

STRATEGY FORMULATION FOR IMPLEMENTING HYBRID PROMOTIONS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: CASE STUDY OF HOTEL 101 STYLE YOGYAKARTA MALIOBORO

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Abstract

This study aims to formulate an experience- and relationship-based hybrid promotion strategy at Hotel 101 Style Yogyakarta Malioboro. Hybrid promotion is conceptualized not merely as the integration of online and offline channels, but as a comprehensive process of shaping guest experiences from the pre-visit stage through on-site service interactions that foster long-term relational bonds. This research employed a descriptive-exploratory qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation involving management, staff, guests, and business partners. Data analysis was conducted thematically through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, supported by triangulation and member checking to ensure data validity. The findings indicate that Integrated Marketing Communication plays a crucial role in forming initial guest expectations through consistent and coherent digital messaging. Furthermore, personal engagement during service delivery serves to validate these expectations through responsive, adaptive, and empathetic interactions. The emergence of marketing intimacy reflects the development of relational closeness, as evidenced by repeat visits, customer recommendations, and positive online reviews. This study proposes a hybrid promotion framework that is systematically integrated into service culture and strengthened through cross-departmental coordination to enhance customer experience and loyalty.

Keywords: Hybrid Promotion, Service Experience, IMC, Personal Engagement, Marketing Intimacy

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is a service sector that heavily relies on the quality of service experiences and the relationships between service providers and customers. Guests' decisions in choosing a hotel are not solely determined by physical facilities and price, but also by perceptions, experiences, and the level of trust formed before and during their stay (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Therefore, a hotel's success in attracting and retaining customers is largely determined by its ability to manage service experiences while building long-term relationships with guests.

The advancement of digital technology has significantly transformed tourist behavior, particularly in searching for information and selecting hotels. Social media, official websites, and Online Travel Agent (OTA) platforms have become primary sources in shaping guests' initial perceptions and expectations of hotel services. Information conveyed through these digital channels functions as an initial experience that influences guest evaluations even before direct interaction with the hotel occurs (Varkaris & Neuhofer, 2017).

This transformation has also driven a shift in the meaning of promotion within the hospitality industry. Promotion is no longer perceived merely as an activity of delivering information or offering prices, but rather as a strategic process of shaping experiences starting from the pre-visit stage. In this context, consistency between promotional messages and actual service delivery becomes a crucial factor in creating satisfaction and building guest trust (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997).

However, excessive reliance on digital promotion may lead to impersonal experiences if not balanced with high-quality direct service interactions. Fundamentally, the hospitality industry is grounded in human-centered service, personal attention, and the ability to build emotional connections with guests. Direct interaction between hotel staff and guests plays a vital role in shaping customer satisfaction and loyalty (Brodie et al., 2011).

On the other hand, offline promotion through service touchpoints, face-to-face interactions with partners, and direct engagement with guests remains strategically important, particularly in corporate, institutional, and travel agency segments. Personal relationships established through such interactions contribute significantly to building trust and long-term collaboration that cannot be fully replaced by digital technology (Treacy & Wiersema, 1993).

Previous studies indicate that research on promotion in the hospitality industry tends to be fragmented. Prasetyanto and Chandrawijaya (2025) emphasize the effectiveness of social media, local cultural collaboration, and online reservation systems in increasing occupancy rates, yet do not comprehensively examine the integration of online and offline promotion. Similarly, Wang & Lee (2020) highlights the role of digital promotion in attracting new customers but does not consider offline promotion or the roles of personal engagement and marketing intimacy. Meanwhile, conceptual studies by Tjiptono (2017) and Sihite, Assauri and Halim (2018) provide a theoretical foundation for marketing strategies and promotional mix, yet do not specifically address the implementation of hybrid strategies in an experience-based hospitality context.

