

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CONVENTIONAL VS DIGITAL MARKETING IN ATTRACTING PATIENTS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

In today's digital era, hospitals face increasingly complex challenges, including intense competition in healthcare services, changes in patient behaviour when seeking health information, and demands for marketing cost efficiency. Digital marketing has become increasingly popular and rapidly growing, although conventional marketing still plays a role, particularly among community segments that have not fully adopted digital technology. This literature review compares the effectiveness of digital and conventional marketing in attracting patients both new and repeat visits during the period 2020–2025, using empirical evidence from studies in Indonesia and internationally. The analysis draws on peer-reviewed articles from databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, published between 2020–2025, with a focus on hospital marketing, patient visit interest, speed, reach, cost efficiency, interaction and feedback, and patient loyalty. The findings show that digital marketing consistently outperforms in raising awareness, engagement, visit interest especially for repeat visits and patient loyalty, particularly in urban areas with good internet access. However, conventional marketing remains relevant for regions with low digital literacy, elderly populations, and in building community-based trust. This review emphasizes that combining digital and conventional strategies tailored to patient segments and local contexts is more optimal than relying on a single method.

Key words: digital marketing; conventional marketing; hospital marketing; healthcare promotion; online advertising

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of the digital era has intensified competition across sectors, including healthcare. Hospitals now compete not only in terms of medical services but also in their healthcare marketing strategies. As essential institutions in public health systems, hospitals previously relied heavily on conventional marketing methods such as print media, billboards, or direct relationships with patients and partner institutions. However, with the rise of digitalization, information technology-based marketing strategies have become inevitable, particularly for building brand image, attracting new patients, and maintaining patient loyalty.

Digital marketing offers advantages such as broader audience reach, relatively lower costs, and real-time data analysis. Through social media, official websites, and other digital platforms, hospitals can deliver information more quickly, interactively, and measurably (Lindawati et al., 2025). Nonetheless, conventional marketing remains relevant, especially in building trust through emotional approaches and personal closeness with communities (Ayuba et al., 2022).

Therefore, it is important to analyze the comparison between digital and conventional marketing in the healthcare sector, particularly hospitals, to determine the most effective and efficient strategy. Understanding the strengths, limitations, and challenges of each approach will help hospitals develop more adaptive communication strategies focused on patient needs in the modern era.

The aim of this literature review is to examine the effectiveness of conventional and digital marketing in attracting patients both new and repeat visits during 2020–2025, by referring to empirical evidence from national and international studies. The results are expected to provide insights into the strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations for more optimal hospital marketing strategies.

METHOD

This literature review was conducted to compare the effectiveness of conventional and digital marketing strategies in attracting patients, both new and repeat visits, during 2020–2025, based on empirical evidence from national and international studies. The review process systematically examined peer-reviewed articles available in databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, published between 2020–2025.

The analysis focused on hospital marketing, patient interest in visits, speed of information delivery, audience reach, cost efficiency, mechanisms for interaction and feedback, and patient loyalty. Keywords such as “digital marketing,” “conventional marketing,” “hospital marketing,” “patient engagement,” “healthcare promotion,” and “online advertising” were used to facilitate literature searches.

Boolean operators (AND, OR) were also used to broaden or narrow the search scope to ensure results were relevant to the research objectives while remaining comprehensive. Articles that met the relevance criteria were reviewed and further analyzed to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of each marketing strategy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This literature review identified several important findings regarding the comparison of digital and conventional marketing effectiveness in attracting patients to hospitals. The results can be summarized as follows:

Table 1. Comparison of Digital and Conventional Marketing

Dimension	Advantages of Digital over Conventional	Situations Where Conventional Remains Relevant/Better
Speed & Reach	Digital marketing can disseminate information more quickly and reach wider audiences than conventional methods (Syafarudin et al., 2022).	In areas with limited internet access or communities not active in digital media, conventional marketing remains more suitable to reach audiences (Utami & Nugroho, 2021).
Cost	Potentially lower costs if optimized, as it allows more targeted outreach to prospective or existing patients virtually (Burhan & Sulistiadi, 2022). Digital marketing is more cost-effective in many aspects due to targeted campaigns through social media, email, etc., minimizing waste in reaching irrelevant audiences (Md Sohel et al., 2024).	Conventional marketing often requires higher costs for printing and distribution. However, in some cases, it provides higher trust levels among certain community groups (Afzal et al., 2020).
Interaction & Feedback	Digital marketing enables two-way interaction, reviews, testimonials, and quicker engagement (Burhanudin et al., 2025). Interactive elements in digital marketing significantly influence outpatient visit interest, showing the importance of feedback and direct interaction (Pramesti et al., 2024).	Conventional marketing tends to be one-way, though still effective in building community relationships and trust (Kotler & Armstrong, 2020).
Patient Decisions	Many studies show digital marketing influences visit intention, loyalty, and patient experience. These often involve effective digital service interactions and responses (Burhanudin et al., 2025). Digital marketing (internet, email, social media) allows hospitals to adapt quickly, attract new patients, and improve loyalty (Francesca Chandra & Nadjib, 2023).	Patient decisions are not always based on digital factors; family recommendations, service quality, and location proximity remain crucial, making conventional marketing relevant (Wulandari et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on this literature review of publications from 2020–2025, fundamental differences exist between digital and conventional marketing strategies in the hospital context. These differences appear in the following aspects: digital marketing significantly outperforms in rapidly disseminating information and reaching broader, segmented audiences. Conventional methods are limited to certain regions and require more time for message distribution. Digital strategies are generally more cost-efficient, especially on a larger scale, because effectiveness can be evaluated in measurable terms. In contrast, conventional marketing incurs higher costs and is harder to evaluate quantitatively. Digital media provides faster, two-way communication that strengthens patient engagement and trust, which is difficult to achieve through conventional one-way approaches. Digital marketing contributes significantly to building patient loyalty through positive digital experiences, easier access to information, and continuous interaction. Conventional marketing emphasizes emotional and physical experiences but is less effective for long-term relationships without digital support. Overall, digital marketing is considered more adaptive, relevant, and efficient in the digital transformation era, especially in healthcare. However, conventional marketing remains important for certain segments, such as communities with limited internet access, elderly populations, or local groups emphasizing trust-based relationships. Therefore, combining digital and conventional strategies tailored to patient characteristics and local contexts will yield more optimal outcomes than relying on a single approach.

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