

Optimizing Hotel Marketing: An Analysis of Instagram Algorithms in 2024

ABSTRACT

This study examines Instagram's effectiveness as a marketing tool for hotels by analyzing the platform's algorithm, shadowbanning risks, and content optimization strategies. The purpose of this research is to assess how Instagram's algorithm can be leveraged to enhance hotel visibility and credibility. Using qualitative methods, including a literature review of research papers, case studies, books, and reports, data is collected and analyzed through content analysis to identify key factors influencing content visibility, engagement, and overall performance on Instagram. The findings offer valuable insights for hotels aiming to optimize their marketing strategies on Instagram. The research emphasizes the importance of understanding Instagram's algorithm and adjusting content strategies to align with trends and algorithms. Key recommendations include focusing on high-quality, engaging content, avoiding shadowbanning practices, and utilizing user-generated content to build customer loyalty. By implementing these strategies, hotels can effectively engage their target audience, showcase their brand, and drive bookings in today's competitive digital landscape.

Keywords: Instagram Algorithm, Hotel Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Promotion Ads, Shadowbanning, UGC.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this era of social media and digital information where every business competes not only with their unique value but also from their marketing promotion flows. Social media has been an outlet for businesses to promote their product since the mid 2000s and has been the cornerstone in today's marketing promotion since COVID-19. Where platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Tiktok, and Instagram are leveraged to enhance customer engagement, build brand loyalty, and drive direct bookings. Research has indicated the importance of using social media for hotel marketers in increasing their promotion and connecting with their customers, which has proven superior

compared to earlier marketing techniques [51, 23, 27, 10, 3]. With the help of social media activities, hotels can elevate their online presence by interacting with guests in real-time, showcase their product, and share authentic guest experiences that can increase their brand value and exposure [9, 36, 45, 15].

Hotel marketing has evolved in using modern technology in the means of a wider range strategic approach, including website optimization, social media engagement, and targeted online advertising. The key point of hotel marketing is to attract guests and drive bookings by using the necessary

marketing tools and their STP [30, 44, 11]. Among various social media platforms, Instagram stands out through compelling visuals, user-generated content (UGC), and influencer collaborations. Businesses, especially hotels can showcase their offerings, build credibility, and attract a global audience. Instagram is still leading above Tiktok, Facebook, Youtube, and other platforms in terms of marketing promotion, knowingly with 80% of worldwide marketers using Instagram in advertisement [47]. Moreover, Instagram's user base is primarily composed of 18-34 year-olds, who also show the highest engagement in brands and products research [16]. This is advantageous for hotels since it closely aligns with their target market.

Research has indicated the struggle in brand awareness for hotel marketers. How brand awareness and visibility plays a crucial part in maintaining the sustainability of the hotel [6, 40, 31, 36, 49]. Many have analyzed hotel's brand awareness or visibility in many ways using Instagram promotion, however limitations are met from various factors on the correlation of brand awareness such as external and internal factors, hence an ongoing study in this area is needed [36]. Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar states the challenges faced in increasing room sales on Instagram due to rapid changes of consumer behavior and trends that are controlled by the algorithm [45], Seminyak Bali Resort find difficulty in creating quality content that fits with current Instagram algorithm [15], and Ahlström Ruukki Hotel that face trouble in content planning and inconsistent of image quality that affect their brand visibility [50]. Research identifies some hotel marketer have yet to grasp the importance and how to effectively use social media marketing, especially in small hotels [35, 24]. Going across multiple research about brand awareness, a research paper suggests using social media algorithms can enhance brand awareness [15].

Social media are programmed through algorithms in which each platform has their own algorithm to personalize content with their user [42]. Instagram's algorithms prioritize content with high engagement, such as likes, comments, shares, and saves to be featured in the explorer page [37]. Marketer responsibility is to analyze and strategically leverage the strengths of a social media platform for promotion, aiming to maximize brand exposure, build fan loyalty, and drive online traffic [11, 29, 18]. By understanding Instagram algorithms, hotel marketer can strategies in retaining their customer and brand image, helping marketer in knowing what to focus on improving their promotion. However, social media algorithms, including Instagram's, have evolved inconsistently over the years leading to unknown visibility of a post in reaching the target audience [34, 25]. The information available online about Instagram algorithms are limited which shows the lack of transparency and complicated marketer in analysis the platform [17]. Additionally, there has been a growing number of online complaints on *r/Instagram* regarding users being shadowbanned for various reasons on Instagram, which significantly hinders the visibility of their posts to be promoted on the Explore page. As these platforms often change their algorithm, hotels must stay flexible, continuously refining their digital strategies and visual content to align with trends and algorithm updates, hence reducing the chances of being shadowban or even action block.

Overall, the durability of the hotel is also measured by their social media present, specifically on Instagram. As previously mentioned, the undertaking measurement in increasing audience engagement and visibility, that has a strong correlation on Instagram algorithm. The current study of the instagram innovation and algorithms is crucial for long-term marketing success in this ever-changing environment. Hotel marketers employ different promotional methods, yet it still raises concern whether it can reach its targeted audience effectively and boost visibility in the

market. Moreover, different marketing approaches are needed since every hotel has their own unique value, indicating that one hotel promotion strategy might work for some hotels but might not work for another [43, 40].

The purpose of this study is to explore and identify the effectiveness of using Instagram as a source of advertisement through their algorithm for hotels visibility and credibility. By analyzing how Instagram algorithms work this research hopes to find insights on 1) Utilizing Instagram's algorithm [37, 38, 21], 2) Real-Time Engagement and Promotion Boost [12, 26, 1], 3) The Impact of Shadowbanning On Hotel Visibility [4, 17, 15], and 4) Algorithm Changes and Marketing Flexibility [36, 10, 11]

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Instagram Algorithm

Instagram has established itself as a leading social media platform, particularly valued for its strong visual appeal and high engagement rates. Central to its success is the algorithm that dictates the visibility in reaching other users on the platform. Instagram's algorithm prioritizes content based on several key factors, including user engagement, relevance, timeliness, and community. These factors work together to create a personalized feed for each user, ensuring that the most pertinent and engaging content appears at the top of users feeds, hence enhancing hotels visibility and loyalty [4, 27]. Understanding and utilizing Instagram's algorithm offers significant benefits for hotels such as attracting new guests, strengthening relationships with customers, driving bookings and fostering long-term loyalty. According to a 2023 report by Hootsuite, posts with high engagement can reach up to a 38% increase in visibility, while data from Sprout Social, relieve content relevance can improve engagement rates by 70% [52].

