AN ANALYSIS OF WORD OF MOUTH MARKETING IN BUILDING CORPORATE REPUTATION: A CASE STUDY OF ADIPUTRA GUESTHOUSE

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Abstract
This study aims to analyze the role of Word of Mouth (WoM) strategy in building corporate reputation, specifically at Adiputra Guesthouse as a hospitality service provider in Yogyakarta. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 103 respondents who had used the guesthouse services. The study also applied the SERVQUAL model as a supporting variable to assess service quality in relation to customer perceptions of corporate reputation. The analysis reveals that the WoM strategy has a positive influence on the formation of Adiputra Guesthouse's reputation, with good service quality reinforcing customers' tendency to recommend the service. The dimensions of reliability and tangibles received the highest scores in service quality evaluation, while empathy and assurance require further improvement. These findings highlight the importance of actively managing WoM strategies and enhancing service quality to foster positive perceptions and strengthen the company's reputation.

Keywords: *Word of Mouth, Corporate Reputation, Service Quality, SERVQUAL, Guesthouse.*

INTRODUCTION

Corporate reputation is an intangible asset with high strategic value, particularly in the service sector such as the accommodation industry. Based on the author's internship experience at Adiputra Guesthouse, it was observed that service success is not only determined by the technical quality of facilities or services, but also significantly influenced by how the company is perceived overall by customers. A positive reputation can substantially enhance consumer trust, loyalty, and purchasing decisions, whereas a negative reputation may lead to declining demand and even market loss (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

In the digital era, reputation building no longer relies solely on one-way communication from companies to consumers. Today, corporate reputation is largely shaped by customer experiences and perceptions shared widely through various communication channels, both directly and indirectly. One of the most influential forms of communication is Word of Mouth (WoM), which involves the spread of information from one individual to another based on personal experience with a particular product or service. WoM has evolved into Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM), encompassing consumer reviews on digital platforms such as Google Reviews, Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) like Traveloka, Airbnb, and other similar platforms. Studies show that e-WoM significantly influences purchasing decisions and online reputation formation in the hospitality industry (Zhang et al., 2016). This is because consumers tend to trust peer-generated information more than promotional messages from companies themselves.

Adiputra Guesthouse, as an actor in the accommodation sector, is not immune to this phenomenon. Based on direct observations during the internship, it was found that many customers became aware of Adiputra Guesthouse through recommendations from friends, family, or digital reviews. This indicates that WoM plays a significant role in attracting new customers. However, the current WoM management strategy implemented by the company is not yet optimally structured. From a marketing management perspective, WoM is considered an efficient promotional strategy due to its organic nature and low advertising cost (Khotimah, 2021). Satisfied customers are likely to share their positive experiences, while dissatisfied ones may

spread negative opinions that could damage the company's reputation. Therefore, managing WoM requires special attention to ensure that circulating information remains positive and contributes to a favorable brand image.

Joesyiana (2018) explains that customer satisfaction is the primary driver behind positive WoM. The higher the satisfaction level, the greater the likelihood of customers recommending the service to others. Conversely, negative experiences tend to spread faster and can harm the company's image. Hence, it is crucial for companies to implement effective strategies for collecting and managing customer feedback, both directly through surveys and indirectly via online review monitoring. Observations at Adiputra Guesthouse revealed that the company lacks an effective system for encouraging and collecting customer reviews on social media or online review platforms despite the proven impact of such reviews on shaping potential customers' perceptions. Given these findings, it is essential to analyze the WoM marketing strategies currently employed by Adiputra Guesthouse. This analysis aims to identify the extent of WoM's influence on the company's reputation and evaluate the effectiveness of its management. By understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the existing WoM strategy, the company can take strategic corrective actions to improve competitiveness in the increasingly dynamic accommodation industry.

