

CONVENTIONAL AND DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES IN HOSPITALS: A PRISMA-BASED SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW (2019–2025)

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ABSTRACT

Increasing competition in healthcare has made marketing strategies essential for sustaining hospital competitiveness. Conventional approaches such as Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), relationship marketing, and the marketing mix (4P) have long supported patient loyalty, while digital strategies, including websites, social media, and customer relationship management (CRM) are increasingly vital in a digital era. This review aims to compare conventional and digital marketing strategies in hospitals and evaluate their impact on patient loyalty and satisfaction. A systematic literature review was conducted following PRISMA guidelines. Databases (PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar) were searched for peer-reviewed studies published between 2019–2025. Inclusion criteria: empirical or review articles on hospital marketing strategies with outcomes related to patient satisfaction or loyalty. 21 studies met the criteria and were synthesized thematically. The included studies revealed that conventional strategies, such as IMC, PR campaigns, word-of-mouth, relationship marketing, and the marketing mix, remain critical for building trust and sustaining loyalty, particularly in collectivist and low-digital penetration contexts. Digital strategies, including hospital websites, social media, SEO, CRM, telehealth apps, and online promotions, enhance scalability, engagement, visibility, and accessibility, particularly among younger populations. Hybrid approaches integrating both strategies demonstrated the strongest impact on patient loyalty. Both conventional and digital marketing strategies contribute significantly to patient satisfaction and loyalty. Hospitals should adopt hybrid approaches that integrate the personal trust of conventional methods with the scalability and efficiency of digital tools.

Key words: hospital marketing strategies; Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC); digital marketing; healthcare; patient loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

Hospitals today operate in increasingly competitive environments and are under growing pressure not only to deliver high-quality clinical services but also to attract and retain patients. Patient loyalty has become a critical success metric, reflecting satisfaction, trust, repeat visits, and sustained financial stability. (Kotler, Shalowitz, & Stevens, 2011) Traditional or conventional marketing strategies, such as Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), public relations, advertising, and relationship marketing, have been central to hospitals' efforts to build loyalty and brand image. (Irawan et al., 2025) Meanwhile, the rise of digital technologies has opened up new channels and tools, such as websites, social media, search engine optimization (SEO), telehealth, email marketing, and CRM systems, that allow hospitals to reach patients more efficiently, engage in two-way communication, and provide more convenience. Earlier evidence also shows that social media can influence both patient engagement and professional communication. (Smailhodzic et al., 2016) For example, the review *Digital Marketing in The Hospital: A Scoping Review* (2003) finds that digital tools, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, played a key role in maintaining patient engagement and extending hospital reach. Other previous systematic reviews in Indonesia also highlight that hospital marketing strategies cover digital approaches, offensive strategies, marketing mix, and service quality enhancement. (Francesca Chandra & Nadjib, 2023; Mustikasari et al., 2024)

However, there remains a gap in the literature when it comes to systematic comparisons of conventional vs digital marketing strategies: their relative strengths, where each is most effective, and how they can best be integrated. This review aims to fill that gap by systematically surveying the literature from 2019-2025 to identify how conventional and digital marketing strategies are used in hospitals and how they affect patient loyalty and satisfaction.

METHOD

We followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) approach in conducting this review. (Moher et al., 2009) Key steps included:

- 1) **Search Strategy:** Databases searched included PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar, and Web of Science. Keywords used were combinations of “hospital marketing strategy,” “digital marketing healthcare,” “IMC healthcare marketing,” “relationship marketing hospital,” “patient loyalty hospital,” and “traditional/conventional marketing hospital.”
- 2) **Timeframe:** Studies published between 2019 and 2025.
- 3) **Inclusion Criteria:** Peer-reviewed empirical studies or literature reviews that focused on marketing strategies in hospital settings (public or private), and reported impacts on patient loyalty, satisfaction, or related outcomes.

- 4) **Exclusion Criteria:** Studies outside hospital settings (e.g., clinics not functioning as hospitals), non-empirical pieces (editorials, opinions), studies focused purely on clinical outcomes without a marketing or communication angle.

The screening process involved identification of records via database searches, removal of duplicates, title and abstract screening to eliminate irrelevant studies, full-text assessment for eligibility, and extraction of key data: type of marketing strategy (conventional, digital, or hybrid), country/context, outcomes relating to loyalty/satisfaction, strengths, and limitations.