Based on these conditions, online and offline promotion should not be positioned as separate approaches but rather integrated into a comprehensive strategy, namely hybrid promotion. In this study, hybrid promotion is understood as an experience- and relationship-based strategy that integrates Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), personal engagement, and marketing intimacy. Hotel 101 Style Yogyakarta Malioboro was selected as the research object because it actively utilizes digital promotion while maintaining personalized services aligned with local cultural values. Therefore, this study focuses on formulating a hybrid promotion strategy that not only builds service experiences but also strengthens long-term relationships between the hotel and its guests (Brodie et al., 2011; Ntarelli & Plapler, 2016).

In this context, hybrid promotion is understood as a relational process rather than merely a performance outcome. Based on this perspective, this study is directed toward four main analytical focuses:

- (1) the implementation of experience-based hybrid promotion,
- (2) the role of personal engagement in building relationships between the hotel and its guests,
- (3) the emergence of marketing intimacy as a result of service experience and personal interaction, and
- (4) the formulation of a contextually relevant and applicable hybrid promotion strategy.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-exploratory research design to gain an in-depth understanding of the hybrid promotion strategy based on experience and relationships at Hotel 101 Style Yogyakarta Malioboro. This approach is chosen because it enables the exploration of meanings, perspectives, and interactions of informants within real-life (Creswell, 2014). The study does not aim to test causal relationships, but rather to understand the processes, experiences, and relationships formed within hybrid promotion practices. The conceptual framework refers to Integrated Marketing Communication (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997; Kitchen, 2010), *personal engagement* (Brodie et al., 2011) and *marketing intimacy* (Treacy & Wiersema, 1993; Ntarelli & Plapler, 2016).

The research was conducted at Hotel 101 Style Yogyakarta Malioboro from September 2025 to January 2026. The location was selected due to the hotel's active integration of digital and offline promotional strategies through collaborations with corporate clients, travel agencies, and government institutions. The research stages included preparation, data collection, data analysis, and report writing (Sugiyono, 2022).

The research subject is the hybrid promotion strategy implemented by the hotel, with informants selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance and involvement (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Informants were grouped into three categories: hotel management, marketing and operational staff, as well as hotel guests and partners, allowing the study to capture diverse perspectives on the formulation and implementation of hybrid promotion strategies.

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to understand promotional practices directly (Spradley, 2016), interviews were conducted to explore informants' experiences and perspectives in depth (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015), and documentation served as supporting data to strengthen the findings (Moleong, 2019). The interview guide was developed based on the concepts of IMC, *experiential marketing*, *relationship marketing*, and *customer experience*.

Data analysis employed thematic analysis with an interactive approach, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The analysis process involved *open coding*, *axial coding*, and *selective coding* to identify meaning units, develop categories, and formulate conceptual themes. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation, as well as member checking to enhance the credibility of the findings (Yin, 2018)

RESULTS

The implementation of hybrid promotion strategy at Hotel 101 Style Yogyakarta Malioboro is understood not merely as the integration of online and offline promotion, but as a process that shapes service experiences and relationships between the hotel and its guests. The findings indicate that digital promotion plays a role in forming initial perceptions and guest expectations, while direct service interactions serve as the primary space to validate those expectations. In addition, cross-departmental coordination within hotel operations is crucial in ensuring consistency between promotional messages and the actual service experienced by guests.

The analysis is conducted in stages using a thematic analysis approach through *open coding*, *axial coding*, and *selective coding* to identify meanings, patterns, and relationships among the findings. Through this approach, hybrid promotion is not viewed solely as a marketing activity, but as a strategic process that shapes experience, emotional engagement, and relational closeness between the hotel and its guests. Therefore, the discussion is directed toward examining the interconnection between marketing communication, service experience, and customer relationships within the framework of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), *personal engagement*, and *marketing intimacy*.

