

The Strategy Involves Using An Online Travel Agent To Increase Hotel Product Sales (Marketing Mix Perspective)

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Abstract

The growth of Indonesian tourism has had various positive impacts, such as being able to stimulate the growth of its supporting industries. As a supporting instrument, the presence of hotels is important for tourism. Good strategies are necessary to achieve business sustainability. Companies can achieve their goals by implementing a marketing mix. The marketing mix consists of several instruments, such as product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence (7P). Preparing and adopting technology can also help create an ecosystem. You can use digital tools such as a website, social media, a marketplace, or an online travel agent (OTA). We conducted this research to assess the efforts of front desk agents (FDAs) in boosting hotel product sales to OTAs from a marketing mix perspective. This research employed a qualitative descriptive research design and a case study approach. The division (FDA) of the Crystal Lotus Hotel Yogyakarta serves as the research object. We selected two FDA staff members and one e-commerce staff member as informants. We combine interview activities with marketing mix instruments to achieve research objectives. We used the Miles Huberman method and triangulation in the data analysis and validation stages. FDA staff has implemented the 7P marketing mix, according to the research results. Using OTA is a way to provide a balance between online and offline marketing. In response to these developments, management must prioritize these instruments as an integral part of their evaluation strategy.

Keywords: Business; Marketing Mix; Sustainability; Tourism; Travel Agent

A. INTRODUCTION

Tourism in Indonesia is experiencing encouraging growth (Buchori et al., 2023; Priatmoko et al., 2021; Sulisty et al., 2022). Domestic tourists' increasing visits reflect this condition (Hermawan et al., 2023; Sulisty et al., 2024). In December 2023, 1,144,542 foreign tourists passed through all arrival gates (BPS, 2024; Kuswaharja, 2023). Furthermore, this information makes tourism a viable sector, increasing the economy and public empowerment efforts (Andriani et al., 2021; Salindri et al., 2022). In light of this situation, we must broaden the development of tourism to ensure its benefits reach a wider audience. Another impact of the tourism sector is that it is able to stimulate the growth of tourism-supporting industries (Aamir & Atsan, 2020; Abd-Elaty et al., 2022). Some industries that emerged as a result of tourism include accommodation services, restaurants, travel agencies, money changers, transportation, culinary businesses, and other industries (Mahanani & Sulisty, 2023; Sulisty et al., 2023).

Several supporting industries emerged and developed as tourism conditions became increasingly strong and sustainable. The presence of hotels serves as a crucial factor in supporting tourism. This industry offers a range of services such as accommodations, facilities, promotion, planning, journeys, transportation, and other engaging programs (Aboramadan & Karatepe, 2021). Hotels can create opportunities for investment and business tourism. The products offered represent management's efforts to improve service quality and satisfaction in the minds of

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tourists (guests). Given these opportunities, it would be appropriate for the accommodation business to continue growing. Areas synonymous with tourism will demonstrate the availability of accommodation services. The central statistics agency's data reveals the evolution of existing hotels

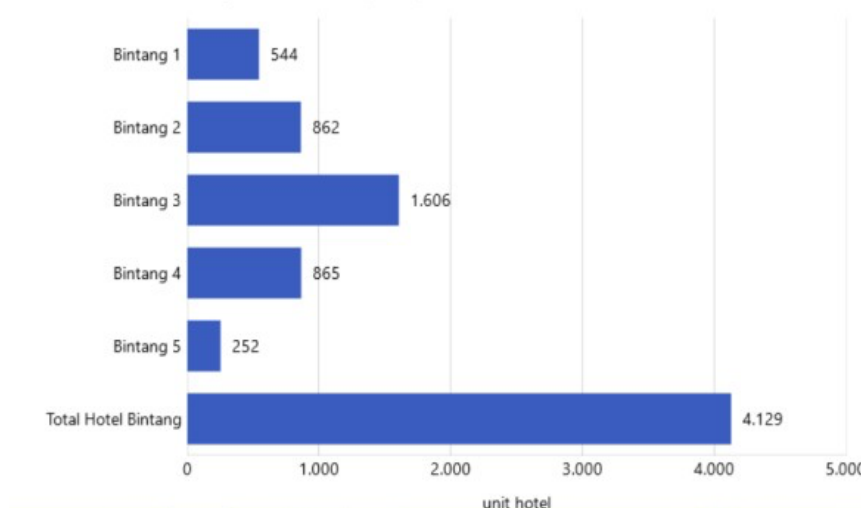


Figure 1. Data Reveals the Evolution of Existing Hotels

Source: Central Statistics Agency (2023)