As Instagram continues to evolve, familiarization of algorithm changes and adapting strategies accordingly will be crucial for maintaining long-term marketing. The algorithm favors newer posts to keep the feed fresh and up-to-date. Although a recent report found an unusual timeliness in Instagram algorithm, this underscores the importance of regular posting and leveraging time-sensitive features like Stories, live videos, or regular mention by influencers. By maintaining a consistent posting schedule and capitalizing on timely events or promotions, hotels can improve their chances of appearing in users' feeds when they are most active [4]. However, marketers should regularly monitor the Instagram algorithm hence it is likely to change overtime [34, 18]. It is also ideal to benefit from paid promotions to ensure the likeliness in visibility.

2.2 Instagram Algorithm in Promotion Ads

When it comes to promotion ads, Instagram's algorithm plays a slightly different matrix than the original algorithm where users typically use. While engagement remains a key factor, the algorithm takes into account factors such as the user's demographics, interests, and past behavior in determining which ads are shown to users. Instagram promotion ads had a bidding algorithm where they rank by relevant content to its user, high engagement rate of each user, and boosting strategy used by the advertiser. Moreover, ad performance metrics like click-through rates, time spent viewing the ad, and interaction levels help the algorithm refine ad placements. By optimizing for these factors, Instagram aims to deliver ads that are more likely to be seen and engaged with by users [19].

Businesses can take advantage of these insights to create highly targeted campaigns, optimizing factors like timing, content format, and audience segmentation to increase the effectiveness of their Instagram ads [32]. To leverage

this algorithm in promotion ads, boosting the most viewed content holds value in increasing visibility, this indicates the most viewed content resonates with the target audiences. Researchers have emphasized the importance of creating content that truly resonates with target audiences. Further findings, it is recommended to consider the role of user-generated content (UGC) in amplifying content engagement [48, 39]. Ads with higher bids and relevance scores are more likely to win the auction and appear in users' feeds. Instagram's algorithm continuously monitors ad performance and makes real-time adjustments to ensure that ads reach the most relevant audience and maximize ROI.

2.3 Differents in Instagram Algorithm and Instagram Promotion Ads Algorithm

Instagram's organic posts and promotion ads differ significantly in terms of reach, cost, control, measurement, and call-to-action (CTA). Organic posts typically reach a limited audience, influenced by engagement levels and timeliness, whereas promotion ads can target a much broader audience through paid and precise advertising. While organic posts are free, promotion ads require a budget, charging advertisers based on impressions, clicks, or other engagement metrics. Promotion ads offer greater control over audience targeting and provide detailed performance tracking, unlike organic posts, which rely more on natural engagement. Additionally, promotion ads enable specific CTAs, driving direct user actions, while organic posts depend on the inherent appeal of their content. Organic posts also have a shorter range of visibility, while promotion ads can be set to run as long as desired, ensuring sustained visibility [2].

2.4 Shadowbanning

Shadowbanning is where a social media platform limits the visibility of a user's content without explicitly informing them. On Instagram, shadowbanning can occur

when Instagram's algorithm detects behavior that violates community guidelines, such as excessive use of banned hashtags, spamming, or engaging in inauthentic activity such as buying followers, using aggravating language, or having political value. When a user is shadowbanned, their posts may appear less frequently in search results, explore pages, and followers' feeds. This can significantly impact their reach and engagement, making it difficult to grow their audience and promote their content [34]. This phenomenon poses a challenge for marketers, as it can disrupt visibility and audience engagement, making it essential for users to adhere to platform guidelines and engage authentically to avoid potential shadowbans.

2.5 Hotel Marketing

In this modern digital era, hotel marketing has evolved in using modern technology with the intention to widen the range in strategic approach, including website optimization, social media engagement, and targeted online advertising. The key point of hotel marketing is to attract guests and drive bookings by using the necessary marketing tools and their STP [30]. The leverages of digital platforms help reach and attract potential guests while adjusting in a much modern strategic approach for hotels to effectively maximize their potential. Studies show the impact of modern digital marketing increases booking and revenue. Additionally, with online review, influencer partnership, and user generated content has amplified hotels to reach credibility, enhanced brand visibility, along with hotel revenue [11].

2.6 Consumer Behavior in Social Media Marketing

Social media has revolutionized consumer marketing by providing direct engagement between businesses and their audience. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, and Twitter offer unique opportunities for personalized marketing, enabling brands to build relationships with

their consumers. Several studies have connected the intervention between social media and consumers' behavior in increasing brand awareness [13, 5, 1]. The nature of social media allows brands and consumers to communicate effectively, increasing engagement and loyalty. Social media assists in gathering real-time feedback, track consumer preferences, and adjust marketing strategies promptly. This helps brands remain relevant and responsive to consumer satisfaction and needs. Moreover, social media offer advanced analytics tools that allow marketers to monitor their performance and user engagement, understand audience demographics, and measure engagement levels, providing valuable data and insight in consumer behavior. Another critical aspect is the ability to leverage user-generated content (UGC), which includes reviews, testimonials, and posts created by consumers that feature a brand's products or services. UGC not only boosts credibility but also enhances brand visibility and engagement. This will foster a community where consumers feel valued and heard, while brands can cultivate loyalty and advocacy [20].

