

ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA ON NEW PATIENT VISITS AT SURABAYA ISLAMIC HOSPITAL, EAST JAVA

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Abstract

The increasing competition among hospitals in Surabaya and changes in public behavior in seeking health information require hospitals to manage digital marketing in a more structured manner. This study analyzes the effect of Digital Marketing Strategy on Social Media and New Patient Visits and examines the mediating role of Social Media. A quantitative descriptive-verification design was employed using questionnaires from 100 new patients and internal hospital data for 2024–2025. Ordinal data were transformed into interval data using the Method of Successive Interval (MSI), followed by regression, path analysis, and the Sobel test. Digital Marketing Strategy positively and significantly affected Social Media (path coefficient = 0.846; $t = 15.700$; $p = 0.000$), Social Media positively and significantly affected New Patient Visits (0.873; $t = 17.689$; $p = 0.000$), and Digital Marketing Strategy had a significant direct effect on New Patient Visits (0.758; $t = 11.498$; $p = 0.000$). The indirect effect through Social Media was 0.738, with a Sobel statistic of 6.1205 ($p < 0.05$), indicating partial mediation. The second structural model produced $R^2 = 71.6\%$. The findings indicate that informative, educational, relevant, and consistent digital marketing should be integrated with structured social media management to support sustainable growth in new patient visits.

Keywords: Digital Marketing; Social Media; Digital Marketing Strategy; New Patient Visits; Hospital Management.

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has transformed the way organizations communicate and market products and services, including in the healthcare sector. Digital marketing is not only about promotion but also encompasses information delivery, brand image building, and customer relationship maintenance through digital channels (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). In the healthcare context, changes in people's online information-seeking behavior have made hospitals' presence on digital channels increasingly strategic. The competitive landscape of healthcare facilities in Surabaya reinforces this need. The research shows that the healthcare ecosystem in Surabaya consists of a relatively large number of hospitals, community health centers, and clinics, providing patients with numerous alternative service providers. In this context, hospitals need to build brand awareness, provide easily understood service information, and maintain public trust through consistent communication.

Surabaya Islamic Hospital has been implementing digital marketing since 2023. However, before October 2024, there were no dedicated human resources focused on planning, managing, and evaluating digital marketing activities. Since October 2024, the hospital has had a digital marketing coordinator and implemented content planning through an editorial plan with a target of at least 30 pieces of content per month. Internal data presented in this thesis shows an increase in patient visits via social media after that period. Social media in this study is positioned as a digital marketing implementation channel as well as a mediating variable. Social media enables two-way communication, interaction, information distribution, and building engagement with audiences (Tuten & Solomon, 2018). Therefore, this study does not equate digital marketing with social media, but rather examines how digital marketing strategies influence social media and subsequently relate to new patient visits.

Based on this background, this study aims to: (1) analyze the influence of Digital Marketing Strategy on Social Media; (2) analyze the influence of Social Media on New Patient Visits; (3) analyze the direct influence of Digital Marketing Strategy on New Patient Visits; and (4) analyze the indirect influence of Digital Marketing Strategy on New Patient Visits via Social Media.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

This research uses a management perspective as a general foundation, hospital management as the organizational context, and the concepts of digital marketing, social media marketing, and consumer behavior as the applied foundation. Digital marketing is understood as a digital technology-based marketing strategy that encompasses communication activities, content, and interactions with consumers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022; Ryan, 2022). Social media marketing is the use of social media platforms to build communication, engagement, and relationships with audiences (Tuten & Solomon, 2018).

In this study, Digital Marketing Strategy (X) is the independent variable, Social Media (Y) is the mediating variable, and New Patient Visits (Z) is the dependent variable. The relationship between variables was tested using path analysis.

Hypothesis	Tested Relationships	Direction
H1	Digital Marketing Strategy (X) → Social Media (Y)	Positive and significant
H2	Social Media (Y) → New Patient Visits (Z)	Positive and significant
H3	Digital Marketing Strategy (X) → New Patient Visits (Z)	Positive and significant
H4	Digital Marketing Strategy (X) → Social Media (Y) → New Patient Visits (Z)	Significant mediation

METHOD

The study employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive and verification design. The research objects included digital marketing strategies, social media, and new patient visits at the Surabaya Islamic Hospital. Respondents were 100 new patients seeking treatment for the first time who were aware of or had viewed the hospital's social media before visiting. Primary data was collected through a 1–5 Likert scale questionnaire. Secondary data consisted of internal hospital documentation, including data on new patient visits and digital marketing activities for the 2024–2025 period.

The research instrument included eight statements for each variable. Digital Marketing Strategy was measured through the aspects of informativeness, ease of understanding, education, attractiveness, information clarity, content updates, suitability to patient needs, and service recognition. Social Media was measured through the frequency of content viewing, ease of access, attractiveness, ease of obtaining information, trust, encouragement to seek further information, interactivity, and positive image. New Patient Visits were measured through the influence of digital information on visit decisions, confidence, service recognition, information suitability, initial information satisfaction, intention to revisit, recommendations, and the role of social media in the decision to visit for the first time.

Data analysis included descriptive statistics, validity and reliability tests, assumption tests, regression, path analysis, t-test, F-test, and Sobel test. Because the questionnaire data was ordinal, the data was transformed into an interval scale using the Method of Successive Interval (MSI) before the path analysis was conducted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis results show that all three variables are in the very good category. Digital Marketing Strategy had an average score of 4.03, with the highest indicator being clarity in service information delivery (mean 4.09). The lowest indicator was ease of understanding of the content (mean 3.94), indicating room for improvement in simplifying language and message presentation.

