

Digital Business Strategy in Building Trust Through Consumer Experience in Tourism Service Companies in Bali (Case Study at PT. Global Dewata)

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Article history:

Received July 24, 2026

Revised September 4, 2026

Accepted September 10, 2026

Abstract

Digital transformation has changed the way service companies build relationships with consumers. Digital business strategies are no longer solely focused on marketing but also on creating customer experiences that build trust. This study aims to analyze how digital business strategies are implemented to build customer trust through digital customer experiences at PT Global Dewata, a tour and travel service company in Bali. The study used a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with four informants: the General Manager, Marketing staff, Customer Service staff, and customers, as well as through observation and documentation. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on their involvement and experience with digital business activities, marketing, service, and the use of the company's services. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results show that PT Global Dewata has implemented an integrated digital business strategy through the company website, social media, Google Ads, Email Blasts, and WhatsApp Blasts. This strategy shapes the digital customer experience through five main aspects: ease of access to information, responsive communication, professionalism of service, ease of transactions, and consistency of service. Positive experiences formed through the interaction between digital technology and quality human service contribute to the formation of consumer trust. This study confirms that Digital Customer Experience acts as a bridging mechanism between Digital Business Strategy and Consumer Trust. These findings indicate that the success of digital business strategies in tour and travel service companies is determined not only by the utilization of digital platforms, but also by the company's ability to integrate technology with consistent communication and service quality. This research is limited to a case study of one company with a limited number of informants, so the findings are contextual and not intended to be statistically generalized.

Keywords:

Digital Business Strategy; Digital Customer Experience; Consumer Trust; Digital Marketing; Tour and Travel.

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of digital technology has transformed the way companies conduct business and interact with consumers. In the tourism industry, this shift is evident in the increasing number of stages of the consumer journey taking place through digital media, from seeking information and communicating with service providers, making reservations and payments, to providing reviews after using a service. This situation makes

digital technology not only a promotional tool but also part of the process of delivering value and service to consumers.

The growth of internet usage in Indonesia also reinforces this trend. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that 72.78% of Indonesia's population had internet access in 2024, up from 69.21% in 2023. The 2024 Indonesian Internet Penetration Survey from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) also recorded national internet penetration at 79.5%, or approximately 221.56 million users. In Bali, the internet penetration rate reached 85.47%, higher than the national figure (APJII, 2024; Databoks, 2024). This high level of connectivity demonstrates the increasingly important role digital channels play for tourism companies, including in reaching and serving consumers.

For tour and travel companies, the presence of digital channels not only determines the breadth of service information dissemination but also influences the consumer experience during interactions with the company. Easily accessible information, fast and responsive communication, a simple booking process, secure transactions, and consistent service can shape consumer perceptions of a company's quality. Therefore, the use of digital technology needs to be combined with service quality so that interactions through digital media result in positive experiences and support the development of consumer trust.

Numerous previous studies have discussed the role of digital technology in enhancing competitiveness, marketing, communication, and service in the tourism sector. Studies on consumer experience also frequently link it to satisfaction, loyalty, and intention to reuse a service. Meanwhile, research on consumer trust generally places service quality, information quality, website quality, or system quality as factors that play a role in shaping trust. These findings indicate that digital business strategy, consumer experience, and trust are interrelated aspects of a company's relationship with its customers.

Despite extensive research, these three aspects are often discussed separately. Digital business strategy is more often understood in terms of improving business performance or marketing effectiveness, while consumer experience is often positioned in relation to satisfaction and loyalty. Studies on consumer trust also often highlight service quality or digital technology as factors that shape trust. This situation leaves room for understanding how digital business strategy translates into consumer experience and subsequently contributes to the formation of trust, particularly in tour and travel service companies.

This gap is also evident in the research context. Studies on digital business strategy have been mostly conducted in the e-commerce, banking, and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sectors, with approaches that tend to examine the relationships between variables quantitatively. Meanwhile, research that describes the implementation of digital business strategy in tour and travel service companies using a qualitative approach is still relatively limited. Yet, the characteristics of the tourism business are closely related to the processes of interaction, communication, service, and customer experience. Therefore, understanding these processes is crucial to explaining how digital strategy works in a service context that involves direct interaction between the company and customers.