1. Hybrid Promotion Strategy Practice at Hotel 101 Style Yogyakarta Malioboro

Hotel 101 Style Yogyakarta Malioboro is a four-star hotel strategically located in the heart of Yogyakarta and managed by Panorama Hotel Management (PHM). In the highly competitive hospitality industry, the hotel is building its market position through a combination of digital promotions and a relational approach. Management believes that the hotel's strength lies not only in its location and products, but also in the consistency of its promotional strategy and the quality of the service experience for guests. The hybrid promotional strategy is defined as an integrated approach that integrates online promotions and in-person service experiences, where digital promotions play a role in building initial expectations, while in-person interactions serve as a means of actualizing service value.

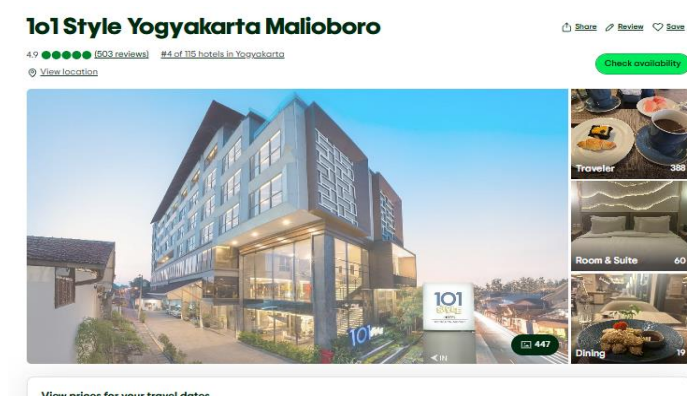


Figure 1. Information from Trip Advisor

From a market perspective, the hotel serves various segments, including individual travelers through OTAs, corporates, travel agents, and communities and institutions. Therefore, promotional strategies are implemented in a balanced manner across online and offline

channels. The hotel's competitive position is reflected in its relatively stable occupancy rate and positive digital reputation on various platforms, such as OTAs, Google Reviews, and TripAdvisor. Supporting data, such as occupancy reports, STR reports, and promotional materials, are used to empirically understand the competitive context. Therefore, the hotel profile and management's understanding of hybrid promotional strategies serve as an important basis for analyzing promotional practices and their implications for guest experience, brand awareness, and customer loyalty.

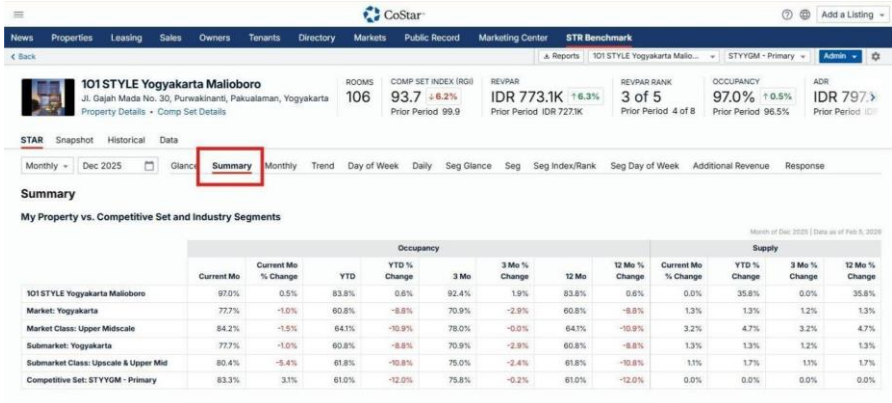


Figure 2. STR Report. Position of Hotel 101 Style Yogyakarta Malioboro Against Competitor Hotels in the Surrounding Area

From an E-Commerce and Marketing Communication perspective, online promotional practices at Hotel 101 Style Yogyakarta Malioboro are implemented through the use of OTA platforms, the official website, social media, and the management of guest reviews as part of digital marketing communications. Online promotions not only serve as a means of conveying information and offers, but also as a two-way interaction medium that builds relationships with potential guests. Guest reviews are perceived as a representation of experiences that influence trust and stay decisions, so their management is carried out in a coordinated manner with the operational department. Thus, promotional content delivered through the website and social media, as well as experiences reflected in reviews on platforms such as Booking.com, are part of an experience-based promotional strategy that demands consistency between digital messages and the reality of service on the ground.



