Engine Marketing (SEM), Email Marketing, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), social media, Display Advertising, Marketing Referrals, Affiliate Marketing, Content Marketing, online advertising, and viral marketing (Salmiah et al., 2020).

Companies across various sectors, including manufacturing and healthcare, utilize digital marketing to enhance their outreach (Burhan & Sulistiadi, 2022). The proliferation of smartphones has

Significance | This study highlights digital marketing's pivotal role in enhancing hospital visibility, patient engagement, and overall healthcare service quality.

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revolutionized digital marketing, making internet access ubiquitous and instantaneous. Today, smartphones enable users to browse online effortlessly, making them a vital tool for digital marketing strategies (American Marketing Association, 2021)

Digital marketing is characterized by its ability to deliver timely, personal, and relevant content to consumers. It utilizes various forms of digital media including text, images, and videos to facilitate communication (Adam et al., 2022). This approach is not limited to product-based companies; it is also increasingly adopted by service providers such as hospitals, reflecting its broad applicability and relevance.

The perception of digital marketing is generally positive, as it allows for more effective and efficient communication compared to traditional methods. Research into digital marketing often employs a descriptive literature review approach, highlighting its role in fostering personalized and cost-effective market interactions (Wibowo, 2014).

The impact of information and communication technology, particularly through smartphones, has been profound. Smartphones have multifaceted effects, enabling rapid and effective communication of products and services (Nabilah, 2022). Digital marketing facilitates brand promotion and customer engagement in a timely, personal, and relevant manner (Endri & Prasetyo, 2021). It also simplifies the distribution of news and updates, including press releases and other content (Purbohastuti, 2017).

In the healthcare sector, digital marketing is crucial for improving accessibility and outreach. According to Hanumtyas (2017), hospitals are integral to social and health organizations, providing comprehensive treatment and preventive services while also serving as training centers for health professionals and research hubs (Rikomah, 2017). In the modern digital era, it is essential for hospitals to be accessible through mobile devices, websites, and social media. Effective hospital marketing strategies are vital for reaching potential patients and meeting their needs, emphasizing the importance of digital platforms in healthcare communication (Christina, I. D., & Fenni-Roselina, D., 2019).

Hospitals that leverage digital marketing can enhance their visibility and effectiveness compared to traditional marketing approaches. Health marketing aims to understand and address potential patients' needs, providing a higher level of service (Zebua, 2018). The internet, email, and social media offer cost-effective alternatives to direct marketing, breaking down geographical barriers and making services more accessible (Sembiluh & Sulistiadi, 2022). The growth of digital information has led to more efficient, transparent, and cost-effective healthcare solutions. Additionally, the targeting capabilities of electronic media have made it an invaluable tool for medical facility marketing managers (Fitzpatrick, M., & Strovink, K., 2021).

Implementing a robust digital marketing strategy is essential for future success in response to trends and challenges, including those arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital marketing not only improves visibility but also offers long-term stability by effectively managing information and engaging with consumers.

Methodology

This study utilizes a descriptive literature review approach to examine the evolving landscape of digital marketing within the hospital sector. The research methodology involved a systematic search of relevant academic articles using two primary electronic databases: Open Knowledge Maps and Google Scholar. The search was conducted using keywords such as "digital marketing," "digital marketing in hospitals," "marketing," "digital," and "systematic review." These terms were selected to identify English-language scientific articles that are central to the study's focus.

Initially, the search yielded a total of 1,112 articles from Open Knowledge Maps and 231 articles from Google Scholar. To refine the selection, several inclusion criteria were applied: the article must be freely accessible, published within the past ten years, and relevant to the systematic review topic. After applying these filters, 668 articles remained. The next step involved removing duplicates, resulting in a pool of 324 unique articles.

A further screening process focused on the type of study, reducing the number to 81 articles. Subsequently, eligibility criteria were applied, narrowing the selection to 42 articles. A final, more rigorous screening process identified four key articles selected for detailed analysis.