2.7 Digital Marketing Strategy

The ever-evolving digital marketing landscape demands innovative approaches to capture consumer attention. The primary function of digital marketing is to reach a targeted audience in a cost-effective, measurable way and drive conversions and brand engagement. Modern digital marketing strategies have evolved a wide range of strategies and tactics that leverage the power of the internet and other forms of digital communication to reach target audiences [32]. Researchers have emphasized the importance of creating content that truly resonates with target audiences. This might involve exploring the effectiveness of different posts and videos for specific platforms. The concept of "smart" suggests the potential use of data and personalization, such as "thinking out of the box" content to capture their audience.

Beyond further findings, it is recommended to consider the role of user-generated content (UGC) in amplifying content engagement [48]. UGC leverages the power of authenticity and fosters a sense of community, hence further strengthening connections with consumers. As digital marketing continues to evolve, integrating these elements will be crucial for businesses to stay competitive and effectively meet the needs of their audience.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative methods, hoping to emphasize and understand the research topic by analyzing the various concepts or terminologies that are supported by data collection [14]. This research utilizes qualitative methods, specifically thematic analysis, to identify recurring themes and marketing strategies within a literature review to explore hotel marketing through Instagram algorithms. Data collection is done through various research papers, case studies, books, or reports relevant to the research topic [28]. The data focus on understanding the Instagram algorithm in promotion and how to utilize it in brand awareness, which include understanding Instagram algorithm benefits and shortcoming. Search terms include 'Instagram algorithm,' 'hotel marketing,' 'brand awareness,' and 'social media marketing.'

Data for this research will be sourced from national and international journals published between 2019 and 2024. Collected using trusted academic databases such as Google Scholar, Research Gate, and Academia.edu. The data collection phase spans three months, from mid-July to mid-October, with an initial target of 20 research journals. To ensure quality and relevance, sources are limited to publications from the past five years, with a minimum of 20 citations. However with the limited research topic regarding Instagram algorithm, this research accumulated a total of 52 journals for this study.

Content analysis is used to systematically evaluate the data, identifying patterns, themes, and trends within Instagram marketing practices [33]. This approach is essential for recognizing both the strengths and limitations of these practices, providing a deeper understanding of the key factors that influence content visibility, engagement, and overall performance on Instagram.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion section will be presented through a rigorous content analysis of the qualitative data (Table 1). This process involves familiarization with the data and identifying patterns to develop key themes from the previous study. By systematically categorizing the data and cross-referencing them, the research seeks to give insight in 1) Utilizing Instagram's algorithm [37, 38, 21], 2) Real-Time Engagement and Promotion Boost [12, 26, 1], 3) The Impact of Shadowbanning On Hotel Visibility [4, 17, 15], and 4) Algorithm Changes and Marketing Flexibility [36, 10, 11].

Table 1. Result of Previous Research

No	Journal	Purpose	Finding
1.	The Role of Social Media in Hotel Marketing: A Study of Customer Engagement and Brand Loyalty [2].	The goal of the study is to understand how social media can be used effectively in hotel marketing to increase customer engagement and brand loyalty.	The study revealed that social media plays a crucial role in enhancing customer engagement and building brand loyalty for hotels. By actively interacting with customers, sharing engaging content, and encouraging user-generated content, hotels can foster a sense of community and strengthen their relationships. To maximize the benefits of social media, hotels should develop a comprehensive strategy, encourage guest-generated content, and prioritize personalized customer interactions.
2.	Opportunities and challenges of Instagram algorithm in improving competitive advantage [4].	The goal of the research is to understand the opportunities and challenges in Instagram algorithms for online marketers. It aims to use Instagram algorithms effectively for sales and competitive advantage.	The study found that the Instagram algorithm presents both opportunities and challenges for online marketers. While it can increase audience reach and provide valuable market insights, the complexity of the algorithm and time constraints can be obstacles. Despite these challenges, the Instagram algorithm remains a valuable tool for businesses looking to attract potential customers and inform their marketing strategies.
3.	<i>Analisis Kata Staycation Pada Instagram Sebagai Media Promosi Akomodasi Perhotelan di Bali</i> [9] (Analysis Of The Term Staycation On Instagram As An Accommodation Promotion For Hotels In Bali)	This study analyzes how "staycation" is used in Bali hotel ads on Instagram. It aims to provide insights for Bali's hospitality industry to develop effective marketing strategies.	This study found "staycation" is a growing trend in Bali's hotel promotions on Instagram. Hotels use this term to promote various accommodations, often with relevant hashtags and engaging visuals. These findings offer valuable insights for Bali's hospitality industry to tailor their marketing strategies that align with market trends, ultimately enhancing Bali's appeal as a tourist destination.
4.	Social Media:	The paper explores the role of	In today's competitive business landscape,