The development and growth of hotels will trigger competitive competition (Méatchi & Camus, 2020). Managers need to re-arrange innovation strategies periodically. Management's ability to implement the strategies used will create sustainable management (Druzhynina et al., 2020; Karmanov et al., 2020; Rogers, 1983). Referring to the concept of innovation, management needs to bring innovation all the time to the business it runs. The slightest positive change that occurs is the implementation of the concept of innovation (Dearing, 2009; Rogers, 1983). The changes made were not only on a broad scale but also carried out gradually. All aspects of management must focus on the implemented strategy. As technology develops, innovation will touch on this (Druzhynina et al., 2020). Systematic and unconventional management is an opportunity to gain (Karmanov et al., 2020).

One department that often comes into contact with guests is the front office. This department needs to adopt technology when providing services. This department serves as the initial and final point of contact for guests. It is incorrect to assume that this department's primary responsibility is to cater to guests' service room needs (Kalargyrou et al., 2023). The front desk agent (FDA) is the most developed and dynamic branch of duties within the front office department. Good equipment and skills are necessary to support the staff in this division. In sustainable management efforts, possessing the ability to utilize technology is crucial. In an effort to create a sustainable business, organizations need to develop a charitable strategy. Management should prioritize the implementation of the marketing strategy. The marketing mix can serve as a strategic tool. One of the strategic tools for achieving prepared organizational goals is the marketing mix (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018b; Sulistyio, 2021; Teo et al., 2019). The marketing mix consists of several instruments, such as product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. The use of this strategy will continue as long as the business is still running.

Various existing developments inform the process of adjusting this strategy (Mintz & Currim, 2015). (Bell & Morse, 2008) determined that a company's ability to create sustainability

management also depends on its readiness and adoption of existing technology. The use of technology and the selection of appropriate digital tools can encourage the dissemination of information and increase the number of guest arrivals (Druzhynina et al., 2020). There are a number of ways to access digital marketing, which facilitates marketing activities, among them websites, blogs, social media, market places, or online travel agents. This attractive development offers a diverse range of market places for your use. Market places that are synonymous with the hotel industry include: Traveloka, Tiket.com, Airy Rooms, Agoda, PegiPegi, JD.ID, Zenrooms, Partner Global Holiday, Antavaya, Go Indonesia, and others. The market place also serves as a platform that facilitates the booking process for market visitors.

Study It is crucial to understand the marketing strategies used by front desk agents and online travel agents to boost occupancy in the hotel industry. Through a comprehensive analysis of the marketing mix, this research will yield implementation findings that can serve as a valuable reference for digital-based strategies. Several studies interpret marketing strategy as a series of goals, targets, and forms of policy when looking at market needs (Fernandez & Debnath, 2014). Other research elucidates the marketing strategy and the innovations that can effectively sell products (Chen et al., 2020). The 7P marketing mix instrument, which includes products, price, places, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence, can facilitate the development and exploration of these steps. Mix marketing is a tactically controlled group tool that the company combines to produce the desired response in the market (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018b)). Mix marketing comprises elements that the company can implement to shape consumer demand for its products. The next development examines how organizations appropriately prioritize their planning strategies. However, it's crucial to balance the planning process strategy with field reality and conduct evaluations (Harrigan et al., 2017). Marketing and sales play a pivotal role for the organization in navigating the competitive landscape. The company must consistently incorporate a variety of controllable instruments into its marketing strategies.

The company took this step in an effort to maintain positive relations with service recipients. According to (Alsheyab et al., 2023) a hotel is a type of business accommodation that provides lodging facilities to the public or general public. This business offers several additional services, including food and drink, a service attendant's room, and other services that meet the required standards. Other literature defines hotels as commercially managed buildings that provide lodging facilities to the general public (Aboul-Dahab & Saied, 2021). On-line According to the Travel Agent Ministry Tourist and Economy Creative Indonesia, an online user is someone who is connected to a larger network or system (Anuvareepong, 2017). Online booking refers to the process of making a reservation for a product or service through various media platforms. One type of travel agent, known as an online travel agent (OTA), conducts all their activities online (Buckley & Cooper, 2021). Types of travel agents This service provides online reservations, making it easier for guests to activate bookings.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopted a qualitative descriptive research design, utilizing a case study approach. The goal of this research is to understand how front desk agents implement strategies for managing marketing activities through online travel agents (Alsheyab et al., 2023).). This research builds a relationship between researchers and the informants used. The object of this research is the front desk agent (FDA) division at the Crystal Lotus Hotel Yogyakarta. We selected two FDA employees and one e-commerce staff as respondents. We used a combination of interview activities and marketing mix instruments to achieve the research objectives. The

