

Digital Communication and Customer Behavior:

Modeling Repurchase Intention in Hotel Services (Case study)

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Abstract ;

The objective of this study is to analyze the impact of digital communication on customer loyalty in the hotel sector, taking the Atlantis hotel chain (Bejaia, Akbou) as a case study. It examines three dimensions of digital communication as well as communication via traditional channels and their influence on the intention to repurchase the hotel service, while using a questionnaire survey distributed to a sample of 170 customers.

The results show that updated content, customer interaction, and presence on multiple platforms have a significant impact on repurchase intent, and hierarchical regression analysis confirms that repurchase intent plays a mediating role between the dimensions of digital communication and customer loyalty to services.

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1. Introduction

For a long time, marketing communication within companies has been based on traditional media, including TV, radio, press, billboards, direct marketing, public relations, etc., but the digital equivalents of traditional means of communication have developed and become increasingly important. According to Shaffey and Smith (2008), there are six categories of e-communication tools: SEM (Search engine marketing), display advertising, online partnerships, digital public relations, e-mailing and social network marketing. Thanks to these tools, companies publish quality content that must be constantly updated, and interact with their customers through their presence on several platforms to guarantee a certain visibility with their targets.

On the other hand, customer loyalty, traditionally based on satisfaction and perceived quality, is undergoing a profound transformation in the digital context. The digitalization of interactions between service companies and consumers is disrupting the traditional levers of loyalty, introducing two-way, instantaneous, and personalized exchange channels. Loyalty is no longer solely behavioral (repeat purchases), but also relational and emotional, shaped by engaging digital interactions throughout the customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), particularly in the hospitality sector, which has undergone profound changes in recent years, driven largely by the digital revolution.

Digital technology offers hoteliers a vast and promising communication channel, acting as a catalyst for their business. This requires the implementation of digital communication strategies, which represent a strategic component of marketing efforts. Simply put, it encompasses all media through which information can be conveyed. It involves a wide variety of channels.

- *Research Problem:*

Based on what was presented in the introduction, the problem of the study emerges by posing the following central question:

How can digital communication contribute to building customer loyalty in the hotel sector, particularly at the Hotel Atlantis Bejaia ?

- *Sub-questions:*

The following sub-questions branch out from this problem:

- What are the main digital communication tools used by the Atlantis Bejaia Hotel?
- Is there a significant relationship between the different aspects of digital communication and the intention to repurchase a hotel service among Atlantis hotel customers?

The objective of this article is to explain the relationship between aspects of digital communication and service loyalty at the Atlantis Hotel, an Algerian hotel chain, in order to provide answers to the main question and the secondary questions

In order to achieve this objective, we will review the literature on digital communication and loyalty in the service sector, presenting and identifying the explanatory variables involved in understanding this theme.

- **Research methodology:**

The approach adopted throughout this work is the quantitative hypothetico-deductive approach, which is a scientific method that consists in formulating hypotheses, collecting data and then testing the results obtained to refute or support these hypotheses. The use of a questionnaire-based field survey will enable us to test the relevance of the research hypotheses that were derived from the literature review and measured on the basis of different measurement scales

2. Digital communication: between objectives and specificities

Digital communication is now a major challenge for companies that want to reach their target audience in an effective and relevant way. It encompasses all communication practices using digital technologies, such as social networks, websites, mobile applications and emails...

2.1 The definition of digital communication

Digital communication is now a major challenge for companies that want to reach their target audience in an effective and relevant way. It encompasses all communication practices using digital technologies, such as social networks, websites, mobile applications and emails...

The term refers to: "all actions (communication and marketing) aimed at promoting products and services through a digital media or communication channel, with the aim of reaching consumers in a personal, highly targeted, and interactive manner. The new objective of companies is therefore to target their consumers not only on the web but across all digital media" (Oualidi, 2013).

According to Tancrede d'Aspremont Lynden: "*Digital communication includes the communication strategies and actions implemented on the web, to transmit messages likely to attract the attention of a target audience, with the ultimate goal of improving the visibility and reputation of a company.*" (Tancrede d'Aspremont, 2024)

Also called digital communication, it defines all the communication strategies and actions deployed around digital and the web: it concerns in particular social networks, smartphones, or even connected objects, etc. It is of interest insofar as it allows companies to take care of their communication with their customers and prospects.

The communication policy aims to transmit the right message, to the right consumer, at the right time. For a long time, it was based on traditional media including TV, radio, press, displays, direct marketing, public relations, etc.