Social media was rated very good, with an average score of around 4.07 on key indicators related to ease of access and interaction. New Patient Visits also ranked very good, with an average score of 4.12 at the conclusion of the study. These findings indicate that respondents' perceptions of the hospital's digital communications are good, but the quality and relevance of the content still need to be maintained.

B. Results of Path Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

The path analysis results of the thesis indicate three direct influences, all of which are positive and significant. A summary of the test results is presented below.

Hypothesis	Track	Coefficient	t-count	Sig.	Decision
H1	$X \rightarrow Y$	0.846	15,700	0,000	Accepted
H2	$Y \rightarrow Z$	0.873	17,689	0,000	Accepted
H3	$X \rightarrow Z$	0.758	11,498	0,000	Accepted
H4	$X \rightarrow Y \rightarrow Z$	0.738*	6,1205**	<0.05	Accepted; partial mediation

* Indirect effect = $0.846 \times 0.873 = 0.738$. ** Sobel test value.

C. The Influence of Digital Marketing Strategy on Social Media

Digital marketing strategy has a positive and significant effect on social media with a path coefficient of 0.846 and a t-test of 15.700 ($p = 0.000$). This means that the better the strategy in planning, compiling, and delivering digital content, the better the effectiveness of the hospital's social media. This finding supports the position of the editorial plan as a content management instrument. The thesis notes that the hospital sets a minimum target of 30 editorial plans per month, or approximately one publication per day. However, consistency in the number of publications needs to be followed by the quality, relevance, and suitability of the content to the characteristics of the audience.

The R^2 value in the first substructure is 0.761 or 76.1%, indicating that the variation in Social Media in the model can be explained by Digital Marketing Strategy of 76.1%, while 23.9% is influenced by other factors outside the model. Thus, digital marketing strategy is a very important factor in building a hospital's social media performance.

D. The Influence of Social Media on New Patient Visits

Social media has a positive and significant influence on new patient visits, with a coefficient of 0.873 and a t-test of 17.689 ($p = 0.000$). This coefficient is the largest among the direct paths in the model. These findings indicate that ease of access to information, interactivity, trust in information, and the ability of social media to help potential patients identify services play a significant role in the decision to visit.

Practically speaking, social media should be treated not just as a publication channel, but as a point of contact connecting information with patient action. Health education content, information about doctors and services, hospital facilities, and registration information can be designed to facilitate the transition from information acquisition to decision-making.

E. The Influence of Digital Marketing Strategies on New Patient Visits

Digital marketing strategy has a direct positive and significant effect on new patient visits, with a coefficient of 0.758 and a t-test of 11.498 ($p = 0.000$). These findings indicate that digital marketing strategy has a direct influence on visit decisions. Clear information, tailored content, and the delivery of service value can help people make decisions without having to go through lengthy social media interactions.

In the second substructure, the R^2 value of 0.716 or 71.6% shows that Digital Marketing Strategy and Social Media together are able to explain 71.6% of the variation in New Patient Visits, while around 28.4% is explained by other factors outside the model. Therefore, research results need to be understood as evidence of the model's contribution, not as the sole explanation of patient decisions.

F. The Role of Social Media Mediation

The indirect effect of Digital Marketing Strategy on New Patient Visits through Social Media was calculated at 0.738 (0.846×0.873). The Sobel test yielded a value of 6.1205, greater than the critical value of 1.96 at the 5% level, with $p < 0.05$. Thus, the indirect effect is significant and Social Media is proven to mediate the relationship between Digital Marketing Strategy and New Patient Visits.

Since the direct effect of $X \rightarrow Z$ of 0.758 remains significant while the indirect effect through Y of 0.738 is also significant, the relationship pattern indicates partial mediation. It should be noted that 0.738 is smaller than 0.758; therefore, Social Media serves as an amplifier or additional transmission mechanism, not a substitute for the direct effect of Digital Marketing Strategy.

From a managerial perspective, these findings confirm that investments in digital marketing strategies will be more effective if translated into consistent and measurable social media activity. Performance should be evaluated using indicators related to engagement and conversion, not just the number of likes or followers.

CONCLUSION

Descriptively, the Digital Marketing Strategy, Social Media, and New Patient Visits are in the very good category. Clarity of information is one of the key strengths of the Digital Marketing Strategy, while social media plays a crucial role in facilitating public access to service information.

Digital Marketing Strategy has a positive and significant effect on Social Media with a path coefficient of 0.846 ($t = 15.700$; $p = 0.000$).

Social Media has a positive and significant effect on New Patient Visits with a path coefficient of 0.873 ($t = 17.689$; $p = 0.000$).

Digital Marketing Strategy has a direct positive and significant effect on New Patient Visits with a path coefficient of 0.758 ($t = 11.498$; $p = 0.000$).

Social media partially mediates the influence of digital marketing strategies on new patient visits. The indirect effect is 0.738 and the Sobel test is 6.1205 ($p < 0.05$). The second substructure model has an R^2 of 71.6%.

IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Hospitals need to maintain a structured calendar/editorial plan with a focus on the quality, relevance, and consistency of content, not just the quantity of publications.

Social media needs to be optimized as a conversion point with clear calls-to-action, integrations to registration or consultations, and easy-to-understand educational content and service information.

Digital marketing performance measurement should use a dashboard that connects reach, engagement, clicks, inquiries, and patient visit conversions so that budgets can be allocated based on data.

Strengthening the digital marketing team needs to be focused on competencies in content marketing, digital engagement, analytics, and campaign evaluation. KPIs should not be limited to likes/followers, but should include indicators more closely aligned with service objectives and visits.

Future research could include other variables such as trust, service quality, patient satisfaction, hospital reputation, or loyalty to explain variations in visits not yet explained by the model.

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