research primarily focuses on how FDA staff implements management in the online travel agent area. The data analysis and validation stages employ the Miles Huberman method and validation techniques use triangulation technique (Abdullahi et al., 2020; Halcomb & Andrew, 2005; Milesandhuberman1994, n.d.).

C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The following table more clearly presents the implementation of the marketing mix at online travel agents, based on the results of the research interviews conducted.

Table 1. Marketing Mix Implementation in Online Management
 of FDA Staff

No	Marketing Mix Instrument	Implementation	
		Already	Not yet
1	<i>Product</i>	√	-
2	<i>Price</i>	√	-
3	<i>Place</i>	√	-
4	<i>Promotion</i>	√	-
5	<i>People</i>	√	-
6	<i>Process</i>	√	-
7	<i>Physical Evidence</i>	√	-

Source: data processed 2024

Product

We interpret this instrument as anything that the market can offer to meet needs (Fernandes & Solimun, 2018; Kotler & Armstrong, 2018b). In the current competitive era of the hotel industry, managers need to pay attention to the quality of the products offered (Stoyanov, 2021). Hotel Crystal Lotus, one of the star hotels in Yogyakarta, tries to offer the best products. The FDA staff strives to provide a variety of offers, including rooms, food, and other amenities, to online travel agents. The following interview illustrates this scenario:

We create a good display design so that it attracts potential guests who see the mockup place (Ecom).

We notify you if the room and property receive routine maintenance. Furthermore, we communicate this through market-place offers (FDA1).

Our market offers hotel products that are ready for guests to enjoy (FDA 2).

In providing information to guests, FDA staff must consider various needs. We provide product information to meet guest needs (Cruz-Milan, 2021). The interview results reveal that the product offerings on the online travel agent portal aim to cater to the needs of our guests. We offer products based on our guests' needs. These conditions also provide choices for hotel guests.

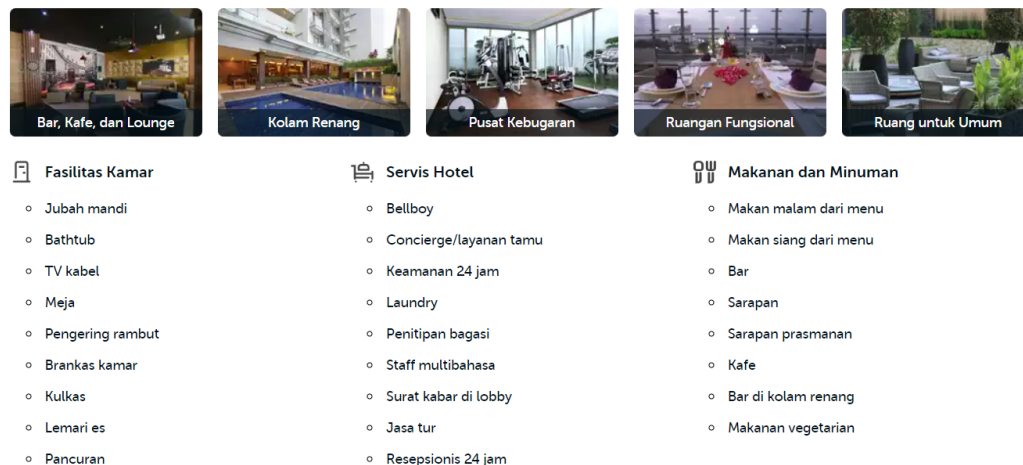


Figure 2. Hotels Product
 Source: traveloka.com

Price

Price is the only instrument in the marketing mix that produces potential profits directly (Fernandes & Solimun, 2018; Lahtinen et al., 2020). Given the significance of this instrument, it requires meticulous preparation. Setting a price too high could lead to market loss, while offering a price too low could result in profit loss.