In a few years, with the development of the Internet and digital technologies, there have been major changes.

2.2 The objectives of digital communication

Digital media can be used to communicate as part of short-term campaigns (launch of a new product, promotion, incentive to participate in an event, etc.) or as part of ongoing online communication. An online communication campaign can be set up to achieve one of the following four objectives (Décaudin & Digout, 2011):

- ✓ develop brand awareness, by promoting its visibility on a set of partner and/or high-traffic sites;
- ✓ create traffic: attract qualified traffic to the site according to the set objective (sale, registration, filling out a form, etc.);
- ✓ convert a visitor into a buyer through communication on the site delivering a relevant message and which helps the visitor in the formation of his perceptions or in the achievement of a marketing result desired by the company;
- ✓ Build loyalty among current consumers by implementing actions encouraging them to buy more and more often.

For a long time, marketing communication within companies was based on traditional media including TV, radio, press, displays, direct marketing, public relations, etc., the digital equivalents of traditional means of communication have developed and taken up more and more space, according to (Chaffey & Smith, 2022), six categories of e-communication tools exist: SEM (Search engine Marketing), display advertising, online partnership, digital public relations, e-mailing and marketing on social networks.

2.3 Digital communication and the concept of loyalty in services

(Rundle-Thiele & Maio Mackay, 2001) State in their article that the majority of research studying loyalty in the context of services believes that the conceptualization and definition proposed for brand loyalty remains valid for services. However, other researchers argue that the results found in the brand domain cannot be generalized to the service domain (Gremler & Brown, Service loyalty: its nature, importance, and implications, 1996) and (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995).

Unlike loyalty to tangible products, in the context of services:

- loyalty is linked to interpersonal relationships. The interaction between the consumer and the staff in contact with him or her forms the backbone of loyalty and service marketing in general (Berry , 1995)
- Perceived risk is higher and constitutes a barrier to switching service providers. In this case, loyalty is a risk-reduction strategy (Bauer, 1960; Zeithaml et al; 1981; Klemperer, 1987 and Guitinan, 1989);

- Intangible attributes such as credibility and trust play a key role in the development of loyalty (Dick & Basu, 1994);
- Affective variables play an important role in determining loyalty, particularly the satisfaction variable (Gremler & Brown, 1998) and (Dick & Basu, 1994).

(Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2020) point out that in services, loyalty is expressed both through repetitive behavior (recurring purchases) and a positive attitude (favorable word of mouth, brand preference). The customer-provider relationship, often personalized and emotional, plays a central role in this process.

In the hospitality industry, managers rely on loyalty to maximize revenue per guest and reduce acquisition costs. Recent research (Kandampully, Zhang, & Jaakkola, 2018) and (Chen, Yen, & Tseng, 2021) indicates that:

- Service quality (welcome, cleanliness, responsiveness) remains the primary factor
- Memorable and personalized experiences play an increasing role in a context where customers are looking for more than just accommodation.
- Customer relationship management (CRM) and loyalty programs are levers used to strengthen brand loyalty.

Customer loyalty in services, and particularly in the hotel industry, is based on a set of interrelated factors: quality of service, customer experience, emotional attachment (Park & Huang, 2020) and innovation in the relationship, like the use of digital tools to attract more customers.

According to (Dwivedi, Ismagilova, & Hughes, 2021), the digitalization of customer relations transforms loyalty into an engaged and interactive process, promoted by relevant, authentic and co-constructed content, this very process which is preceded by an intention to repurchase the service.

Repurchase intention is defined as a customer's perceived likelihood of repeating a purchase or using a service in the future (Hellier, Rickard, Geursen, & Carr, 2003). It is considered a direct predictor of behavioral loyalty, but also a mediator between marketing factors (e.g., communication, perceived quality) and actual loyalty, according to several studies, such as (Harrigan, Uwana, Morgan, & Miles, 2018) on social media in the hotel industry, (Shareef & al, 2019) dealing with a study on e-commerce and banking services. In this study, we will examine the impact of digital communication in its various aspects on customer loyalty, analyzing the role of repurchase intention as a mediating variable. We will also compare this digital communication with traditional communication campaigns based on correlation coefficients

3. *Digital communication at the Atlantis Hotel*

Atlantis Hotels is an Algerian hotel chain that opened its first hotel in Akbou in 2015. It offers modern establishments, often strategically located, offering high-quality services, including fine restaurants, wellness facilities, and conference rooms.