	Marketing Strategies in Hospitality Industry [10]	social media in the hospitality and catering industry. It examines how social media has transformed communication, marketing, and operations in these sectors.	social media is crucial for increasing visibility, promoting brands, and attracting customers. While hospitality businesses may have their own websites, active engagement on social media platforms like Meta, Twitter, Instagram, and TripAdvisor is essential. By sharing informative and interesting content, businesses can enhance their brand value, attract more customers, and increase revenue.
5.	The new era of hotel marketing: integrating cutting-edge technologies with core marketing principles [11]	This paper investigates how new technologies like virtual reality, voice search, artificial intelligence, robotics, and the Metaverse are affecting hotel sales, marketing, and revenue.	The study shows that innovative technologies can improve customer engagement, booking processes, and revenue. However, traditional marketing practices like user-friendly websites, mobile optimization, SEO, social media, content marketing, and data-driven revenue management are still essential for hotels to stay competitive.
6.	Perceived credibility of online hotel reviews and its impact on hotel booking intentions [12]	The study wants to know how the source, receiver, and message affect how people trust online hotel reviews, specifically on social media platforms. It also wants to find out if people are more likely to book a hotel if they trust the reviews.	The study found that two-sided online reviews (both positive and negative) have a stronger positive impact on perceived customer opinion reliability (PCOR). This study analyzes how source, receiver, and message affect PCOR. It provides explanations to influence the authenticity of online hotel reviews and their impact on hotel image and brand awareness.
7.	<i>Implementasi Digital Marketing Melalui Instagram Dalam Meningkatkan Brand Awareness di Anantara Seminyak Bali Resort</i> [15] (Digital Marketing Implementation through Instagram in Increasing Brand Awareness at Anantara, Seminyak Bali Resort)	This study aims to investigate the implementation of digital marketing through Instagram at Anantara Seminyak Bali Resort. Specifically, the research will analyze how Instagram has been utilized as a tool to enhance brand awareness for the resort.	This study analyzes the effectiveness of Instagram marketing at Anantara Seminyak Bali Resort. By utilizing Instagram for targeted promotions, it has successfully increased brand awareness and attracted more guests. The resort's use of the AIDA concept, collaborations with influencers, and high-quality content has contributed to its success. However, to further enhance its online presence, it is recommended to expand its social media strategy to include creating engaging content that aligns with the hotel's brand and current trends according to its algorithm.
8.	Role of Social Media Networks in Promoting Hotel Industry [24]	This research aims to identify the use of social media platforms for hotels and how they are used for marketing purposes. It will provide insights into the types of social media platforms hotels use and how they utilize them for communication and advertising.	This research highlights the importance of social media for hotels in building customer relationships and driving direct bookings. By using targeted ads, engaging on social media platforms, and creating a well-managed website, hotels can establish a strong online presence and attract more customers. Additionally, investing in a mobile app can further enhance customer engagement and convenience. However, it's crucial to tailor content and strategies to each platform and maintain consistent customer interaction to maximize the benefits of social media.

9.	<p><i>Pengaruh Content Marketing Instagram Terhadap Customer Engagement Di Khas Ombilin Hotel</i> [26]</p> <p>(The Impact of Instagram Content Marketing On Customer Engagement At Khas Ombilin Hotel)</p>	<p>The primary goal of this research is to understand how content marketing strategies influence customer engagement at the Khas Ombilin Hotel. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of content marketing by examining the relationship between the content created and the level of interaction from customers,</p>	<p>The study found a significant positive correlation between Instagram content marketing and customer engagement at Khas Ombilin Hotel. While the hotel's content marketing efforts are generally good, there's room for improvement. Overall, customer engagement is moderate, with areas like cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects needing further attention. This study suggests that Khas Ombilin can significantly enhance customer engagement by further refining its Instagram content marketing strategies.</p>
10.	<p>A Study on the Role of Social Media Marketing in Hospitality Industry [35]</p>	<p>This research aims to investigate the significance of social media marketing in the hospitality industry. It will explore how social media can be used to target specific audiences, enhance brand awareness, foster customer engagement, and drive revenue</p>	<p>Social media is important for hotels. By using platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, hotels can reach customers, promote their services, and build loyalty. However, some hotels struggle to leverage social media effectively. To succeed, hotels need to be active on social media, share engaging content, and respond to customers. By doing so, hotels can increase brand visibility, enhance customer relationships, and gain a competitive edge in today's digital landscape.</p>
11.	<p>Hotel Marketing Strategies in the Digital Age [30]</p>	<p>The primary purpose of the book is to provide a comprehensive guide for hotels on how to effectively leverage digital marketing strategies to enhance their business performance. It aims to navigate the complexities of the digital landscape and maximize their online presence. -</p>	<p>The book emphasizes the importance of understanding digital consumers, leveraging social media, creating high-quality content, optimizing for search engines, managing online reputation, utilizing email marketing, prioritizing mobile optimization, and tracking key performance indicators. By implementing these strategies, hotels can effectively navigate the digital landscape, attract and retain guests, and enhance their overall marketing success.</p>
12.	<p>Digital impressions: Evaluating Instagram's influence on hotel brand awareness in Bali [31]</p>	<p>The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of Instagram marketing in enhancing brand awareness for hotels in Bali. By examining the relationship between the frequency of Instagram posts, guest engagement, and overall brand visibility.</p>	<p>The study found that Instagram marketing significantly influences brand awareness for Bali hotels. The hotel in this study demonstrated effective Instagram use, achieving high brand awareness among respondents. However, there's room for improvement in fostering a sense of community among followers. By sharing guest experiences and encouraging user-generated content, the hotel can further enhance engagement and strengthen its brand presence.</p>
13.	<p>The effectiveness of Instagram ads as a promotional platform in selling products at Sthala Ubud Bali using the EPIC model method [36]</p>	<p>The researcher aims to assess how well Instagram advertisements resonate with potential customers and influence their purchasing decisions by analyzing their emotional appeal, persuasive power, impact on audience, and communication clarity.</p>	<p>This research evaluated the effectiveness of Instagram advertising for Sthala, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel, Ubud Bali. The findings indicate that Instagram advertising has been highly effective in promoting the hotel, contributing to a significant increase in room sales over the past few years. While the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily impacted sales, the hotel has successfully recovered and continues to see growth. However, to maintain this momentum, Sthala should continue to prioritize high-</p>