PT Global Dewata is a tour and travel service company in Bali that has utilized various digital channels in its marketing activities and customer service. The platforms used include websites, social media, Google Ads, email blasts, and WhatsApp blasts. The use of these various channels provides a relevant context for examining how digital business strategies are implemented in practice, how consumer experiences are shaped through various interaction points, and how these experiences contribute to consumer trust.

Based on this gap, this study offers a perspective that positions Digital Customer Experience as a bridging mechanism between Digital Business Strategy and Consumer Trust. The research focuses not only on the existence or use of digital platforms, but also on the processes that occur after the strategy is implemented, namely how consumers experience ease of access to information, responsive communication, professional service, ease of transactions, and consistency of service. These five aspects are used to understand how digital strategies translate into consumer experiences that then contribute to the formation of trust.

With this perspective, this research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between digital business strategy, digital consumer experience, and consumer trust in the context of tour and travel service companies. Academically, this research contributes by expanding the discussion of digital business strategy beyond simply the use of technology and marketing activities to the process of creating customer experiences. Practically, the research findings can provide input for tourism service companies in designing digital strategies that integrate technology, communication, service, and customer feedback evaluation.

This research aims to analyze how digital business strategy is implemented at PT Global Dewata and how this implementation shapes the digital consumer experience that contributes to consumer trust.

1.1. Digital Business Strategy

Digital Business Strategy can be understood as a company's strategic approach to utilizing digital technology as part of its business processes and creating value for customers. Therefore, digital strategy is not limited to the use of online media for promotional activities, but also encompasses how this technology supports business processes and the company's relationships with customers.

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) explain that digital strategy encompasses the use of digital technology in marketing activities and customer relationship management. This perspective suggests that digital media

should be positioned as part of a company's strategy, not simply as an additional communication channel. Consistent with this, Verhoef et al. (2021) emphasize that digital transformation requires integration between technology, organizational processes, and customer interactions.

Based on this perspective, Digital Business Strategy in this study is understood as the application of digital technology and channels used by PT Global Dewata to support marketing, information delivery, communication, and customer service. This understanding serves as the basis for examining how the company's digital strategy is translated into customer experiences.

1.2. Digital Customer Experience

Digital Customer Experience relates to the experiences consumers experience when interacting with a company through various digital channels. This experience does not occur at a single point of contact, but rather develops throughout the series of interactions between consumers and the company.

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) define customer experience as the experience formed throughout the customer journey through various touchpoints, both before, during, and after a purchase. This perspective demonstrates that customer experience is a holistic process, so the quality of one interaction cannot be separated from the experience at other stages.

In the context of this research, the concept of Digital Customer Experience is used to understand consumers' experiences when interacting with PT Global Dewata through digital channels and the accompanying service interactions. Based on the research findings, this experience is analyzed through five aspects: ease of access to information, responsive communication, professionalism of service, ease of transactions, and consistency of service.

These five aspects demonstrate that the digital experience in the tour and travel business is not solely determined by the availability of technology. The quality of available information, speed of response, staff ability to provide service, ease of transaction processing, and continuity of service quality are also part of the consumer experience.

1.3. Consumer Trust

Consumer trust refers to consumers' confidence that a company has the ability and credibility to meet expectations and deliver services as promised. Trust is crucial in business relationships because consumers need to have confidence in a company before making decisions, especially when some interactions take place digitally.

Gefen et al. (2003) demonstrated that trust is a crucial element in digital-based business relationships because consumers face uncertainty when engaging or transacting online. Regarding the development of the digital environment in the hospitality and tourism sector, Lee et al. (2025) also demonstrated that digital trust is becoming increasingly relevant as consumer interactions through various digital platforms increase.

In this study, consumer trust is understood as consumer confidence in the credibility of PT Global Dewata, formed through experiences during interactions with the company. This trust is linked not only to the existence of digital platforms but also to the quality of information, responsive communication, professionalism of service, ease of processing, and consistency of service received by consumers.

1.4. Conceptual Relationships

The three concepts in this study are positioned in a relationship that explains the process of building consumer trust. Digital Business Strategy serves as the starting point because it determines how a company utilizes technology and digital channels to interact with consumers.