Figure 3. One of the Guest Reviews on the Website

Offline promotions in this study are interpreted as an integral part of the service experience that shapes the impression and relationship between the hotel and guests. Every direct interaction at various service points such as the Front Office, Housekeeping, and Food and Beverage is viewed as a form of personalized and contextual marketing communication. From the Front Office perspective, the initial interaction is a key moment in building the guest experience, as conveyed by an informant:

"Service begins from the moment guests arrive. From greetings and check-in assistance to attentiveness to guests' needs, it all becomes part of the experience they remember." (Informant 3).

This statement demonstrates that service is not merely operational, but also a means of shaping guests' perceptions and initial impressions. Furthermore, offline promotional practices are also reflected in attention to detail and the quality of service interactions. A Housekeeping informant emphasized that the guest experience is built through personal touches, such as welcome notes or towel art, as stated:

"We try to make guests feel cared for, for example through welcome notes or towel art. Small things like that often become memorable experiences for guests." (Informant 5).

Meanwhile, from the Food and Beverage side, service interactions in restaurants become a space to build emotional closeness which naturally encourages promotion, as expressed.

"When guests feel comfortable and well-served at a restaurant, they're often more likely to tell others about it. From there, promotion naturally occurs through their own experiences." (Informant 4).

This confirms that service experience serves as a powerful promotional tool through experience-based recommendations. Furthermore, this service experience extends to relationships with external partners, such as travel agents, demonstrating the importance of personal engagement in building long-term trust. An informant from Java Travel Agent stated:

"The factor that influenced me to choose IOI Style was its GM, Ms. Ati. Besides having known her for a long time, Ms. Ati is accessible at any time. Even on long weekends, the only GM who still takes calls from travel agents is Ms. Ati." (Informant 11).

This statement demonstrates that relational closeness and personal communication are key factors in the sustainability of collaborations. Thus, offline promotions occur not only in guest interactions but also in ongoing professional relationships, thus strengthening the hybrid promotion strategy as a process that connects digital expectations with real-life service experiences.

2. Integration of Online and Offline Promotion in Operational Practices

The research results show that the integration of online and offline promotions at Hotel 101 Style Yogyakarta Malioboro is carried out through continuous cross-departmental coordination. Information regarding digital promotions, program offers, and guest expectations formed from online channels is used as a reference by the operational department in providing services. From an E-Commerce perspective, coordination with the Front Office is carried out to ensure that booking details and promotional information can be followed up appropriately, as stated:

"Every time there is a booking or promotion running on an OTA, we always coordinate with the Front Office so they know the guest details and expectations that have been formed online" (Informant 8).

Furthermore, the Front Office also plays a role in conveying feedback from guests to the relevant team, as stated:

"If there is input or requests from guests who come online, we convey it to the relevant team so that it can be followed up and used as material for future evaluation" (Informant 3).

This demonstrates that marketing communications are directly linked to service practices on the ground. Furthermore, marketing communications leverages service experience as a primary resource in creating digital content to ensure it remains authentic and relevant to reality, as stated:

"The content we display on social media is usually taken from guest activities and experiences at the hotel, so that what is seen online matches what is felt directly" (Informant 7).

This view is reinforced by the Director of Sales and Marketing who emphasized the importance of consistency between promotions and services:

"Online and offline promotions are interconnected. What's communicated digitally must be supported by on-site service, and conversely, guest experiences serve as evaluation material for marketing communications" (Informant 2).

Thus, cross-departmental coordination reflects a hybrid promotional strategy as a two-way communication process that connects digital messages with service experiences, while also enabling strategy adjustments based on actual guest experiences.