3.1 *Digital communication tools used by the Atlantis Hotel*

Digital communication is a strategic function of marketing actions that encompasses all media used to convey information. This includes a wide variety of channels, new media, and new strategies.

Today, digital communication has become essential for the hotel industry, as it offers new opportunities to reach guests and promote the hotel's services.

Since its opening, the Atlantis hotel has opted for digital communication and does not use traditional communication channels.

Many platforms are essential for successful acquisition, visibility, and business development efforts, such as: Social media (Facebook, Instagram) and websites; Hotels use various social media platforms to communicate with customers online, improve their search engine rankings, and market their services:

Website: Each establishment (Algiers, Bejaia, Akbou, soon Oran, etc.) has a dedicated website (e.g. atlantis hotels dz.com) allowing real-time booking and presentation of services (rooms, spa, restaurants, etc.)

Platon Atlantis” mobile application and loyalty program

Launch of the Platon Atlantis program in November 2024, the first loyalty program in Algeria for the hotel industry.

Guests can:

- Earn points for each reservation or service (restaurants, spa, etc.),
- Reach four levels (Eumélos, Cleito, Poseidon, Atlas) with increasing benefits,
- Manage their account via a mobile app (Play Store & App Store) downloadable from the Play Store

Social networks

Facebook: This is the most used social network for openings, event evenings (end of year party), promotions and recruitments. The pages of the Atlantis Bejaia, Akbou and Algiers hotels have more than 60,000, 96,000 and 26,000 subscribers respectively.

Instagram: This social network is highly effective for communication thanks to its visual approach, which helps build brand awareness. Through emotionally resonant photos and videos, hotels can interact with users and inspire them to take action. The Atlantis Bejaia hotel's Instagram page has over 93,000 followers, the Akbou hotel's page has over 37,000 followers, and the Algiers hotel's page has over 24,000 followers.

Social media has completely transformed the way we gather information, communicate, and do business. For businesses, having a presence on Facebook and Instagram has become an

essential part of their marketing strategy. And it's easy to understand why when you consider the many benefits of developing your presence on social media.

Facebook and Instagram are friendly and family-oriented networks; when used to promote your hotel, satisfied customers will be more likely to give their feedback and share it with those around them. Use this awareness as a digital version of word of mouth to engage with potential customers

3.2 Analysis of the Atlantic Hotel Website

Data collection largely depends on the hotels' websites. During the analysis, we seek to understand the communication strategies implemented by marketing and communications managers. This step allows us to understand the message that managers wish to convey through the website's content. To do this, it is necessary to develop an analytical framework that not only identifies key information related to marketing communications, but also assesses whether the website adds value to this information.

We conducted research on this evaluation using an analytical framework that was also inspired by the work of (Baloglu & Pekcan, 2006) and (Lin, 2009).

The analytical framework contains a general section for identifying and presenting the website. They propose a grid composed of four dimensions which are the subject of an evaluation: functionality, navigation, interactivity and marketing

The functional dimension of the website aims to present the hotel, its products, and services in a general manner. This dimension can be presented in the form of general information and useful information.

The second dimension concerns navigation: it aims to assess whether the hotel website offers quick and easy navigation for visitors, as well as the availability of adequate tools for searching for information about the hotel and its services.

Interactivity is a specific characteristic of the social web. This dimension allows us to examine the different ways in which the hotel communicates with its customers, as well as the exchange of opinions, comments, advice, etc., between the customers themselves.

The final dimension concerns marketing. To meet this financial expectation, the hotel provides information on rates, descriptions, room availability, offers, and special programs. In addition, it provides online booking and payment tools to facilitate purchases.

The elements of the four dimensions of the website analysis grid are found in the summary table on the following page:

Table N°01 : The Four-dimensional elements of the Atlantis hotel website

Dimensions	Hotel website
Feature (9 items)	
General presentation	X
Presentation of products and services	X
Color and background image	
Multilingualism	X
Multimedia	X
News and events	X
Advertising banners	X
Date and time	
Weather	
Navigation (9 items)	
Overview of main options	
Horizontal/vertical scrolling	
Links to reference sites	
Internet link	
Internal search engine	
Different navigation versions	
Ability to return to home page	
Quick access to website	X
Interactivity (10 items)	
Contacts	X
Email link	
Blog and/or forum	
Online feedback	
Social networks	
Site account creation	
Online survey	X
Frequently asked questions (FAQ)	
Information request form	
Chat	
Marketing (10 items)	
Room rates	X
Calendar of special programs	X
Description of products and services	X
Promotion and special offers	X
Customer loyalty program	X
Online booking	X
Personalized services	
E-mail booking	
Online payment	
Up-to-date exchange rates	
Links to tourist information	