METHOD

This research adopts a descriptive quantitative approach, aimed at explaining and describing phenomena through numerical data collected from respondents. This method was selected to align with the study's objective: to evaluate Word of Mouth (WoM) strategies and their role in building corporate reputation at Adiputra Guesthouse. It allows the researcher to assess how customers respond to services received and how these experiences drive them to share feedback both directly and digitally (e-WoM) thereby influencing the company's reputation. To support this analysis, the SERVQUAL model was used to assess service quality across five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. While service quality is not the main variable, it serves as a key factor influencing customers' willingness to recommend the service. In summary, the descriptive quantitative method provides a solid foundation for analyzing WoM effectiveness, identifying influencing factors, and understanding how customer perceptions shape corporate reputation in the accommodation industry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Respondent Demographics

The demographic analysis aims to provide an overview of the background characteristics of individuals involved in this study. Demographic information is essential as it reflects social contexts and consumer behavior tendencies in assessing service quality, spreading Word of Mouth (WoM), and forming perceptions of Adiputra Guesthouse's reputation. In this research, the analyzed demographic variables include gender, age range, and customer engagement level based on frequency of visits or previous accommodation experiences. Additionally, the author identifies the initial sources of information respondents obtained about Adiputra Guesthouse to assess the effectiveness of communication channels and service delivery strategies.
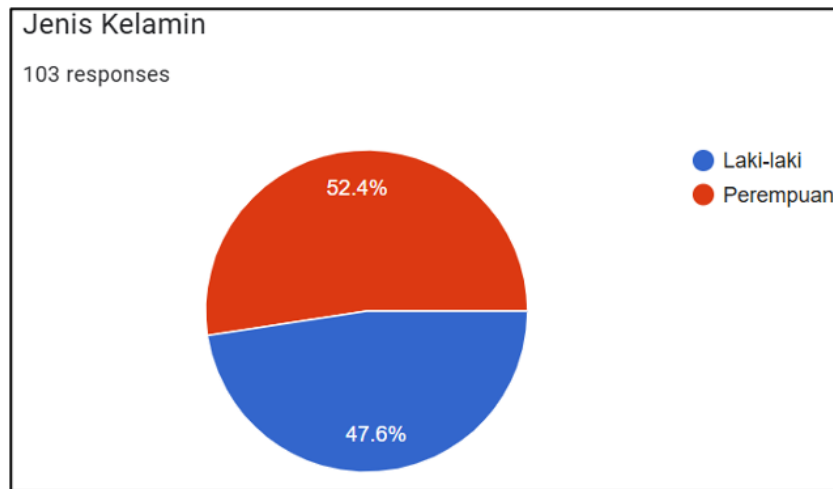**Gender Distribution of Respondents**

Table 1. Demographic Data Gender of Respondents

Gender	Number of People	Percentage
Male	49	47,6%
Female	54	52,4%

Total	103	100%

Source: Primary Data

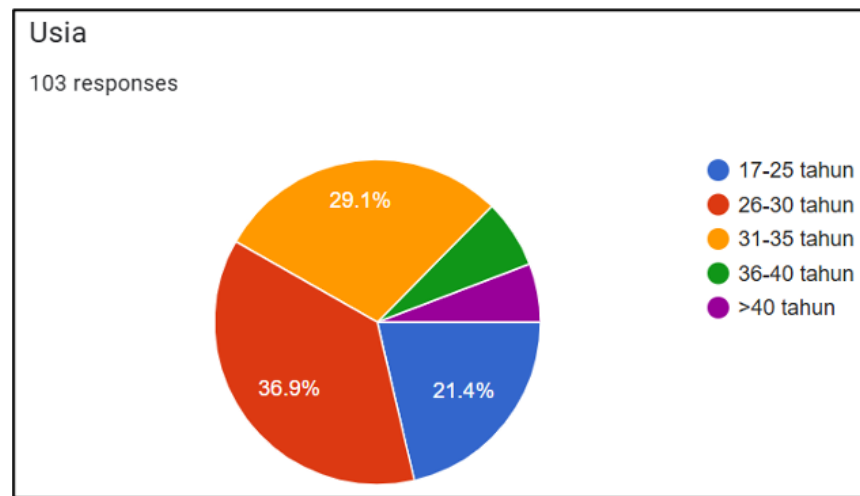**Figure 1. Demographic Diagram of Respondent Gender**

Based on the data presented in Table 1 and Figure 1, out of a total of 103 respondents, 49 (47.6%) are male and 54 (52.4%) are female. The findings indicate that slightly more than half of the respondents are female.