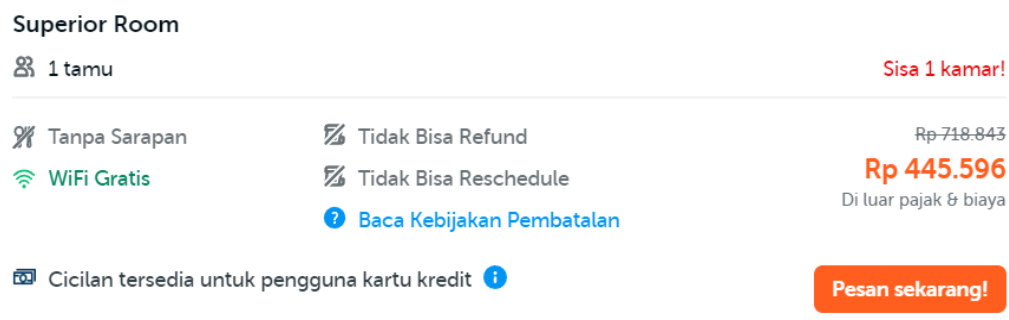


Figure 3. Price of Hotels product
 Source: Traveloka.com

We obtained the following information based on the interview results:

The price determination process that we offer at OTA is the result of an analysis that takes into account the market situation and occupancy rate conditions (ECOM).

Occupancy is one of our considerations when providing price information to guests. The price offered increases as the number of rooms fills (FDA 1).

The prices we offer via OTA are very flexible, varied, and subject to change. Occupancy conditions are one consideration. We also provide offline promotions to guests who come in person. We believe the prices we offer are in accordance with the facilities we provide (FDA 2).

Given the significance of the price offered, management must consider various factors. People interpret price as the amount of money they spend on a product (Fernandes &

Solimun, 2018; Kotler & Armstrong, 2018a). The results of the interview explain that the price offers given on the OTA portal have taken many factors into consideration. Management, through FDA staff, tries to design price offers that are competitive and affordable for hotel guests.

Place (Marketing Channel)

One of the qualities of a successful business is having the ability to reach the target market. On the other hand, the existing market also makes it easier to reach the product (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018b). Marketing strategies answer the challenges of realizing both. The hotel business, as an industry that supports tourism, must also take this important factor into account. Many factors need to be considered when designing the channels (Jobber & Shipley, 2012). Channels are not limited to conventional or offline methods. Technological developments mean that business managers need to use technological tools that can support performance. The interview results revealed several key findings:

This hotel is in a fairly strategic location, and the distance to the airport is still considered normal. To reach a wider target, we use several digital portals or market places, such as IG, WEB, Trevelola, and others (ECOM).

Our hotel is strategically located in the "central" area of night tourism. We also use several market places and social media for marketing activities (FDA1).

Despite not being situated in the heart of Jogja city, the Crystal Lotus occupies a strategic location. This is due to its proximity to numerous businesses and entertainment venues. This hotel can also be easily accessed through social media or other digital tools (FDA 2)

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Figure 4. Market Place Strategy

Source: google.com

Choosing a successful marketing channel will provide many benefits for management (Lahtinen et al., 2020). However, managers also need to consider consumer interests. Managers must also own the digital tools used by consumers. These conditions aim to streamline the information transmission process. Based on the interview results, Crystal Lotus management has successfully implemented the instruments in the marketing mix strategy.

Promotion

Another equally important tool is promotional activity. This instrument is a business's ability to inform and persuade the target market (Sulistyo, 2021; Sulistyo et al., 2024). Businesses will present various attractive offers to consumers. A business's ability to provide promotional activities will have a positive impact on business continuity. Interviews conducted with FDA staff provided the following information:

Crystal Lotus regularly participates in campaigns through an online travel agent to raise hotel exposure. Apart from that, the hotel also holds regular promotions every month for walk-in guests. (ECOM).

We regularly upload various information through various promotional media, starting with photos, flyers, videos, and other interesting information and offers (FDA1).

We use the hotel's internal social media alone, displaying and offering various promotions or events held at the hotel (FDA 2).