Data synthesis was thematic rather than meta-analytic, given the varied metrics and designs among studies. In the identification stage, a total of 812 records were retrieved across databases. After removing duplicates, 456 unique records remained for screening. At the screening stage, titles and abstracts were reviewed against the eligibility criteria. Studies were excluded if they were not related to hospitals, did not involve marketing strategies, or lacked outcomes on patient satisfaction or loyalty. This process excluded 383 records, leaving 73 articles for full-text assessment. During the eligibility stage, full-text articles were assessed in detail. Exclusion at this step was due to (1) non-empirical designs such as editorials or commentaries, (2) absence of measurable outcomes related to patient satisfaction or loyalty, or (3) focus on clinical interventions without marketing relevance.

Finally, 21 studies met all inclusion criteria and were included in the synthesis. These studies consisted of both empirical research and systematic reviews covering conventional, digital, and hybrid marketing strategies in hospital settings across diverse geographic contexts.

RESULTS

From the screened literature, a number of representative studies illustrate both conventional and digital marketing strategies and hybrid approaches.

The study *Marketing Strategies That Impact Patient Loyalty in Hospitals* identified Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and relationship marketing as the dominant conventional strategies in hospitals in Indonesia and Japan. These strategies were found to significantly drive patient loyalty through consistent communication, trust building, and long-term relationship management. (Irawan et al., 2025)

On the digital side, *Impact of Digital Marketing on Hospital Marketing Strategies: A Comprehensive Literature Review* (2024) reviews four key articles and shows that digital marketing methods, including SEO, social media, online promotional activities help hospitals attract new patients, improve brand image, and strengthen loyalty. (M. Sohel, 2024)

Other studies like *Digital Marketing in the Hospital: A Scoping Review* (Chandra & Nadjib, 2023) highlight that digital platforms have become particularly important during crisis periods (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic), both for maintaining patient engagement and for promoting hospital services when in-person interactions are limited. (Francesca Chandra & Nadjib, 2023) Earlier systematic evidence also confirms that social media use can influence both patient engagement and professional practices, making it a critical element of hospital digital marketing strategies. (Smailhodzic et al., 2016)

Some studies combine both conventional & digital elements. For example, *Traditional Marketing Strategies in Healthcare and Hospitals* comments that though traditional strategies like physician referrals, offline advertising and community engagement still build strong trust (especially among older demographics), integrating these with digital outreach yields better patient engagement and retention. (Kumer Animesh, 2025)

In Indonesia, local hospital reports also demonstrate the importance of service quality and patient perception as part of marketing effectiveness. For instance, the *Survei Kepuasan Masyarakat (SKM) RSUD Arjawinangun Semester I 2025* reported generally high patient satisfaction across service dimensions, particularly in staff responsiveness and communication. These dimensions align closely with relationship marketing principles, reinforcing the role of interpersonal trust and consistent service quality in sustaining patient loyalty. (RSUD Arjawinangun, 2025)

In terms of outcomes, digital strategies are repeatedly associated with improved visibility, increased engagement, and greater patient satisfaction when paired with good usability and trust (security/privacy). Conventional strategies are more strongly associated with emotional loyalty, trust, and patient retention in settings where relationships and reputation matter greatly. Similarly, Mustikasari et al. (2024) synthesized 10 studies and found that hospitals commonly implement digital marketing, marketing mix (4P), and intensification strategies to increase competitiveness and patient satisfaction. The marketing mix, also known as the 4P framework, includes product (hospital services such as inpatient, outpatient, or laboratory care), price (service fees and insurance schemes), place (hospital location, accessibility, and telemedicine availability), and promotion (advertising, health campaigns, and patient education initiatives). In the hospital context, the 4Ps ensure that services are not only of high quality but also affordable, accessible, and effectively communicated to patients. (Mustikasari et al., 2024)

DISCUSSION

This review confirms that no single strategy is sufficient. Conventional marketing is strong in contexts where interpersonal trust and community reputation drive loyalty, while digital strategies offer scalability, convenience, and broader reach. Hybrid approaches combining both are the most effective. These findings align with

Mustikasari et al. (2024), who concluded that both digital marketing and conventional 4P strategies remain central in hospital marketing, particularly in the Indonesian context. However, trust remains a crucial barrier: Catapan et al. (2025) found that both patients and professionals are more likely to adopt digital healthcare when systems are perceived as secure and reliable. (Catapan et al., 2025; Mustikasari et al., 2024)