Age Distribution of Respondents

Table 2. Demographic Data Age of Respondents

Age of Respondents	Number of People	Percentage
17 - 25 Years	22	21.4%
26 - 30 Years	38	36.9%
31 - 35 Years	30	29.1%
36 - 40 Years	7	6.8%
> 40 Years	6	5.8%
Total	**103**	**100%**

Source: Primary Data

**Figure 2. Demographic Diagram of Respondent Age**

Based on data from Table 2 and Figure 2, the age distribution among the 103 respondents is as follows: 22 respondents (21.4%) are in the 17–25 years age group, 38 respondents (36.9%) fall within the 26–30 years range, 30 respondents (29.1%) are aged 31–35 years, 7 respondents (6.8%) belong to the 36–40 years group, and 6 respondents (5.8%) are over 40 years old. This distribution indicates that the majority of respondents are between 26 and 35 years old, making up approximately 66% of the total sample.

Frequency of Stay at Adiputra Guesthouse

Table 3. Demographic Data Frequency of Stay

| Frequency of Stay	Number of People	Percentage
1 time	61	17.5%
2-3 times	18	59.2%
>3 times	24	23.3%
Total	**103**	**100%**

Source: Primary Data
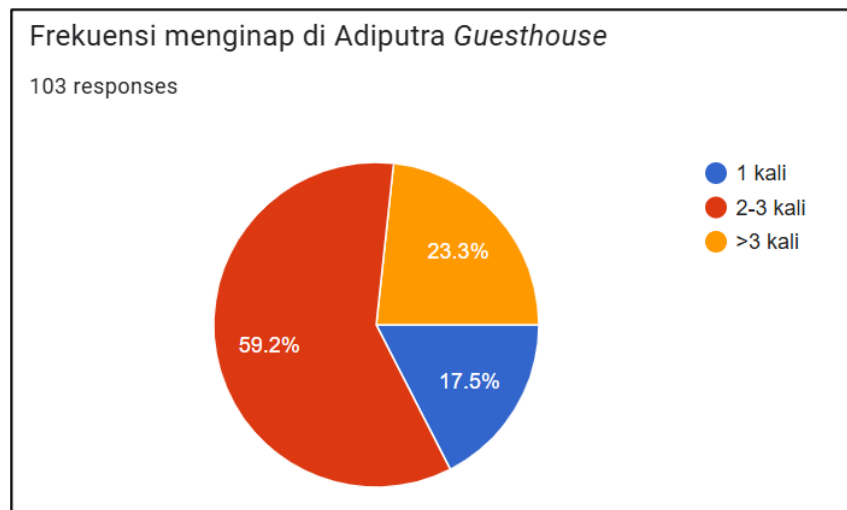
Figure 3. Respondent's Frequency of Stay Diagram

Based on data from Table 3 and Figure 3, it was found that the majority of respondents in this study were customers who had stayed at Adiputra Guesthouse only once. Specifically, 61 respondents (59.2%) reported having only one accommodation experience. Meanwhile, 18 respondents (17.5%) indicated they had stayed two to three times, and 24 respondents (23.3%) had stayed more than three times. The findings suggest that most respondents are new customers, although a considerable proportion consisted of repeat visitors. This frequency of visits reflects the level of customer engagement with the services offered by Adiputra Guesthouse, where repeated stays may lead to more objective evaluations of service quality.