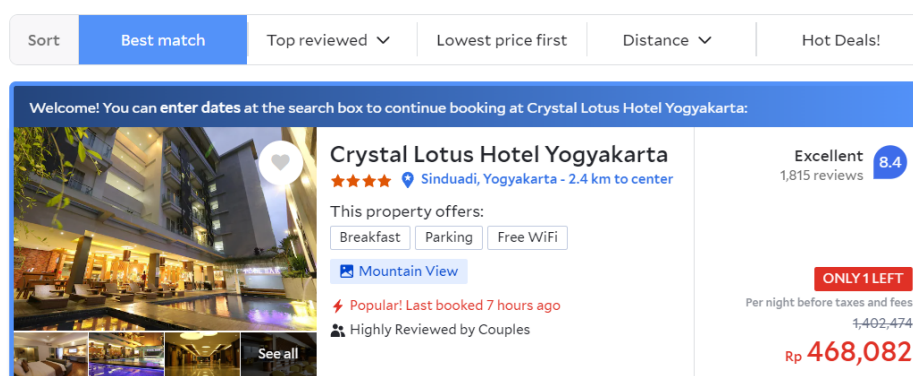


Figure 5. Online Promotion

Source: agoda.com

We carry out promotional activities to pique the interest of target consumers, encouraging them to take further action (buy, visit, choose, etc.). Attractive promotions can influence the psychology of the target market. Promotional activities can be in the form of: 1) word-of-mouth marketing; 2) sales promotion; 3) personal selling; 4) events; 5) public relations; 6) publication of activities; 7) direct sales; 8) interactive marketing; and 9) advertising (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018b; Lahtinen et al., 2020). The interview results indicate that companies have implemented promotional activities to pique consumer interest. One attractive method is to use OTA as a promotional channel. The various pieces of information provided represent the implementation of the offered strategy.

People (human resources)

The existence of human resources in organizational management is an important factor in creating sustainability (Asmelash & Kumar, 2020; Bell & Morse, 2008). Competence, skills, and personal qualities are inherent in the workforce. As service providers, human resources need to have the ability to build relationships with guests, colleagues, and other parties. The presence of workers is also required to be able to solve consumer problems that arise. Furthermore, management must establish an operational flow and path that form the

foundation for the services offered. The interviews conducted yielded the following information:

We always train our staff to provide the best services for visitors. We took this step in an effort to focus on the needs of our guests (ECOM).

Staff in this division are required to always be fast, responsive, alert, and responsive when visitors need help (FDA 1).

We have to be friendly, smiling, responsive, and not long-winded in servicing visitors. Both online and offline, we must implement these standards (FDA 2).

Feny Pamungkas Ningrum

 crystal lotus hotel yogyakarta

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Figure 6. Human Resource Profile

Source: linkedIn.com

It is crucial for businesses to have the ability to provide attention and policies that adhere to standards. Services-related businesses prioritize the development of competent human resources. The results of the interview confirm that the human resources at Crystal Lotus understand how to provide the best service to guests. Periodically, hotel management also prioritizes skill improvement through the training provided.

Process

We interpret this instrument as a description, flow, or standard that a business follows for providing services. This effort stems from management's pursuit of optimal outcomes (Asmelash & Kumar, 2020; Bell & Morse, 2008). All parties must follow this process as a guide. The internal organization must adhere to the process as a standard in order to achieve organizational goals. The interview results shed light on several key points:

Our service standard is to deliver service to guests as well as possible and to be clear in giving information. We strengthen the information on the OTA portal, which is unclear, by providing data directly (Ecom).

When providing services, we begin by extending a warm smile and implementing the SOUP greeting and grooming protocol. We implement these stages because the front office department assumes a guard-leading role and serves as a reflection of the hotel.

The check-in and check-out process should be conducted in stages, with the FDA requiring the ability to provide the 3S (smile, who, regards) to visitors regardless of the circumstances. This step will leave a lasting impression on the visitor and create a memorable experience for them, according to FDA 2.