The findings from the *RSUD Arjawinangun SKM Report (2025)* further illustrate how measured patient satisfaction can serve as an indirect indicator of marketing effectiveness. High SKM scores in staff courtesy, communication, and responsiveness reflect the strength of relationship marketing at the institutional level. Such evidence suggests that marketing strategies cannot be separated from service quality initiatives, as both directly contribute to patient loyalty and public trust in hospitals. This is consistent with findings by Ferreira et al. (2023), who identified communication and responsiveness as key determinants of patient satisfaction in healthcare services. (Ferreira et al., 2023)

Interpretation of findings: The literature suggests that neither conventional nor digital strategies are sufficient alone to maximize patient loyalty. Conventional strategies provide the relational foundation (trust, reputation, word-of-mouth) that is indispensable, especially in contexts where patients value personal interaction or where digital access or literacy is lower. Digital strategies, by contrast, offer breadth, scalability, engagement, convenience and can help hospitals remain visible and accessible in a fast-evolving environment.

Hybrid approaches using conventional and digital together appear particularly promising: conventional strategies to build trust and reputation, digital tools to maintain visibility, engage patients regularly, and facilitate convenience (e.g., online scheduling, mobile apps, social media outreach). Evidence from China (2025) further shows that loyalty is influenced not only by service quality but also by accessibility and continuity of care, suggesting that marketing strategies must adapt to local health system structures. (Li et al., 2025)

Practical implications:

- 1) Hospital administrators should audit their current marketing mix to identify where conventional strategies are strong/weak and where digital adoption is possible/needed.
- 2) Investments in digital infrastructure (website, CRM, privacy/security) must accompany content strategy and staffing/training.
- 3) Message consistency across offline and online channels is vital for credibility and brand image.

Limitations in the literature:

- 1) Many studies are descriptive rather than longitudinal; few measure long-term loyalty or track ROI quantitatively.
- 2) Contextual bias: many studies are from certain countries (e.g., Indonesia, India) and findings may not generalize.
- 3) Measures of loyalty and satisfaction vary widely, making synthesis difficult.

Future research directions:

- 1) Comparative studies measuring ROI or cost-effectiveness of conventional vs digital strategies.
- 2) Longitudinal or panel studies that track patient loyalty over time.
- 3) More research in low-resource or rural settings to understand digital adoption barriers.
- 4) Standardization of loyalty/ satisfaction metrics for more robust comparisons.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review highlights that both conventional and digital marketing strategies play essential roles in shaping patient loyalty and satisfaction in hospital settings. Conventional strategies such as Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), public relations, relationship marketing, and the marketing mix (4P) remain powerful tools for building trust, reputation, and long-term emotional loyalty, particularly in communities where interpersonal relationships strongly influence healthcare choices. At the same time, the rise of digital marketing strategies including hospital websites, social media platforms, SEO, CRM systems, and telehealth applications has transformed how hospitals engage with patients. These approaches improve visibility, accessibility, and engagement, especially for younger, digitally literate populations. Trust in digital health platforms, however, remains a critical factor influencing their effectiveness.

Recent evidence from Mustikasari et al. (2024) also emphasizes that hospitals are increasingly integrating digital promotion with the traditional marketing mix (4P) and intensification strategies. This suggests that rather than replacing conventional approaches, digital tools complement them, creating a more comprehensive and competitive framework for patient engagement. Similarly, local evidence from the *Survei Kepuasan Masyarakat* of RSUD Arjawinangun (2025) reported high levels of satisfaction in staff communication and responsiveness, reinforcing the importance of relationship-based strategies as part of effective hospital marketing.

The evidence from 2019–2025 suggests that the most effective approach is hybrid: integrating the relational depth of conventional strategies with the scalability and data-driven insights of digital marketing. Hospitals that adopt this integrated model can enhance competitiveness, patient retention, and sustainable brand loyalty. Future research should focus on (1) measuring the comparative ROI of conventional versus digital marketing in diverse

contexts, (2) conducting longitudinal studies on patient loyalty outcomes, and (3) exploring adoption barriers in low-resource or rural settings. Such evidence will help hospitals refine marketing strategies to balance human connection with digital innovation, ensuring resilient patient relationships in an evolving healthcare landscape.

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