Source of Initial Information About Adiputra Guesthouse

Table 4. Fornell Larcker Criterion Value

Initial Information	Number (People)	Percentage
Friends/Family	24	23.3%
Social Media	48	46.6%
OTA	31	30.1%
Total	**103**	**100%**
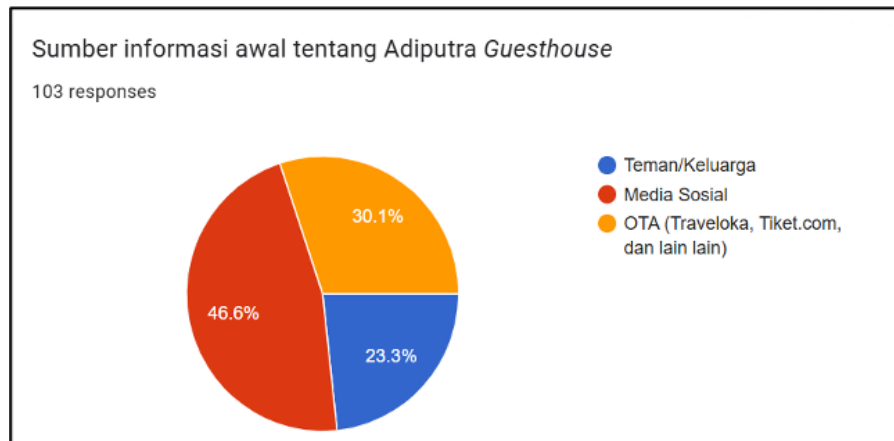
Figure 4. Respondent's Initial Information

Based on Table 4 and Figure 4, most respondents first learned about Adiputra Guesthouses through social media (46.6%), followed by Online Travel Agents (30.1%) and word-of-mouth from friends or family (23.3%). These findings highlight the significant role of digital channels particularly social media and OTAs in promoting Adiputra Guesthouse. However, traditional word-of-mouth also remains influential, indicating the importance of maintaining a positive reputation both online and offline, as customer perceptions are shaped by experiences shared across various communication platforms.

Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

Before analyzing respondent perceptions of Word of Mouth (WoM), corporate reputation, and service quality at Adiputra Guesthouse, a scoring standard was established to interpret the questionnaire results systematically. Responses were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement. Based on this range, the scores were classified into five qualitative categories: very poor, poor, fair, good, and very good. The interval for each category was calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Category Interval} = \frac{(nilai\ maksimal - nilai\ minimal)}{jumlah\ kelas}$$

$$\text{Number of Categories} = \frac{(5-1)}{5}$$

$$\text{Number of Categories} = 0,8$$

Table 5. Standard Range of Values

No.	Score Length	Category
1.	1,0 - 1,8	Very Poor
2.	1,9 - 2,6	Not Good
3.	2,7 - 3,4	Fairly Good
4.	3,5 - 4,2	Good
5.	4,3 - 5,0	Very Good

This classification was applied to all variables: Word of Mouth (independent), corporate reputation (dependent), and the five SERVQUAL dimensions (supporting variables). Average scores from each questionnaire indicator were then interpreted using this scale to identify trends in respondent perceptions.

Word of Mouth (WoM)

Table 6. Standard Range of Values

No.	Questions	Average	Category
1.	I tell others about my positive experience staying at Adiputra Guesthouse.	3.17	Quite Good
2.	I recommend Adiputra Guesthouse to friends and family.	3.84	Good
3.	I encourage others to stay at Adiputra Guesthouse.	4.28	Good
	Total	**3.76**	**Good**

Based on the data in Table 4.6, respondents' perceptions of the Word of Mouth (WoM) strategy implemented by Adiputra Guesthouse fall into the "good" category, with an overall average score of 3.76. The highest score was 4.28 for the first statement, classified as "very good," indicating a strong willingness among customers to voluntarily recommend the guesthouse. The second statement scored 3.84 (good), while the third scored 3.17, categorized as "fair." These results suggest that the WoM strategy is fairly effective, particularly in encouraging indirect promotion. However, there remains room for improvement in actively motivating customers to share their positive experiences, both through direct conversations and online reviews. This is essential, as the success of WoM largely depends on how actively customers spread positive feedback after using the service.