Results and Discussion

The four selected articles provide significant insights into digital marketing strategies in hospitals, each contributing a unique perspective to the field:

Prasetyo & Sulistiadi (2019) conducted a study titled "Designing Marketing Plans for Hospitals in the Digital Era." This research employed a descriptive qualitative methodology to investigate digital marketing practices within dental hospitals. The study's findings revealed several key points: the current state of digital marketing activities, the challenges faced in implementing these strategies, and recommendations for developing comprehensive digital marketing plans (Jami, P. M. et al., 2021). The research highlights the need for hospitals to adapt their marketing strategies to leverage digital tools effectively, suggesting that a well-structured digital marketing plan can significantly enhance a hospital's outreach and engagement.

Rony & Panuju (2018) explored the topic "Digital Media Hospital: Online-Based Marketing Communication Applications." This study used qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews, assessments, and documentation techniques, to analyze the use of online platforms for hospital marketing. The research found that

Table 1. Previous Research Researcher and Research Year

| | Title | Method | Results |
|--|--|--|---|
| Andreas Aryo Risky Prasetyo, Wachyu Sulistiadi, 2019 | Designing a marketing plan for hospitals in the digital era | Descriptive qualitative | This study obtained some data related to digital marketing activities that have been carried out, challenges in digital marketing, and the preparation of digital marketing development plans in dental hospitals. |
| Noor Firmansyah Rony, Redi Panuju. 2018 | Digital media hospital: an online-based marketing communication application | Qualitative (in-depth interview, assessment, and documentation techniques that focus on data discovery) | The study results show that besides using RSPHC CARE as an online registration medium, PHC Surabaya Hospital is also a marketing medium. |
| Dhini Sari Sembiluh, Wahyu Sulistiadi. 2022 | Implementation of digital marketing in hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic: <i>literature review</i> | Descriptive qualitative with <i>literature review</i> | The results of this study indicate that digital marketing in hospitals during this pandemic is a marketing strategy that has many benefits, namely attracting new patients, expanding the business, increasing customer trust, and strengthening loyalty. |
| Leni Burhan, Wachyu Sulistiadi. 2022 | Optimization of digital marketing strategies for hospitals | Qualitative descriptive (literature review by formulating theoretical contributions and regular breakdown of the data obtained). | Digital marketing media has a significant influence on promotional activities, expanding business while still prioritizing quality se |

the RSPHC CARE RS PHC Surabaya platform was not only used for online registration but also served as a key marketing tool (Membrillo, A., 2020). This dual function of the platform underscores the importance of integrating digital solutions that facilitate both operational efficiency and marketing effectiveness. The study highlights the role of digital media in streamlining hospital operations while also enhancing marketing communication strategies.

Sembiluh & Sulistiadi (2022) conducted a literature review titled "Implementation of Digital Marketing in Hospitals During the COVID-19 Pandemic." This research used a descriptive qualitative approach to assess the impact of digital marketing during the pandemic. The findings indicated that digital marketing strategies provided several benefits (Purcarea, V. L., 2019), including attracting new patients, expanding business operations, increasing customer trust, and fostering patient loyalty. The study emphasizes that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital marketing practices in hospitals, illustrating how these strategies can effectively address challenges and capitalize on opportunities in a crisis situation (Pujiyanto, P., 2021).

Burhan & Sulistiadi (2022) examined "Optimizing Digital Marketing Strategies for Hospitals." This study applied a descriptive qualitative methodology, combining theoretical contributions with data decomposition to analyze digital marketing strategies. The research revealed that digital marketing media plays a significant role in promotional activities, contributing to business expansion while maintaining a focus on quality services (Sita-Paramita, et al., 2021). The study underscores the importance of optimizing digital marketing strategies to enhance hospital visibility and engagement, suggesting that a strategic approach to digital marketing can lead to substantial improvements in hospital performance and patient satisfaction as shown in table 1.

Recent research underscores the transformative impact of digital marketing on hospital operations, aligning with findings from Rony & Panuju (2018), Nuryadi et al. (2022), and Burhan & Sulistiadi (2022). These studies collectively demonstrate that digital marketing offers a wealth of benefits for hospitals, particularly in attracting new patients, expanding business reach, and enhancing patient trust (Keegan, B. J., & Rowley, J., 2017). By leveraging digital marketing strategies, hospitals can foster patient loyalty, raise awareness of their services, and encourage patients to recommend the hospital to their families and friends.