However, the use of digital technology alone is not sufficient to explain the formation of Consumer Trust. Consumers first experience various forms of interaction through the company's digital channels. These interactions result in experiences that are perceived through the quality of information, communication responses, service, ease of transactions, and service consistency.

These experiences then influence how consumers evaluate the company. When these interactions provide convenience, adequate responses, professional service, and a consistent experience, consumers gain a foundation for building positive perceptions of the company. These perceptions subsequently contribute to the formation of trust.

Based on this relationship, this study positions Digital Customer Experience as a bridging mechanism between Digital Business Strategy and Consumer Trust. This position is used to explain the process by which a company's digital strategy goes beyond technology or marketing activities to translate into consumer experiences that then contribute to the formation of trust. This framework serves as the basis for analyzing PT Global Dewata's situation.

1.5. Conceptual Model

To clarify the relationship between concepts, this study uses the following conceptual model:



Figure 1. Research Conceptual Model

In this model, Digital Business Strategy describes the application of a company's digital technology and channels to support business activities and interactions with consumers. Implementation of this strategy then results in a Digital Customer Experience reflected through five main aspects:

- Ease of information.
- Responsive communication.
- Service professionalism.
- Ease of transactions.
- Service consistency

The experience formed through these five aspects then becomes the foundation for developing Consumer Trust.

Thus, the research conceptual model does not position the relationship between Digital Business Strategy and Consumer Trust as a stand-alone relationship, but rather explains the connecting process through Digital Customer Experience.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply understand the implementation of digital business strategies in relation to building consumer trust through digital customer experiences at PT Global Dewata. This approach was chosen based on the research objective, which focuses on understanding the processes, experiences, and real-world conditions that occur within the company's business practices.

The research was conducted at PT Global Dewata, a tour and travel company in Bali that utilizes a number of digital media platforms for its marketing and customer service activities. The company was selected purposively, considering its suitability for the research focus, particularly in its use of websites, social media, Google Ads, email blasts, and WhatsApp blasts as part of its digital business activities.

The data sources in this study were divided into primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with four informants with varying levels of involvement in the company's activities: the General Manager, a Marketing staff member, a Customer Service staff member, and a customer of PT Global Dewata. Informants were selected purposively, considering each informant's knowledge, experience, and involvement in digital business strategies, marketing activities, services, and experiences using the company's services. Representative perspectives from management, marketing executives, customer service, and consumers were used to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under study.

Secondary data was obtained through documentation related to the company and its digital activities. This documentation included the company profile, official website, social media, digital promotional materials, and other supporting documents relevant to the research objectives.

The data collection process was conducted through interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to obtain information regarding the implementation of digital business strategies as well as experiences and perceptions related to consumer trust. Observations were conducted by observing PT Global Dewata's digital activities, particularly on the company's website and social media, including the forms of interactions with consumers. Meanwhile, documentation was used to complement the information from the interviews and observations and to provide supporting data for the research findings.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). The analysis stages included data reduction, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions.

In the reduction stage, data from interviews, observations, and documentation were selected and grouped based on information related to the research focus. The grouped data were then organized into narratives and tables to help researchers identify patterns and relationships between findings. Next, conclusions were drawn and verified repeatedly by comparing findings obtained throughout the research process.

To ensure the validity of the findings, this study employed source triangulation and technical triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from informants with company documents and information available on PT Global Dewata's digital platforms. Meanwhile, technical triangulation was conducted by comparing interview results with observations and documentation. This process was used to assess the consistency of information from various sources and data collection techniques, thereby enhancing the credibility and consistency of research findings.

Table 1. Characteristics of Informants

No.	Informants	Role	Information Focus
1	General Manager	Management	Digital business strategy and corporate policy
2	Marketing	Marketing executor	Digital marketing and digital platform management
3	Customer Service	Service implementers	Communication and interaction with consumers
4	Consumers	Service users	Digital experience and trust in the company

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Implementation of PT Global Dewata's Digital Business Strategy

The research results show that PT Global Dewata has utilized digital business strategies as part of its marketing activities and customer service. The company's media include its official website, Instagram, Facebook, Google Ads, email blasts, and WhatsApp blasts. The use of these various channels demonstrates that the company's digital media function extends beyond promotional activities to support information delivery, customer communication, and consumer relationship maintenance.