			quality content, excellent service, and maintaining the hotel's facilities and amenities to attract and retain guests.
14.	The influence of user generated content on hotel sales: an Indian perspective [38]	The study aims to understand how online reviews, ratings, and other forms of UGC influence consumer decision-making and ultimately drive hotel bookings.	The study found that UGC, particularly positive reviews and ratings, significantly impacts hotel sales. This suggests that hotels should actively encourage and promote UGC on their social media platforms, such as Instagram. By fostering a culture of engagement and sharing, hotels can leverage UGC to build trust, credibility, and social proof, ultimately driving more bookings.
15.	Technology and Social Transformations in Hospitality, Tourism and Gastronomy: South Asia Perspectives [39]	It aims to understand how technological advancements are reshaping these sectors and driving social transformations.	The book explores the significant impact of technology on these industries. Key findings include the increased use of technology in operations, marketing, and customer experience. Social media has become essential for engagement and reaching customers. These advancements offer both opportunities and challenges for businesses in these sectors. It is ideal to leverage social media like instagram in increasing online presence.
16.	Instagram as a Digital Marketing Tool of a Hotel Brand [41]	The primary objective of this exploratory study is to investigate the role of visual marketing in enhancing the performance of Instagram posts for a five-star hotel group brand in Porto, Portugal.	This research analyzed visual marketing strategies of boutique hotels on Instagram. It found that effective storytelling, color choices, and topic selection are crucial for engagement. The findings emphasize the importance of social media presence for hotels and the need to utilize various tools to drive engagement in the algorithm.
17.	Enhancing Hotel Room Bookings through Instagram Marketing [45]	The goal of the study is to investigate the effective use of Instagram as a marketing tool for hotels, specifically focusing on Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar. By examining the hotel's strategies and their impact on room bookings.	This study highlights Instagram's effectiveness in boosting room sales at Whiz Prime Hotel Sudirman Makassar. By using visually appealing content and sharing exclusive offers that match the algorithm, the hotel successfully attracted and engaged potential guests on Instagram. This led to increased followers, interactions, and direct bookings.
18.	Digital Marketing : Engaging Consumers with Smart Digital Marketing Content [48]	This study aims to find out how hotels can use social media marketing to stay relevant in today's changing times.	Social media usage is growing, making it essential for businesses to adapt their strategies. The shift from offline to online shopping means marketers must prioritize online promotion, including endorsements and paid advertising. These tactics can positively impact brand awareness, leading to increased consumer interest and sales. Effective content marketing, tailored to audience preferences, is crucial for achieving these results.
19.	Instagram Content Marketing Strategies for Boosting Brand Reach and Engagement [50]	The goal of this thesis was to improve Ahlström Ruukki's Instagram account by using new Instagram features to increase engagement and reach.	This study demonstrated the power of Instagram content marketing in the tourism industry. Despite facing challenges, achieved its objectives and received positive feedback. However, continuous adaptation to the rapidly evolving

			landscape of Instagram algorithms is essential for maintaining a strong online presence and achieving long-term success.
20.	Analysing the impact of social media marketing on guests hotel selection [51]	The study aims to identify which social media tools hotels use and how these tools influence guests' decisions when choosing a hotel.	Social media marketing is crucial for hotels to build trust and credibility with guests. In today's world, guests often use social media to research accommodations, making social media tools essential for hotels to effectively promote themselves and attract customers. In such, social media platforms have different effects in their marketing.

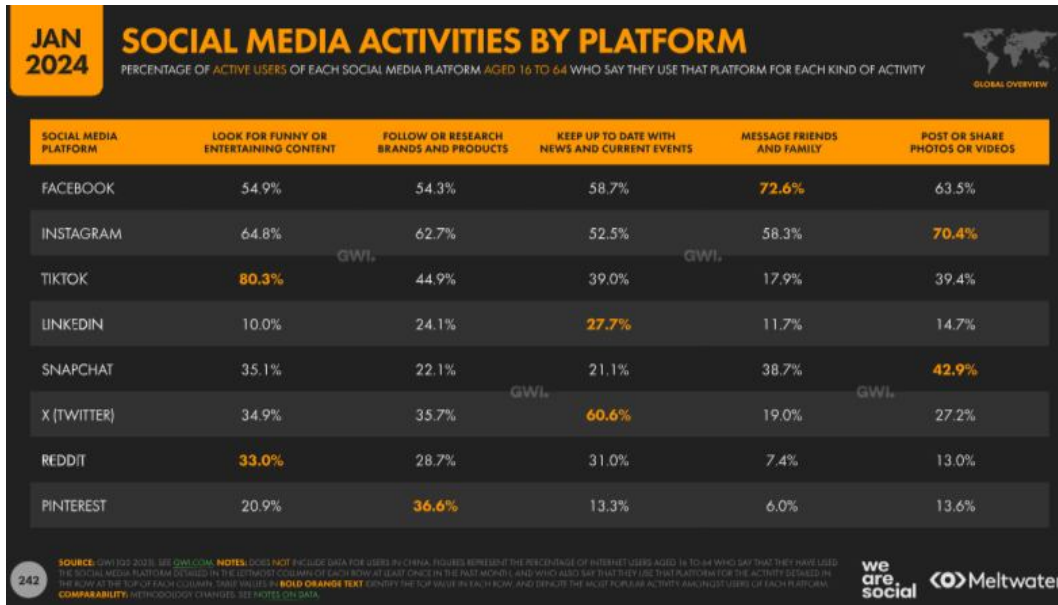
The initial findings provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of digital marketing, specifically Instagram, as a promotion tool for hotels [2, 9, 15, 31, 36]. The finding consistently highlighted digital marketing value as a powerful skill in promotion in hotel marketing [4, 10, 35, 41]. However it is emphasized that the success of digital marketing, especially in instagram heavily depends on the right implementation and strategies [11, 39, 50, 51]. For instance, the use of visually appealing content, regular posting, and interactive features like stories and reels were mentioned as crucial factors that can significantly enhance a hotel's visibility and customer engagement. Additionally, the effectiveness heavily depends on how well these strategies align with the target audience's preferences and behaviors. This underscores the importance of utilizing STP and UGC in strategy promotion to maximize its potential impact on customer loyalty and brand sustainability as mentioned on [41], where the research compared the differences in their

marketing approach to align their target market. The following section offers a much organized explanation to emphasize the key points and insights of the finding, that will be based on the research purpose as mentioned above.

4.1 Utilizing Instagram Algorithm

Research by [36] emphasizes the importance of consistent promotion, noting that irregular posting can diminish user engagement and weaken brand loyalty. Additionally, other research [13, 5, 1] suggests that user behavior plays a crucial role in sustaining interest and engagement. As previously mentioned, Instagram's algorithm prioritizes content based on factors like user engagement, relevance, timeliness, and community [37]. This underscores the need for hotels to maintain consistent posting schedules with content that resonates with their target market, which in turn helps retain customers and strengthen loyalty.