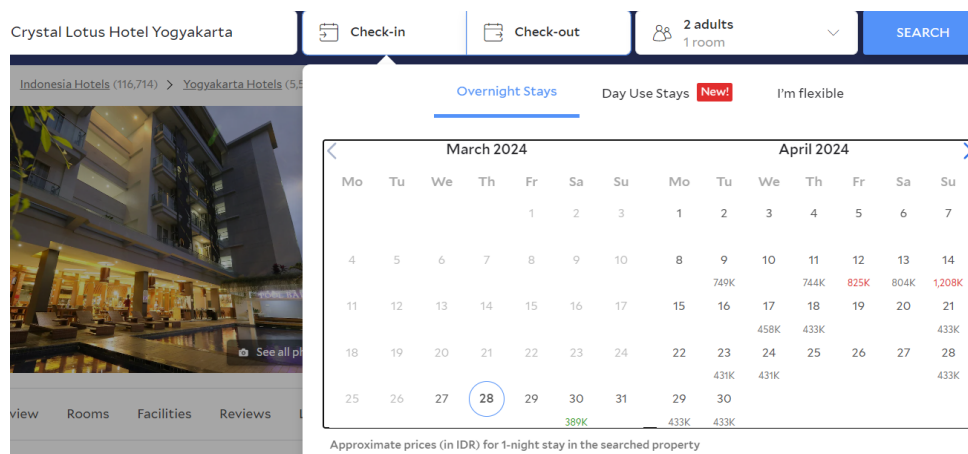


Figure 7. Standard Operational Procedure of Booking
 Source: agoda.com

Process instruments are essential for the creation and delivery of value (Lahtinen et al., 2020). The required standards become a guide for human resources to follow. The organization prepares the process to implement the strategy. The results of the interview confirm that the Crystal Lotus hotel has prepared and implemented its process standards. Organizational capabilities and developing and implementing processes will impact the sustainability of organizational.

Physical Evidence

Real-world proof of the various offers is required. The promise of product-consumer problem-solving capabilities drives business (Pantano et al., 2019; Salama et al., 2022). The business must present its various achievements as evidence. As a service business, management needs to pay attention to the ability to provide evidence. On the other hand, providing potential consumers with evidence will boost their confidence in the product they will use. The interviews revealed the following information:

We must present a range of verified offers through OTA. For example, amenities in each room are complete and guaranteed to meet the needs of staying guests (ECOM).

Maintenance If a hotel wishes to develop, it must customize its physical form and follow suit with adequate facilities. We convey this information directly or via the OTA instrument (FDA1).

We give the hotel an appealing appearance. We design the hotel with a semi-open concept to provide guests with a fresh and airy atmosphere during their stay. We also equip our hotel with bar facilities, a swimming pool, and a gym. Visitors can access these amenities to enhance their stay at the hotel. This. Although the draft is open to para staff already trained, be responsible and guard areas each to keep it clean and comfortable for guests. We also convey various things that we display physically via uploads on OTA (FDA2).

“Hotel strategies di Jalan Magelang”

Lokasi hotel dipinggir jalan raya magelang, dekat dengan tempat makan dan tempat oleh2. Kami tiba terlalu pagi di yogya sehingga kami menitipkan koper di awal sebelum check in kepada receptionist. Kami disambut dengan sangat ramah, dan saat check in prosesnya pun cepat. Menu sarapan cukup variatif dan enak. Seluruh staff dari FO, resto, housekeeping dan petugas kolam renang sangat helpful. Kondisi kamar bersih dan nyaman, kami diberikan kamar dgn connecting door sesuai request awal, karena membawa lansia dan anak2

Diulas pada 30 April 2023

Figure 8. Guest Comment

Source: tripadvisor

As a service standard, providing guarantees and proofs is mandatory (Abodohoui et al., 2020; Adams et al., 2019). We need to further validate the promises we make to consumers, whether directly or via OTA. In its development, testimonials given by guests can also strengthen this instrument. Based on interviews, the hotel has proven its promises and offers. This step serves as evidence that the management has taken action. A marketing mix instrument serves as a valuable tool and guide for organizations to achieve their objectives. The business will continue to use these instruments for as long as it operates. Organizational management can focus on creating sustainability by implementing this instrument as a strategy.

D. CONCLUSION

Management's primary responsibility is to implement sustainable business management. To create hotel guest satisfaction, it is crucial to make the right strategic choices. Using marketing mix instruments is one way to implement a marketing strategy. The FDA staff at the Crystal Lotus hotel has implemented the 7P marketing mix concept, which includes existing instruments such as product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence, based on the results of the analysis. The FDA staff at Crystal Lotus hotel uses OTA as one of the channels to maintain a balance between online and offline marketing. Facing ongoing developments, management regularly needs to pay attention to these instruments. The various strategy implementations carried out need to receive validation from service recipients, in this case, hotel guests. We conducted this effort as an evaluation stage for the implemented strategy. Further research can use other methods and concepts that are relevant to business strategy.

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