The main challenge in implementing a hybrid promotional strategy at Hotel 101 Style Yogyakarta Malioboro lies in maintaining consistency between messages delivered through digital channels and the service experience received by guests in person. Differences in work rhythms between departments and daily operational dynamics can potentially lead to inconsistencies if not supported by intensive internal communication. This was conveyed by an

informant from Marketing Communications:

"Sometimes what we communicate on social media needs to be adjusted to reflect conditions on the ground. If it's not communicated well, there can be a discrepancy between guest expectations and the service they receive," (Informant 7).

From a Front Office perspective, challenges also arise from increasing guest expectations due to exposure to digital information, as expressed:

"Guests now have expectations even before they arrive, based on online promotions. The challenge is how we can align our service with those expectations amidst a dynamic operational environment," (Informant 3).

In addition, the Director of Sales and Marketing emphasized that the differences in work rhythms between departments are a challenge in maintaining strategic alignment:

"Each department has its own work rhythm. The challenge is how to unify these rhythms so that the message delivered to guests remains consistent, both online and offline" (Informant 2).

This is also reinforced by the Food and Beverage perspective which emphasizes operational readiness in facing the surge in guests due to digital promotions:

"Online promotions help attract guests, but in the field, we have to be ready to provide appropriate service. That's a challenge, especially during busy operating hours," (Informant 4).

Thus, the challenge of a hybrid promotional strategy is understood as the process of organizational adaptation in aligning marketing communications with service experiences, where promotional integration is not only administrative, but is a continuous exchange between digital messages and the guest's real experience.

DISCUSSION

1. Hybrid Promotion Strategy from an Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) Perspective

The findings indicate that the hybrid promotion strategy at Hotel 101 Style Yogyakarta Malioboro is implemented by maintaining alignment between promotional messages and the service experience perceived by guests. This suggests that *Integrated Marketing Communication* (IMC) functions not only as a mechanism for integrating various marketing communication channels, but also as a means of shaping guests' initial experiences prior to direct interaction with hotel services.

Information delivered through digital media, such as social media, websites, and *online travel agents* (OTA), constructs guests' expectations regarding service quality, hotel atmosphere, and the value offered. These expectations then serve as a reference point for evaluating the actual service experience (Habel et al, 2016). Therefore, the degree of congruence between promotional messages and service reality plays a significant role in strengthening guests' trust in the hotel.

The findings also reveal that message consistency managed through IMC contributes to maintaining the credibility of the hotel's promotional efforts. When the service experience aligns with the information received prior to arrival, the hybrid promotion strategy functions as a coherent and integrated experiential process. This is consistent with the views of Schultz and Kitchen (1997) and Kitchen (2010), who emphasize that IMC is a strategic approach to building consistent customer understanding and perception. In this study, IMC is positioned not merely as the end goal of promotion, but as a foundational element in shaping pre-visit experiences that influence subsequent service interactions.

2. Personal engagement as the Core of Service Interaction

The findings indicate that experiences shaped through *Integrated Marketing Communication* (IMC) develop into *personal engagement* through direct service interactions. Guest engagement is formed through interactions that are personal, responsive, and emotional across various service touchpoints within the hotel. Interactions between staff and guests are not merely understood as operational activities, but as communication processes that foster emotional engagement. Prompt responses, attentiveness to guest needs, and empathetic staff attitudes are key factors in creating meaningful experiences, enabling guests to feel valued and cared for.

In this study, *personal engagement* functions as a relational mechanism that bridges promotion and loyalty. Guest engagement is not formed solely through digital promotion, but through directly experienced service interactions. These findings are consistent with the perspectives of Brodie et al. (2011) and Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2012), which emphasize that engagement goes beyond mere transactions and is rooted in meaningful interactions. Therefore, *personal engagement* can be positioned as the core of the initial relationship between the hotel and its guests, serving as a prerequisite for the development of sustained relationships.