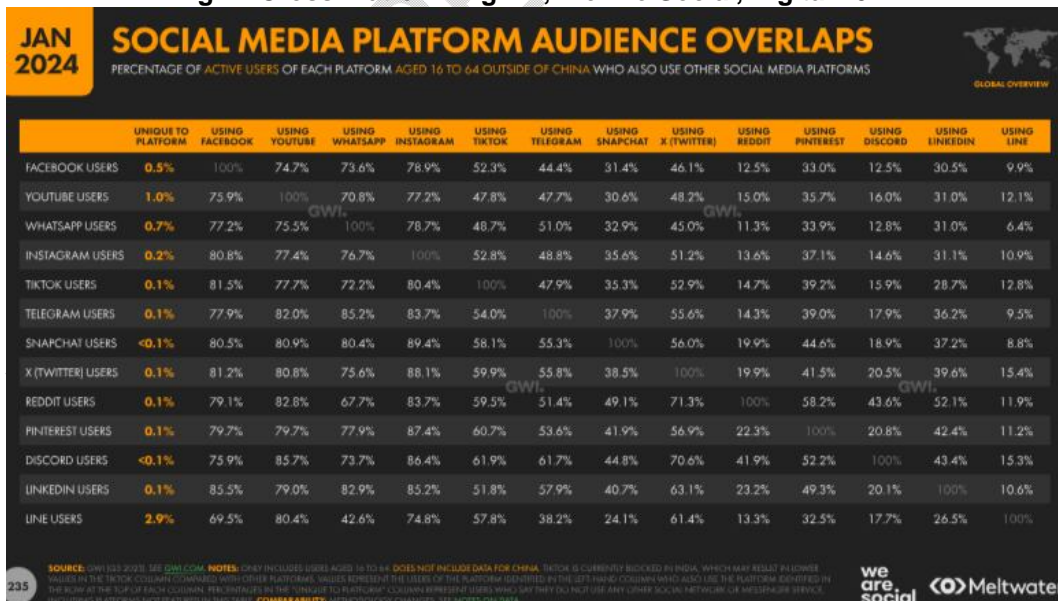
Fig. 1. Social Media Activities, We Are Social Digital 2024



Data from We Are Social (Fig. 1) highlights that Instagram is the most popular platform for brand and product research, reinforcing its dominance in the digital marketing landscape. For hotels targeting millennials and Gen Z, who make up a large portion of their audience, Instagram becomes an

essential tool for capturing attention and driving engagement. By leveraging the platform, hotels can not only stay aligned with broader market trends but also position their brand effectively in the highly competitive hospitality sector.

Fig. 2. Cross Platform Inlink, We Are Social, Digital 2024



This insight is backed by data from the We Are Social Digital 2024 report (Fig. 2) and help.instagram.com, both of which

highlight the crucial role of SEO in cross-platform marketing. These sources underscore Instagram's powerful influence

within modern digital marketing strategies. Advances in technology, including cross-platform web links, have further strengthened Instagram's ability to seamlessly integrate with other social networks, allowing hotels to more effectively target and engage specific audiences across multiple platforms.

Moreover, various studies on Instagram's algorithm reveal a strong correlation between visibility and the combined use of SEO and compelling copywriting [22, 7]. This approach enables precise, targeted promotions that effectively reach the right audience and drive traffic. By optimizing content with strong SEO practices and persuasive copywriting, hotel marketers can better align their posts with current trends and consumer behavior, ultimately increasing reach and engagement.

Lastly, User-Generated Content (UGC) plays a vital role in leveraging Instagram's algorithm. By encouraging users to share content related to a brand or product, hotels can increase authentic engagement, which the algorithm rewards [20, 48]. UGC, such as guest reviews, photos, or experiences, not only enhances credibility but also boosts interaction rates, as users are more likely to engage with content created by their peers. This type of content often receives higher visibility due to its relevance and engagement, making it a valuable asset in any Instagram marketing strategy. This indicated the credibility of the hotel from external factors and has been used in many hotels [12, 38, 21]. Additionally, reposting UGC strengthens community ties, fostering a sense of loyalty and advocacy among followers while driving organic reach.

However, insights from previous research suggest that marketers must be cautious in developing their strategies. Tactics like post spamming, buying followers, or using chatbots can increase the risk of shadowbanning, which negatively affects post visibility [34]. Additionally, Instagram's promotion ads operate on a bidding

algorithm that ranks content based on its relevance to users, engagement rates, and the advertiser's boosting strategy [19]. Naturally, Instagram will prioritize promotion ads especially if they excel in user engagement such as click-through rates, time spent viewing ads, and interactions. To maximize success, businesses should create highly targeted campaigns by optimizing factors like timing, content format, and audience segmentation [2]. Boosting high-performing content, which typically resonates well with the target audience, is an effective way to significantly increase visibility and engagement.

4.2 Real-Time Engagement and Algorithm Boost

Instagram's algorithm favors posts that quickly attract meaningful engagement, pushing them to a broader audience. Hotels that actively interact with their followers in real-time not only improve visibility but also create a sense of community, which the algorithm rewards by prioritizing their content [12, 26]. To encourage user interactions and improve their engagement rate, hotels can implement several strategies. Asking open-ended questions in their captions can spark conversations and encourage followers to share their thoughts. Running contests or giveaways with engaging requirements, such as tagging friends or sharing a photo, can incentivize participation. Responding promptly to comments demonstrates the hotel's commitment to customer engagement and can foster a sense of community. Research on content strategies across various industries has shown that hotels tend to focus heavily on ROI-driven promotions, often neglecting the use of pay-per-click (PPC) ads or similar campaigns, despite their proven effectiveness. This singular focus on increasing sales may actually be a disadvantage in the evolving landscape of digital marketing [46].