According to Sembiluh & Sulistiadi (2022), the pandemic has accentuated the importance of digital marketing for hospitals. Their research reveals that digital marketing strategies are instrumental in achieving several key objectives. Hospitals can utilize digital marketing to attract new patients, expand their market reach, increase patient trust, and cultivate patient loyalty. Additionally, digital marketing helps in raising awareness about hospital services

and encouraging patients to share their positive experiences with others.

Implementing an effective digital marketing strategy involves a series of strategic steps. Hospitals must first define their marketing objectives and select the appropriate digital media channels to meet these goals. This involves setting specific, measurable objectives for each chosen media channel. The process includes analyzing the current situation, understanding the target audience, determining the budget, and establishing achievable goals. Effective implementation also requires assigning responsible personnel to execute the strategy and continuously monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of each digital marketing effort.

Rony & Panuju (2018) evaluated the performance of the digital media application RSPHC CARE at RS PHC Surabaya and reported positive outcomes. However, they identified areas needing further development, such as improving application features, regularly updating knowledge articles, and managing advertisement frequency to ensure that information remains current and engaging. These improvements are essential for maintaining user engagement and ensuring that the digital platform effectively supports the hospital's marketing goals.

Prasetyo and Sulistiadi (2019) highlight the challenges associated with digital marketing, particularly in the context of dental hospitals. Their research suggests that there is a need for innovation in digital marketing plans. They propose adapting a marketing master plan framework from Piñeiro-Otero & Martínez-Rolán (2016), which includes a comprehensive situational analysis, objective analysis, strategic planning, and operations control. This updated model emphasizes the importance of integrating technological components such as hardware, software, and organizational resources to enhance digital marketing efforts.

The framework suggests several key elements for developing an innovative digital marketing plan. It starts with a situational analysis that includes defining the hospital's mission, conducting a SWOT analysis, and assessing the marketing budget. This is followed by analyzing objectives, which involves evaluating relationships, space, options, scientific knowledge, technical skills, service efficiency, and security. Strategic planning then focuses on media selection, core business strategy, and tactical execution. Finally, operations and control involve managing time, resources, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure the effectiveness of the digital marketing strategy.

Burhan & Sulistiadi (2022) support the notion that digital marketing is an effective tool for promoting hospital services. Their research highlights that positive patient reviews on digital platforms can significantly boost patient numbers and enhance the hospital's reputation. Digital marketing also simplifies the process for patients to find hospital locations and learn about available services. Various digital marketing techniques, such as search engine marketing

(SEM), email marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), social media engagement, display advertising, referral marketing, affiliate marketing, content marketing, online advertising, and viral marketing, can be employed to achieve these goals.

Social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, offer numerous opportunities for hospitals to engage with patients and build a strong brand presence. To remain competitive, healthcare organizations must keep up with evolving marketing and advertising trends. Continuous monitoring, control, and a commitment to quality improvement are essential for leveraging digital marketing effectively.

By adopting a comprehensive and innovative digital marketing strategy, hospitals can enhance their outreach, improve patient engagement, and ultimately achieve their marketing objectives. This approach requires a thorough understanding of digital media channels, strategic planning, and ongoing evaluation to ensure that digital marketing efforts are both effective and efficient.

Conclusion

Digital marketing has emerged as a transformative force in hospital marketing strategies, offering significant benefits such as enhanced patient engagement, increased visibility, and improved service quality. The study reveals that hospitals leveraging digital platforms and tools such as social media, SEO, and online advertising can effectively attract and retain patients, expand their reach, and build stronger relationships with their audience. The insights from the literature underscore the importance of adopting modern digital strategies to remain competitive in the evolving healthcare landscape. As the digital environment continues to advance, hospitals must prioritize continuous innovation and strategic implementation of digital marketing practices. This approach will not only optimize promotional efforts but also ensure that healthcare facilities meet the dynamic needs of patients while maintaining a strong and positive brand presence in the digital age.

Author contributions

M.S.R., conceptualized the project, developed the methodology, conducted formal analysis, and drafted the original writing. N.F.S., contributed to the methodology, conducted investigations, provided resources, visualized the data. H.R.S., contributed to the reviewing and editing of the writing.

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Competing financial interests

The authors have no conflict of interest.

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