



Digital Marketing and Cross-Cultural Service Adaptation for Chinese Tourists: A Case Study of Abi Bali Resort & Villa Jimbaran

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ABSTRACT

The rapid recovery of Bali tourism after the COVID-19 pandemic has encouraged the return of Chinese tourists as one of the largest international market segments. This development creates both opportunities and challenges for hospitality businesses, particularly independent hotels that must adapt to changing tourist behavior and digital travel trends. This study examines how Abi Bali Resort & Villa Jimbaran develops marketing strategies and service adaptation to attract Chinese tourists. A qualitative case study approach was employed through interviews, observations, and documentation. The collected data were analyzed using SWOT analysis supported by IFAS and EFAS matrices to identify the hotel's strategic position. The findings indicate that the hotel benefits from strengths such as its private villa concept, peaceful environment, and competitive pricing, which are considered attractive for Chinese tourists seeking comfort and privacy. However, several limitations remain, including the absence of Mandarin-speaking staff, limited use of Chinese digital payment systems, and insufficient exposure on Chinese social media platforms. The SWOT analysis places the hotel in Quadrant I, indicating strong growth potential through aggressive marketing strategies. The study emphasizes that adapting to Chinese digital ecosystems and improving cross-cultural services are essential components in enhancing hospitality competitiveness in Bali

INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector plays a crucial role in supporting Bali's regional economy, particularly through the hospitality industry. Following the recovery period after the COVID-19 pandemic, international tourist arrivals to Bali have shown significant improvement. One of the fastest-growing international markets is Chinese outbound tourism, which has regained momentum after the reopening of China's international travel policies.

Chinese tourists have different travel behaviors compared to many other international travelers. Their travel decisions are strongly influenced by digital ecosystems, social media engagement, online reviews, and mobile-based transactions (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

Platforms such as WeChat, Xiaohongshu, Douyin, and Trip.com have become major sources of travel information and purchasing decisions among Chinese travelers (Leung et al., 2013). Consequently, hospitality businesses targeting this market are required to adapt not only their marketing strategies but also their service systems and communication approaches.

Abi Bali Resort & Villa Jimbaran is a four-star independent hospitality business that offers private villa accommodation with a quiet and comfortable atmosphere. This concept aligns with the preferences of many Chinese tourists who prioritize privacy, relaxation, and exclusive experiences during their vacations. Despite these advantages, the hotel still faces several operational and marketing limitations, including limited Mandarin communication, inadequate integration with Chinese digital payment systems, and minimal visibility on Chinese digital platforms.

Previous studies discussing Chinese tourist behavior mainly focus on large-scale destinations or international hotel chains. Research examining independent hotels in Bali, particularly from the perspective of digital ecosystem adaptation and cross-cultural hospitality services, remains relatively limited. Therefore, this research contributes to hospitality marketing studies by integrating SWOT analysis with the characteristics of Chinese tourists and digital service adaptation in the context of independent accommodation businesses.

This study aims to identify the internal strengths and weaknesses of Abi Bali Resort & Villa Jimbaran, analyze external opportunities and threats related to the Chinese tourism market, examine the characteristics of Chinese tourists, and formulate strategic recommendations related to digital marketing and service adaptation. Although studies discussing Chinese tourist behavior and hospitality marketing have increased in recent years, most previous research focuses on international hotel chains and large tourism destinations. Limited studies specifically examine how independent hospitality businesses in Bali adapt their digital marketing strategies and cross-cultural services to attract Chinese tourists. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in the integration of SWOT analysis, Chinese tourist characteristics, digital ecosystem adaptation, and cross-cultural hospitality services within the context of an independent resort and villa business in Bali. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on international hotel chains, this research highlights strategic adaptation practices undertaken by a locally managed hospitality enterprise.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hospitality Marketing Strategy

Marketing strategy in the hospitality industry refers to planned managerial efforts aimed at attracting, satisfying, and retaining customers through service quality, customer experience, and market positioning. According to Kotler and Keller (2019), marketing strategy focuses on creating customer value through market positioning, service quality, and customer satisfaction. In hospitality businesses, marketing activities are closely associated with customer expectations, cultural preferences, and service personalization.

Digital Marketing in Tourism

The development of digital technology has transformed tourist behavior in searching for travel information, booking accommodation, and evaluating tourism experiences. Buhalis and Law (2008) explain that digital technology has transformed tourism marketing and customer interaction patterns within the hospitality industry. In the Chinese tourism market, digital platforms and mobile applications have become highly influential in shaping travel decisions. Hotels that successfully build strong digital visibility tend to gain greater trust and engagement from potential Chinese visitors. Digital marketing in tourism has shifted from conventional online promotion toward ecosystem-based interaction. Chinese tourists increasingly depend on integrated digital platforms that combine social media, travel reviews, booking systems, and digital payments within one ecosystem. Consequently, hospitality businesses targeting Chinese tourists are required to develop digital visibility, online engagement, and reputation management simultaneously.

SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is commonly used as a strategic planning tool to identify organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Rangkuti (2018) states that SWOT analysis helps organizations formulate strategies based on internal strengths and external environmental conditions in order to formulate effective strategies. In hospitality management, SWOT analysis is frequently applied to evaluate competitiveness and support strategic decision-making.

Characteristics of Chinese Tourists

Yu, Lee, and Noh (2022) found that Chinese outbound tourists are highly influenced by digital accessibility, online reviews, and personalized services. Chinese outbound tourists are generally characterized by strong digital dependency, high responsiveness to online reviews, and preference for convenience-oriented travel services. In addition, Chinese travelers tend to value safety, comfort, privacy, and culturally adaptive services. Digital payment accessibility and communication support also influence their travel experiences and accommodation choices.

METHODOLOGY

This research applied a qualitative case study approach focusing on Abi Bali Resort & Villa Jimbaran as the research object. The qualitative approach was selected because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of marketing practices and service adaptation within the hotel's operational context. Data

collection was conducted through direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation review. Supporting documents such as occupancy reports, promotional materials, and operational records were also analyzed. The study involved six key informants selected through purposive sampling. The informants consisted of the General Manager, Front Office Supervisor, Reservation Officer, Marketing Representative, Guest Service Officer, and a travel agent who regularly handled Chinese tourists visiting Bali. These participants were selected because of their direct involvement in hotel operations, marketing activities, and interactions with Chinese guests. Their experience provided valuable insights into the hotel's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and service adaptation strategies. Data analysis was conducted through four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The interview transcripts and observation notes were coded and categorized according to internal and external strategic factors. The identified factors were subsequently evaluated using IFAS and EFAS matrices before being mapped into the SWOT Cartesian matrix to determine the strategic position of the hotel.

The collected data were interpreted using SWOT analysis to identify internal and external strategic factors affecting the hotel. Furthermore, IFAS and EFAS matrices were applied to determine the hotel's strategic position. Data validity was strengthened through source triangulation and method triangulation to ensure consistency between interview findings, observations, and supporting documents.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Chinese Tourists at Abi Bali Resort & Villa

The findings indicate that digital adaptation is no longer a complementary strategy but has become a strategic necessity for hospitality businesses targeting Chinese outbound tourists. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the importance of digital engagement in influencing Chinese tourist behavior (Gamage et al., 2022). The previous studies emphasizing that Chinese travelers are strongly influenced by digital engagement, online reputation, and mobile-based travel ecosystems. Therefore, hotels that fail to integrate digital ecosystem adaptation may experience lower competitiveness within the Chinese tourism market.

The findings indicate that Chinese tourists staying at Abi Bali Resort & Villa generally prioritize privacy, convenience, and peaceful accommodation environments. Most guests prefer private facilities that provide comfort and exclusivity rather than crowded hotel environments. These preferences align with the hotel's private villa concept, which becomes one of its strongest competitive advantages.

The research also found that Chinese tourists rely heavily on online reviews and digital recommendations before making accommodation decisions. Information available on social media platforms significantly influences their perception of service quality and trust toward hospitality businesses.

In terms of payment behavior, Chinese tourists show a strong preference for digital transactions using Alipay and WeChat Pay. The absence of these

payment systems at the hotel may reduce convenience and affect guest satisfaction. Communication barriers also remain an important issue because several hotel employees still have limited Mandarin language skills.

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis identified several internal strengths possessed by Abi Bali Resort & Villa, including its private villa concept, strategic location, competitive pricing, and peaceful atmosphere. These strengths support the hotel's ability to attract tourists seeking relaxation-oriented accommodation experiences. However, the hotel also faces internal weaknesses related to limited Mandarin-speaking staff, insufficient digital marketing targeting Chinese platforms, and limited adoption of Chinese digital payment systems.

Table 1 Abi Bali's Tabel SWOT

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Private villa concept with private pool	1. No Mandarin-speaking staff
2. Quiet Jimbaran location	2. No Alipay/Wechat Pay yet
3. Competitive prices compared to chain hotels	3. Minimal Chinese digital content
4. Good reputation on OTAs	4. Limited Mandarin reviews
5. Management flexibility	5. Limited digital talent

From the external perspective, increasing Chinese tourist arrivals to Bali after the reopening of international travel policies create significant opportunities for hospitality businesses. The rapid growth of digital tourism trends also allows hotels to expand their market reach through social media and online travel platforms.

On the other hand, competition from international hotel chains represents a major threat because larger hotels generally possess stronger digital infrastructure, broader promotional networks, and more advanced customer service adaptation.

Strategic Positioning

Based on the IFAS score of 3.00 and EFAS score of 3.15, Abi Bali Resort & Villa is positioned in Quadrant I of the SWOT matrix. This position reflects an aggressive growth position in which organizations are encouraged to maximize strengths in order to capture market opportunities. In this context, the hotel has considerable potential to strengthen its competitiveness through digital marketing development and service innovation targeting Chinese tourists. In other words, it indicates that the hotel possesses strong internal capabilities while simultaneously facing favorable external opportunities.