Fig. 3. 2024 Instagram Engagement Rate Base By Follower

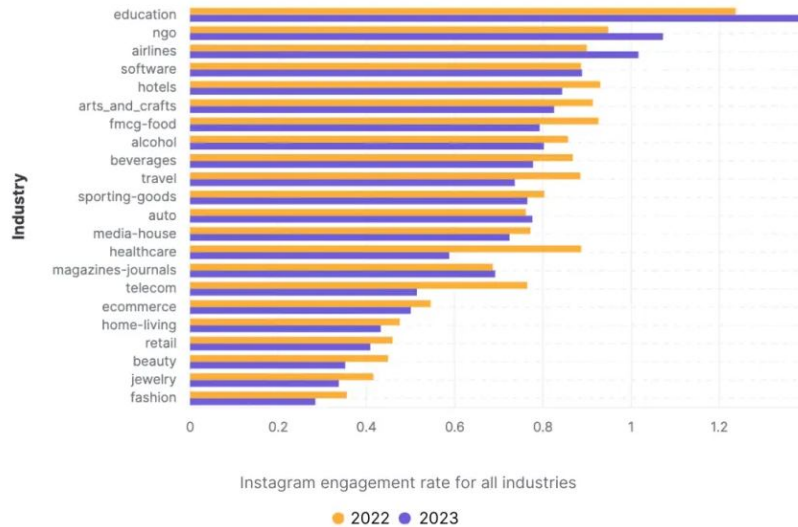
INSTAGRAM ENG RATE

0.70%

ALL INDUSTRIES

Education is the most engaging industry

The education sector is the most engaging industry on Instagram with an engagement rate of 1.40% on average.



Source: Socialinsider, 2023

Nonetheless the hospitality industry has one of the most engaging content in Instagram (Fig. 3). Which would be regrettable to not use or explore other content focused on increasing user engagement. After successfully enhancing engagement, hotels can leverage their top-performing posts to boost Instagram ad promotions. By targeting these high-engagement posts to a broader audience, they can attract new customers through formats like sponsored posts, story ads, and carousel ads Research by [41] highlights the need to understand user behavior and preferences in crafting Instagram ads. While social media offers a convenient platform for promotion, users may overlook ads due to feeling overwhelmed or distracted, or because of loyalty to competing brands. Many also find online ads intrusive and disruptive, making it essential for marketers to create

resonant content that minimizes interruptions.

Successful strategies should balance promotional efforts with user convenience, tailoring approaches to the specific needs of the target market, as different ad types can influence consumer behavior differently [29, 43]. Additionally, Instagram's website for business account users emphasizes the importance of selecting posts with the highest engagement rates for boosting promotional ads. The platform recommends that marketers pre-select content with strong engagement metrics to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of their promotions. By aligning boosted content with user interests, marketers can optimize their budgets and achieve better results in their advertising efforts.

4.3 The Impact of Shadowbanning on Hotel Visibility

As previously mentioned regarding shadowbanning. This often happens when an account is flagged for violating platform guidelines, whether through excessive posting, the use of banned hashtags, purchasing followers, or engaging with suspicious third-party tools like chat bots. For hotels, shadowbanning can cause a negative impact on marketing and showcasing products, as it significantly reduces the reach of promotional content, making it harder to connect with potential guests and maintain a competitive edge in the digital space.

Shadowbanning often stems from unintentional guideline violations. For example, overusing promotional language or engaging in inorganic growth tactics can trigger the algorithm to limit post visibility [34]. To avoid shadowbanning, marketers should ensure they adhere strictly to Instagram's content guidelines, focus on genuine engagement, and avoid shortcuts like buying followers or using automation tools that could be detected as suspicious activity by the algorithm [19]. It is also mentioned to limit posting activities to avoid spamming action, while regular posting has their benefit, marketer should not exaggerate in posting, sometimes less is more. Furthermore, hotel marketers should elevate their post with various or different content in an attempt to avoid being dim as a bot. To further enhance visibility and avoid shadowbanning, hotels should focus on creating authentic content that resonates with their audience. Avoid using excessive hashtags or generating multiple hashtags to increase keyword visibility, as this can be seen as spammy behavior. Instead, use relevant and well-chosen hashtags that align with your content's theme. By prioritizing quality over quantity, hotels can build a loyal following and improve their overall visibility on Instagram [25]

Signs in shadowban should be acted quickly by analyzing content for potential

violations of Instagram's guidelines. Although shadowbanning can be frustrating, adhering to platform rules and focusing on quality content will help maintain a positive online presence. By engaging with the community and prioritizing quality, hotels can minimize the risk of shadowbanning and ensure their content reaches its target audience. Maintaining consistent visibility on Instagram, despite risks like shadowbanning, requires proactive strategies. Diversifying content formats such as posts, stories, and Reels can help reach a broader audience. Engaging with the community through comments, likes, and shares also enhances organic reach [8]. Transparency and avoiding clickbait are crucial to preventing shadowbanning [25]. While the specific signs of shadowbanning may be unclear, regularly checking content visibility and engagement can help identify problems. Comparing the performance of individual posts to historical trends can highlight irregularities, and feedback from comments can indicate whether content is reaching the intended audience.