Company Reputation

Table 7. Descriptive Analysis of Company Reputation

No.	Questions	Average	Category
1.	I believe that Adiputra Guesthouse is a reliable lodging service provider.	3.81	Good
2.	Adiputra Guesthouse consistently provides quality services	3.62	Good
3.	I feel that Adiputra Guesthouse has an advantage over other similar inns.	3.75	Good
4.	I feel loyal to Adiputra Guesthouse because of its good reputation.	3.56	Good
5.	I believe Adiputra Guesthouse deserves an award from the lodging industry.	4.04	Good
	Total	**3.76**	Good

Based on the data in Table 7, respondents' overall assessment of Adiputra Guesthouse's reputation falls into the "good" category, with an average score of 3.76. This indicates a generally positive perception of the guesthouse's image and credibility. The highest score was recorded in the fifth statement (4.04), reflecting strong customer appreciation for service quality. The first statement also scored high at 3.81, while the lowest score was found in the fourth statement, suggesting that although the guesthouse is seen as reputable, long-term emotional attachment and customer loyalty are not yet fully established. These findings indicate that Adiputra Guesthouse has a positive reputation among customers. However, reputation management could be further enhanced through stronger brand communication, consistent service delivery, and efforts to build loyalty via personalized approaches and retention programs.

Tangibles

Table 8. Tangibles

No	Questions	Average	Category
1	Services are delivered as promised.	4.20	Good
2	Employees demonstrate reliability in resolving issues.	3.90	Good
3	Reservation and check-in went smoothly as scheduled	4.16	Good
	Total	**4.09**	**Good**

Based on the data in Table 8, the service quality of Adiputra Guesthouse in the tangibles dimension received an average score of 3.90, placing it in the "good" category. This suggests that customers generally have a positive perception of the guesthouse's physical and visual aspects. The highest score was recorded in the second statement (3.99), followed by the third (3.90) and the first (3.81). All indicators consistently reflect positive perceptions regarding cleanliness, staff appearance, and in-room facilities. These results indicate that Adiputra Guesthouse has effectively managed its tangible aspects. Well-maintained facilities not only enhance guest comfort but also contribute to a positive brand image and reputation, which in turn supports favorable Word of Mouth (WoM).

Reliability

Table 9. Reliability

No	Questions	Average	Category
1	The physical facilities of the Guesthouse are attractive and clean.	4.20	Good
2	Tools and equipment in the rooms are in good condition.	3.90	Good
3	The staff's appearance is neat and professional.	4.16	Good
	Total	**4.09**	**Good**

Based on the data in Table 9, the reliability dimension of Adiputra Guesthouse's service received an overall average score of 4.09, categorized as good. This indicates that most customers believe the service met their initial expectations and commitments. The highest score, 4.20, was

recorded in the first statement, reflecting that guests generally found their stay aligned with prior information or promised standards. The third statement scored 4.16, and the second 3.90, both within the good category. These findings suggest that reliability is a key strength of Adiputra Guesthouse's service. Observations during the internship also showed that staff consistently met guest requests and followed service procedures. However, there is room for improvement in terms of faster and more solution-oriented responses to customer issues to further enhance service quality.

Responsiveness

Table 10. Responsiveness

No.	Questions	Average	Category
1.	Staff are quick to respond to guest requests or complaints.	3,74	Good
2.	Employees are always ready to help at all times.	3,50	Good
3.	Additional guest requests are handled quickly and efficiently.	4,00	Good
Total		**3,74**	**Good**

Based on the data in Table 10, the responsiveness dimension received an overall average score of 3.74, falling into the good category. This indicates that, in general, customers view Adiputra Guesthouse staff as fairly responsive to their needs and requests. The highest score, 4.00, was on the third statement, followed by 3.74 on the first, and 3.50 on the second all categorized as good, though with varying degrees. Overall, these results suggest that Adiputra Guesthouse has established a reasonably responsive service system. However, there is still room for improvement, particularly in proactively anticipating guest needs in real-time and ensuring more comprehensive responsiveness.