These findings were obtained from interviews with PT Global Dewata management informants, who explained:

"Promotion through websites, Instagram, using Google Ads and Email Blast and WA Blast."

The same informant also explained that digital media has dominated the company's marketing activities, as stated:

"...80% of the means used in marketing use digital media."

The 80% figure represents an estimate from management informants regarding the proportion of digital media use in the company's marketing activities. Therefore, this figure is not treated as a statistical measurement conducted by the researcher, but rather as contextual information illustrating the high level of digital media utilization at PT Global Dewata. Observations and documentation also indicate the use of websites, social media, Google Ads, email blasts, and WhatsApp blasts in the company's digital activities.

In qualitative research, this information is used to illustrate the dominance of digital media in the company's marketing practices. Therefore, the 80% percentage is positioned as empirical information from informants and not as a basis for testing statistical relationships between variables.

Company documentation shows that the official website not only contains information about the company profile but also provides information about services, tour packages, vehicle rentals, and direct communication facilities via WhatsApp. This situation demonstrates that the website has a broader function than simply a promotional medium.

This research finding aligns with the Digital Business Strategy concept proposed by Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), which states that digital technology needs to be integrated into business processes to generate value for customers while supporting company competitiveness. The research findings are also relevant to the views of Verhoef et al. (2021), who emphasized that digital transformation is not only about implementing technology but also about its integration into business processes and customer interactions.

However, the findings of this study place a more specific emphasis on the context of a tour and travel service company. PT Global Dewata's digital business strategy is not solely determined by the number of digital media used, but also by how these various media support each other in providing information and building interactions with customers. This aligns with Dang and Nguyen (2023), who emphasize shared value creation as a crucial part of the digital environment in the tourism and hospitality sector.

The implementation of the digital business strategy is also carried out through regular evaluation. An informant explained:

"Marketing evaluation is carried out every 3 months using SWOT analysis."

This information indicates that the company's digital strategy is not fixed, but rather reviewed periodically. Evaluations are conducted to assess marketing conditions and serve as a basis for determining strategy refinements in line with market developments and customer needs. Therefore, the implementation of a digital business strategy at PT Global Dewata encompasses not only the use of technology but also an evaluation process to maintain the strategy's relevance.

These findings demonstrate that a digital business strategy is the initial step in creating a customer experience. When digital media can provide needed information, facilitate communication, and support the service process, the benefits of a digital strategy are felt not only in marketing but also in the customer experience.

3.2. Shaping the Digital Consumer Experience

The research results show that the implementation of PT Global Dewata's digital business strategy resulted in a digital customer experience shaped by five key aspects: ease of access to information, responsive communication, professional service, ease of transaction processing, and consistency of service. These five aspects emerged from customer interactions across various digital channels as well as direct interactions with the company.

Ease of access to information is one of the experiences that emerges in the initial stages of consumer interaction with the company. Through the website, customers can obtain various information related to the company's services, tour packages, vehicle rentals, company profiles, and other supporting information. One informant stated:

"The company website is comprehensive and detailed, providing insight to customers."

This statement indicates that the existence of a website provides a space for customers to obtain information before making a service choice. With the availability of relatively comprehensive information, consumers can understand the services offered by a company without having to rely entirely on direct communication. The website, in this context, functions as a digital interaction point that helps customers reduce uncertainty before proceeding with the service or transaction process.

The next aspect is responsive communication. The use of WhatsApp allows customers to communicate directly with the company when they need information or services. The existence of this communication channel allows for a more practical and faster question-and-answer process. This finding suggests that the quality of the digital experience depends not only on the availability of technology, but also on how the company responds to customer needs through that technology.

Furthermore, service professionalism is a crucial element in shaping customer perceptions of the company. When asked about factors that contribute to building customer trust, informants stated:

"Professional service."

This statement demonstrates that the use of digital media must be accompanied by good service quality. Technology can be a means of connecting companies with customers, but perceptions of a company's credibility are also influenced by the quality of interactions consumers receive. Therefore, professional service is a key component of the customer's digital experience.