3. Intimacy as a relational process

The findings indicate that personal engagement, when sustained consistently, evolves into marketing intimacy. The relational closeness between the hotel and its guests is formed through repeated service experiences and continuous personal interactions. Marketing intimacy is reflected in guest behaviors such as repeat stays, providing recommendations to others, and sharing positive reviews across various platforms. This closeness does not emerge instantly but is developed through ongoing experiences and engagement, positioning the established relationship as a strategic asset in the hospitality industry (Sofi et al, 2025).

These findings are consistent with the concept of customer intimacy proposed by Treacy and Wiersema (1993), as well as the development of brand intimacy by Ntarelli and Plapler (2016), both of which emphasize the importance of emotional closeness in fostering loyalty and long-term performance. Within the hybrid promotion strategy, marketing intimacy is understood as the outcome of relational processes built through service experiences and personal engagement (Liu et al, 2024). Therefore, the level of closeness achieved can serve as an indicator of the effectiveness of hybrid promotion strategies based on experience and relational dynamics.

4. Formulating a Hybrid Promotion Strategy Based on Experience and Relationships

This study formulates that the hybrid promotion strategy at Hotel 101 Style Yogyakarta Malioboro is not merely implemented as a technical integration of online and offline promotion. Instead, it is understood as a strategic process grounded in service experience and relational dynamics (Vargo et al, 2024). This formulation is developed inductively from operational practices, service experiences, and personal interactions that occur consistently across various touchpoints between the hotel and its guests.

The experience- and relationship-based hybrid promotion strategy consists of four interconnected elements. First, Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) functions as the foundation for shaping guests' initial expectations through consistent promotional messages across digital channels, such as social media, websites, and online travel agents (OTA). Second, service experience delivered through personal engagement serves as the primary mechanism for validating these expectations, where direct interactions between staff and guests—characterized by responsiveness, empathy, and attentiveness—represent the actualization of the promised service values.

Third, cross-departmental coordination acts as a linking mechanism to ensure alignment between promotional messages and service delivery. Information generated from digital channels is utilized as an operational reference in providing services, while guest experiences become a key source for developing and refining promotional content. Fourth, the consistency of service experience and personal engagement evolves into marketing intimacy, reflected in repeat stays, word-of-mouth recommendations, and positive guest reviews. This relational closeness develops gradually through continuous experience and engagement, positioning the relationship between the hotel and its guests as a strategic long-term asset.

Conceptually, the hybrid promotion strategy in this study can be understood as a continuum that moves from expectation formation through IMC, to personal engagement, and ultimately to relational closeness (marketing intimacy). The effectiveness of this strategy is not determined solely by the intensity of digital promotion, but by the hotel's ability to maintain

consistency between promotional promises and actual service experiences. Therefore, the proposed formulation is both contextual and applicable, positioning promotion as an integral part of the hotel's service culture and operational practices in fostering sustainable guest relationships.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, this study concludes that the hybrid promotion strategy at Hotel 101 Style Yogyakarta Malioboro is not merely the integration of online and offline promotion, but a process that shapes service experience and relationships between the hotel and its guests, and is embedded within the organization's service culture. The findings indicate that experience-based hybrid promotion is implemented through the alignment between digital promotional messages and the actual service experience delivered to guests, where social media, websites, and Online Travel Agents (OTA) form initial expectations that are subsequently validated through direct service interactions across operational departments. Furthermore, *personal engagement* functions as a key mechanism in building relationships, manifested through continuous, responsive, empathetic, and contextual interactions between staff and guests at various service touchpoints. These interactions generate meaningful experiences that strengthen relational bonds. In turn, consistent service experiences and engagement contribute to the development of *marketing intimacy*, reflected in repeat stays, recommendations, and positive guest experiences. Ultimately, this study formulates a hybrid promotion strategy framework that integrates Integrated Marketing Communication as experience-based marketing communication, personal engagement as the relational process, and marketing intimacy as the outcome, positioning hybrid promotion as a strategic approach that connects communication, service experience, and long-term customer relationships in the hospitality.

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