Assurance

Table 11. Assurance

No.	Questions	Average	Category
1.	Employees are polite and friendly.	3.28	Fair
2.	Staff demonstrated sufficient knowledge of the service.	3.85	Good
3.	I felt safe when I was in the property area.	4.12	Good
	Total	**3.75**	**Good**

Based on the data in Table 4.11, respondent's assessment of the assurance dimension yielded an average score of 3.75, which falls into the good category. This indicates that Adiputra Guesthouse is generally perceived as providing a sense of safety and confidence to its guests. The highest scores were on the third statement (4.12) and the second statement (3.85), both categorized as good. The lowest score was on the first statement (3.28), categorized as fair. These findings suggest that while customers trust the staff's competence, there is still room to improve the consistency of courteous and friendly service. Observations during the internship showed mostly positive staff-guest interactions, though not all staff demonstrated optimal service behavior consistently. Enhancing staff soft skills and interpersonal communication through regular training is recommended to further strengthen the assurance dimension.

Empathy

Table 12. Empathy

No.	Questions	Average	Category
1.	Employees give me personalized attention.	3.69	Good
2.	Employees understand my unique needs.	3.44	Good
3.	Service hours suit my needs.	4.03	Good
	Total	**3.72**	**Good**

Based on the data in Table 12, the empathy dimension of Adiputra Guesthouse services received an overall average score of 3.72, classified as good. This indicates that guests generally perceive the staff as attentive and understanding of individual needs. The highest score (4.03) was

for the third statement, reflecting guest satisfaction with flexible service timing. The first and second statements scored 3.69 and 3.44, respectively both within the good category, though at mid-range levels. These results suggest that the empathy aspect is fairly evident, particularly in accommodating guest schedules. However, personal attention and understanding of specific guest needs could be further improved. Based on the author's internship experience, staff-guest interactions were polite and open, but not all staff demonstrated a personalized approach. Strengthening interpersonal communication and adopting a more human-centered service strategy may enhance this dimension, making guests feel more individually valued rather than treated as general service users.

Overall Respondent Rating Summary

Based on the summary of questionnaire results, the average score calculation serves as a reference for further analysis. As shown in Table 4.13, the overall perception of respondents regarding all service indicators at Adiputra Guesthouse falls into the "good" category, with an average score of 3.82. This reflects a generally positive evaluation of both service quality and communication strategies.

Table 12. Overall Average of Indicators

No.	Indicator	Average	Category
1.	Word of Mouth	3.76	Good
2.	Company Reputation	3.76	Good
3.	Tangibles	3.90	Good
4.	Reliability	4.09	Good
5.	Responsiveness	3.74	Good
6.	Assurance	3.75	Good
7.	Empathy	3.72	Good
	Total	**3.82**	Good

The Reliability dimension scored the highest at 4.09, indicating that guests view the guesthouse as dependable, particularly in fulfilling service promises and managing the booking process. Tangibles received a score of 3.90, highlighting satisfaction with physical facilities, cleanliness, and staff appearance.

Word of Mouth (WoM) and Corporate Reputation both scored 3.76, showing that guests are reasonably inclined to recommend the guesthouse and view its brand image positively. Assurance and Responsiveness were rated at 3.75 and 3.74, suggesting that while guests feel safe and well-responded to, improvements in consistent service behavior and proactive communication remain necessary.

The Empathy dimension received the lowest score at 3.72, still within the "good" range, but signaling a need for more personalized attention and deeper understanding of individual guest needs. Overall, these findings suggest that Adiputra Guesthouse has built a solid reputation

and service quality. However, enhancing personalized service, strengthening communication, and improving digital review management are key strategies for increasing competitiveness in the hospitality sector.