Ease of transactions is also part of the customer experience, shaped through the implementation of digital strategies. Utilizing digital channels allows for more convenient communication regarding service needs. Integration between information media and communication channels helps customers continue the service process according to their needs. In the context of tour and travel service companies, this convenience is crucial because customers require a simple process from information search to service delivery.

In addition to convenience, service consistency is another aspect identified in the research. PT Global Dewata strives to maintain service quality through post-service evaluations. An informant stated:

"Always improve service based on post-service questionnaire results."

This statement demonstrates the company's efforts to utilize customer feedback as evaluation material. Thus, the customer experience is not only considered during the interaction or transaction, but also after the service is completed. Post-service evaluation is one-way companies obtain input to maintain and improve service quality.

The findings of this study support the Digital Customer Experience concept of Lemon and Verhoef (2016), which views customer experience as the result of various interactions at touchpoints throughout the customer journey. In the context of PT Global Dewata, these touchpoints are not limited to websites or digital communication media, but also include the quality of service provided by the company's human resources.

This finding also aligns with Kim and So (2022) regarding the importance of customer experience in the hospitality and tourism sector, as well as Sharafuddin et al. (2024), who demonstrated the relevance of digital marketing to tourist experience and satisfaction.

Nevertheless, this study emphasizes the relationship between digital experience and consumer trust. The digital experience in tour and travel companies does not stop at creating convenience or satisfaction; it can be a process that helps build consumer trust in the company. In other words, the benefits of a digital strategy are even stronger when the technology is combined with professional and consistent communication and service.

Based on these findings, the Digital Customer Experience at PT Global Dewata can be understood as the result of a combination of digital technology and quality human service. Interactions across various company touchpoints provide experiences that then become the foundation for building Consumer Trust. This strengthens the Digital Customer Experience's position as a bridging mechanism connecting Digital Business Strategy with Consumer Trust.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that PT Global Dewata has integrated a Digital Business Strategy into its business activities by utilizing several digital channels, including its website, social media, Google Ads, email blasts, and WhatsApp blasts. The use of these channels is not only directed at promotional purposes but also supports the delivery of information, communication, and service to consumers.

The implementation of this digital business strategy contributes to the formation of a Digital Customer Experience through five key aspects: ease of access to information, responsive communication, professionalism of service, ease of transactions, and consistency of service. These findings demonstrate that consumer experience in the digital environment is not only related to the presence and function of technology but is also influenced by the quality of interactions and services provided by the company.

The main findings of the study indicate that Digital Customer Experience acts as a bridging mechanism between Digital Business Strategy and Consumer Trust. Consumer trust does not arise simply from the use of various digital technologies. Trust is formed through the process when the technology is translated into a service experience that provides convenience, responsiveness, professionalism, and consistency to consumers. Therefore, the effectiveness of a digital strategy depends heavily on a company's ability to connect the use of technology with the quality of the customer experience.

Theoretically, this study contributes by placing Digital Business Strategy, Digital Customer Experience, and Consumer Trust within a single conceptual framework within the context of tour and travel service companies. The results demonstrate that consumer experience is a crucial component in explaining the process of implementing digital strategies towards building consumer trust. Practically, tourism service companies need to view digital transformation not merely as a marketing tool, but as a means to create a positive customer experience through the integration of technology, communication, service, and consumer feedback evaluation. This research has limitations due to its use of a case study approach focused on a single company with a limited number of informants, in keeping with the characteristics of qualitative research. This condition makes the research results contextual and not intended to be statistically generalized to all tourism service companies. Therefore, the interpretation of the research results is more appropriate based on the context and characteristics of the case studied.

Future research could expand on these findings through comparative studies involving several tour and travel service companies in different regions. Furthermore, a quantitative approach could be used to empirically test the relationship between Digital Business Strategy, Digital Customer Experience, and Consumer Trust, including further examining the role of Digital Customer Experience as a connecting mechanism within the broader service industry context.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank PT Global Dewata for their research permit and support during the data collection process. He also thanks the four research informants for their time and the necessary information. He also expresses his appreciation to his supervisor and all parties who contributed to the completion of this research and this article.

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