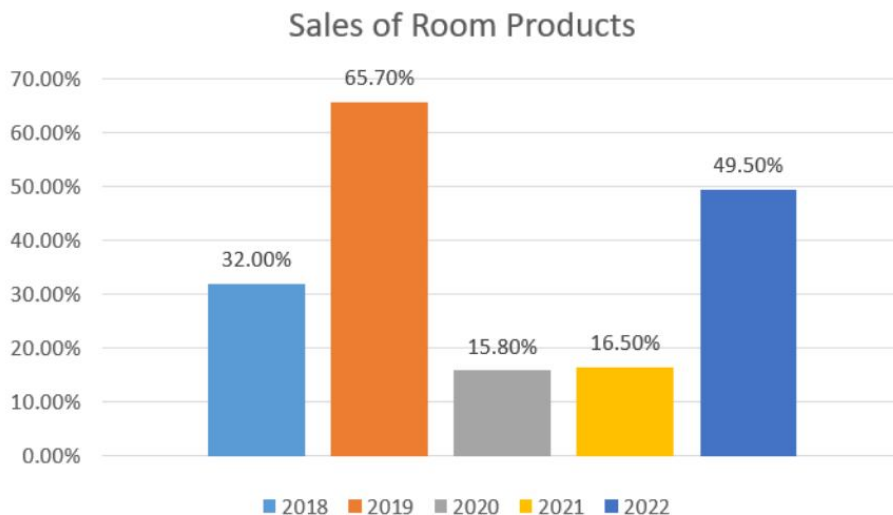
4.4 Algorithm Changes and Marketing Flexibility

Instagram's constantly evolving algorithm presents both challenges and opportunities for hotel marketers. Staying updated on these changes is key to maintaining effective marketing strategies and visibility. Major updates, like the introduction of Reels and Stories, have shifted the focus to short-form video content. Additionally, changes in hashtag ranking and the emphasis on engagement metrics have affected content visibility. Hotels that don't adapt may see a drop in organic reach and engagement. In today's digital age, digital marketing is essential for successful hotel strategies. Hotels now rely on platforms like Instagram to connect with potential guests, build brand awareness, and drive bookings. Visual storytelling on Instagram, combined with the ability to track customer engagement, makes it a powerful tool for the hospitality industry.

To stay visible, it's crucial to follow trends and create relevant content. A case study based on interviews with hotel marketers highlighted the impact of post-pandemic shifts, such as increased focus on environmental concerns, cleanliness, and nature-based tourism. Aligning with these trends can help hotels attract and engage

customers [10]. While frequent algorithm updates can be challenging, they ensure content stays fresh and engaging, preventing the platform from becoming stagnant. This adaptability is essential for hotels to capture potential customers' attention and remain competitive in the fast-changing digital landscape.

Fig. 4. Room Product Sales Graph in Marriott Hotel



Source : Sadewa et al., 2023

Marriott, for example, effectively used Instagram to boost sales, especially during the pandemic (Fig. 4). In an interview, Marriott's marketing team shared that adapting their Instagram strategy during algorithm changes was key to maintaining revenue. By aligning their content with platform updates, Marriott stayed visible to potential guests, ensuring continued engagement and bookings. This highlights the importance of regularly refining digital strategies based on platform changes [10].

Additionally, there are significant concerns in hotel credibility of online reviews and star ratings. A case study highlighted that these reviews and ratings can be subject to various biases, which may not always accurately reflect the true quality of a hotel [30]. For instance, reviews made by fake accounts or manipulated by competitors can lead to misleading information for potential guests. This situation underscores

the critical need for authentic user-generated content (UGC). Hotels should actively engage with genuine feedback and encourage real guests to share their experiences. This approach helps counteract any potential biases present in online reviews and star ratings, offering a more transparent and reliable representation of the hotel's quality [20]. By prioritizing authentic UGC, hotels can build stronger trust with their audience, enhance their online reputation, and provide prospective guests with a clearer understanding of what they can expect.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examines the effectiveness of Instagram as a marketing tool for hotels, focusing on the role of Instagram's algorithm, shadowbanning, and content optimization strategies. Through this analysis, the research offers key insights to

help hotel marketers strengthen their online presence and attract more guests. The study is structured around four main themes: (1) Leveraging Instagram's Algorithm [37, 38, 21], (2) Real-Time Engagement and Promotion Boost [12, 26, 1], (3) The Impact of Shadowbanning on Hotel Visibility [4, 17, 15], and (4) Adapting to Algorithm Changes for Marketing Flexibility [36, 10, 11]. This framework aims to assess Instagram's effectiveness as an advertising platform for enhancing hotel visibility and credibility through algorithm-based strategies.

The findings highlight the crucial role of Instagram in reaching a target audience, particularly millennials and Gen Z travelers. Instagram has become a powerful tool for hotels to reach their target audience, build brand awareness, and drive bookings. However, to maximize its potential, hotels must adopt a multifaceted approach that includes: staying updated on Instagram's evolving algorithm and adjusting content strategies accordingly, combining organic engagement tactics with strategic paid advertising, and prioritizing authenticity and transparency through genuine content and transparent communication. Additionally, creating high-quality, engaging content that resonates with the target audience is key to boosting organic reach and attracting potential guests. The research also emphasizes the importance of avoiding practices that can lead to shadowbanning, such as excessive posting, spammy hashtags, and engagement with suspicious tools. Transparency and adherence to Instagram's guidelines are essential for maintaining a positive online presence.

To further improve engagement and build a loyal following, hotels should prioritize real-time interaction with followers. Responding to comments, asking questions, and running contests can foster a sense of community and encourage user participation. By strategically promoting high-performing content through Instagram ads, hotels can maximize their marketing efforts and drive conversions. Furthermore, the research underscores the value of user-generated content (UGC) in building trust and credibility. By encouraging genuine guest reviews and showcasing authentic experiences, hotels can provide potential guests with a clear picture of what they can expect. This transparency helps counteract any biases present in online reviews and

star ratings. By following these strategies, hotels can navigate the complexities of Instagram's algorithm, optimize their marketing efforts, and ultimately achieve their business goals.

In conclusion, Instagram presents a powerful platform for hotels to reach their target audience, showcase their brand, and drive bookings. By staying informed about the platform's algorithms, avoiding shadowbanning tactics, and prioritizing high-quality content and real-time engagement, hotels can leverage Instagram for successful digital marketing in the ever-changing digital landscape. Despite having limited data on Instagram algorithm, research has shown many benefits in the course of understanding the use of Instagram algorithm for hotel marketers. Further research is needed to clarify the specific benefits of Instagram's post, story, and reel algorithms, along with a comparative analysis of their impacts. This study aims to inspire additional research into Instagram's algorithm to keep pace with the evolving digital landscape.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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