Discussion

Word of Mouth (WoM) is a non-conventional yet highly effective marketing strategy in the hospitality industry due to its organic nature and high consumer trust. Based on the analysis in Table 4.6, the average WoM score falls into the "good" category, indicating that most guests are inclined to recommend Adiputra Guesthouse through direct conversation or digital reviews. This aligns with Hidayat & Ariffin (2023), who define WoM through three elements: sharing positive experiences, making recommendations, and encouraging others to use the same service. However, one indicator scored only "fair," suggesting that not all respondents actively share their experiences. This presents an opportunity for Adiputra Guesthouse to implement structured WoM strategies, such as encouraging online reviews (e-WoM) via OTA platforms and social media.

According to Fakhrudin et al. (2021), WoM is most effective when customers have highly satisfying and emotionally engaging experiences. This is reinforced by positive perceptions of service quality, particularly in reliability and tangibles, which support customer comfort and meet expectations. This supports Joesyiana's (2018) view that customer satisfaction is a key driver of WoM. Therefore, the current WoM strategy at Adiputra Guesthouse is performing well but should be enhanced through more systematic customer experience management. Regarding corporate reputation as the dependent variable, the findings are also positive. Respondents perceive the guesthouse as reliable and consistent, with competitive advantages over other accommodations. The highest-rated indicator was the belief that Adiputra Guesthouse deserves industry recognition, reflecting strong customer expectations and an emerging professional image.

However, customer loyalty, as a long-term component of reputation, scored lower, indicating a need to strengthen emotional connection with guests. According to Oktavianus et al. (2022), reputation is built through three main indicators: industry recognition, customer trust and loyalty, and service performance. The study shows that while the first two are relatively strong, customer loyalty needs improvement. This can be addressed by sustaining WoM strategies and implementing retention programs such as loyalty rewards or review-based incentives on OTA platforms. In conclusion, Word of Mouth plays a vital role in shaping the reputation of Adiputra Guesthouse. Positive customer perceptions especially regarding reliability and comfort drive informal promotion. Although the current reputation is favorable, long-term strategies are needed to build stronger customer loyalty and engagement, which are essential for maintaining competitiveness in the hospitality industry.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Word of Mouth (WoM) marketing strategy and its influence on the reputation of Adiputra Guesthouse, with service quality as a supporting variable. Based on data from 103 respondents, the WoM strategy showed a good performance with an average score of 3.76, indicating that most customers were inclined to recommend the guesthouse, although spontaneous sharing of positive experiences remains moderate. Reputation also scored 3.76, suggesting that the guesthouse is viewed as credible and reliable, yet emotional loyalty remains low, highlighting the need for stronger retention strategies. Service quality played a key role, with the highest scores in reliability (4.09) and tangibles (3.90), reflecting the importance of consistent service and well-maintained facilities. However, empathy and assurance dimensions require improvement in personal approach and hospitality. Overall, the findings confirm that WoM significantly shapes the guesthouse's reputation, with positive and consistent service experiences serving as the core driver for informal customer-driven promotion.

SUGGESTION

Based on the conclusions, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the marketing strategy and reputation management of Adiputra Guesthouse: (1) Strengthen the Word of Mouth (WoM) strategy by encouraging digital reviews through platforms like OTA, social media, or Google Reviews, possibly supported by incentives such as birthday discounts or review-based vouchers; (2) Foster customer loyalty by implementing retention programs such as membership, point systems, or personalized communication to build stronger emotional connections; (3) Improve interpersonal service quality through soft skills training focused on communication, empathy, and guest needs, especially in areas like assurance and empathy; (4) Strategically utilize digital platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and OTA not just for promotion but as key channels to build a consistent and credible brand image; and (5) Future researchers are encouraged to explore management perspectives or conduct longitudinal studies to observe changes in customer perception over time. These suggestions aim to help Adiputra Guesthouse maintain and strengthen its reputation in an increasingly competitive hospitality industry.

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