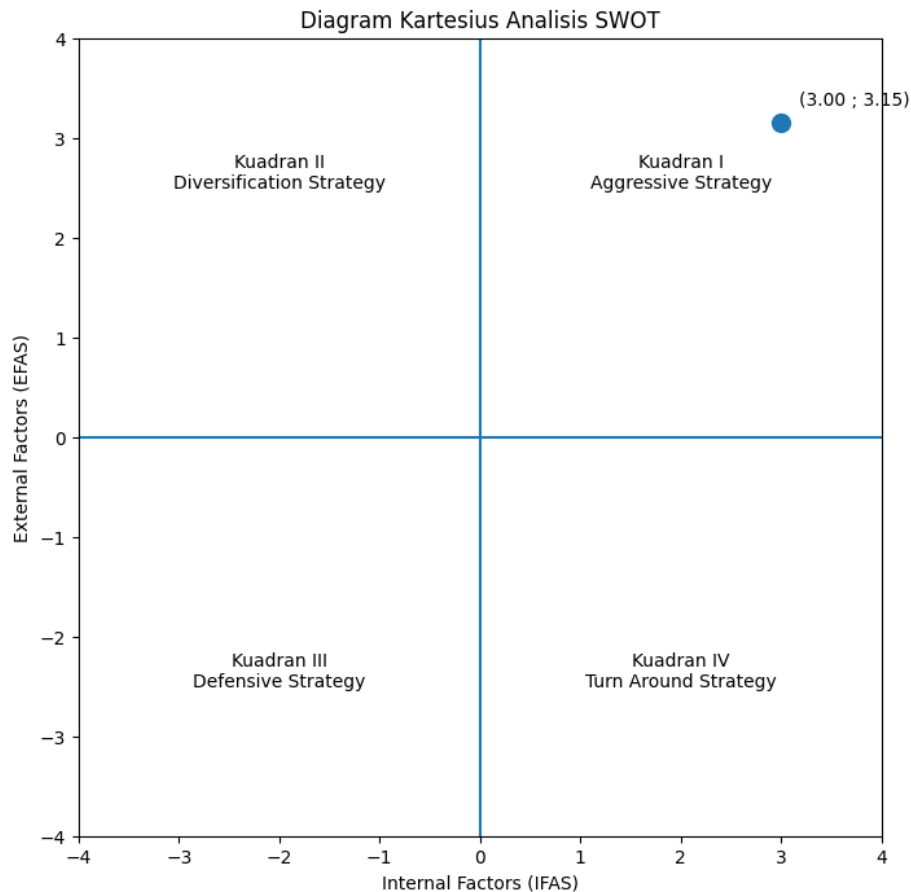


Figure 1 Kartesius Analisis SWOT

Digitalization and Cross-Cultural Service Strategy

The study demonstrates that digitalization has become an essential component of hospitality marketing for Chinese tourists. This result also supports Leung et al. (2013), who highlighted the growing role of social media and digital ecosystems within tourism and hospitality industries. The effectiveness of promotional activities increasingly depends on the hotel's visibility within Chinese digital ecosystems. Therefore, platforms such as WeChat, Xiaohongshu, Douyin, and Trip.com should be considered strategic channels for hotel promotion and customer engagement.

The integration of Chinese digital payment systems would also improve transaction convenience and enhance guest experiences. In addition, hotels need to improve cross-cultural communication through basic Mandarin training and culturally adaptive service standards. The findings suggest that successful hospitality strategies targeting Chinese tourists should combine digital ecosystem adaptation, personalized service experiences, and cultural responsiveness rather than relying solely on conventional promotional approaches.

Managerial Implications

The findings of this study provide several managerial implications for hospitality businesses targeting Chinese tourists. First, hotel management should strengthen its digital presence on Chinese platforms such as WeChat, Xiaohongshu, Douyin, and Trip.com. Second, the integration of Chinese digital

payment systems, including Alipay and WeChat Pay, should be prioritized to improve customer convenience. Third, regular Mandarin language training and cross-cultural service programs are necessary to enhance communication quality and guest satisfaction. Finally, collaboration with Chinese travel agencies and digital influencers can help expand market reach and improve brand visibility within the Chinese tourism ecosystem.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Abi Bali Resort & Villa Jimbaran possesses strong strategic potential in attracting Chinese tourists through its private villa concept, competitive pricing, and comfortable accommodation environment. Based on SWOT analysis supported by IFAS and EFAS matrices, the hotel is positioned in Quadrant I, indicating favorable conditions for aggressive growth strategies. Despite these strengths, the hotel still needs to improve several operational aspects, particularly Mandarin communication capabilities, Chinese digital payment integration, and digital marketing visibility on Chinese platforms.

This research highlights that the competitiveness of hospitality businesses targeting Chinese tourists is increasingly influenced by their ability to adapt to digital ecosystems and provide culturally responsive services. Therefore, digitalization and cross-cultural adaptation should become important priorities in hospitality marketing strategies within Bali's tourism industry.

SUGGESTION

This study focuses on a single independent hospitality business in Bali; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all hospitality sectors. Future studies are recommended to involve comparative analysis between independent hotels and international hotel chains or to apply quantitative approaches in measuring the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies targeting Chinese tourists.

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