Source: prepared by the researcher

After analyzing the table above, we can observe the following points in relation to the various dimensions of the Atlantis hotel website analysis:

- Basic but functional presentation; lack of visual and contextual elements (weather, languages, customization).
- Navigation is very limited, with no search engine, no link back to the home page, no alternative version, or clear structure. This significantly impairs the user experience.
- A very low level of interactivity. No social media, chat, or forms or FAQs—which severely limits user interaction and trust.
- A good point regarding basic marketing and sales functions, but missing:
 - Booking by email,
 - Online payment,
 - Personalized services....

Following what has been presented, we note that despite a local presence and responsiveness on messages and comments, and varied event content (end of year party, inaugurations, symbolic dates, organization of family evenings), the use of the different media and digital communication tools remains limited by the hotel establishment and requires improvements such as the integration of dynamic content with more videos, customer testimonials, virtual tours of the establishments, etc.

4. Field study methodology:

4.1. Conceptual model and hypotheses:

In order to answer the problem, we have posed, as well as the secondary questions, we have chosen to follow the descriptive-analytical approach, using a sample survey to collect the necessary data, while using a questionnaire to measure the study variables and study the relationship between them.

Through this questionnaire, we tried to measure the independent variable represented by aspects of digital communication within the hotel establishment, as well as the dependent variable, which is customer loyalty.

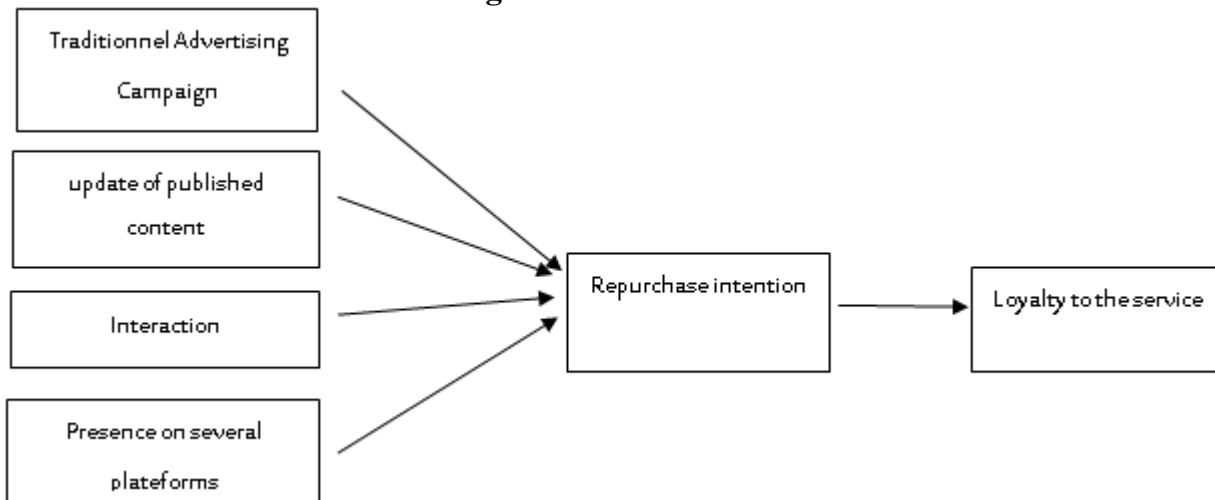
Digital communication factors are measured through published content, advertising, platforms used and frequency of communication.

We measured the dependent variable: customer loyalty through the three-dimensional approach of the concept, because several researchers suggest that consumer loyalty to the service requires the simultaneous consideration of consumer beliefs (cognition), consumer feelings and intentions (attitude) and repurchase action (behavior) (Gremler and Brown, 1996; (Ting Pong & Tang Pui Yee , 2001). To measure it, we used the additive measurement scale of (Ting Pong & Tang Pui Yee, An integrated model of service loyalty, 2001) which contains 3 dimensions and 11 items.

Regarding repurchase intention, and to differentiate it from brand loyalty, we chose the (Shin, So, & Jeong, 2024) scale with five items that link digital experience and behavioral repurchase intentions, without mentioning loyalty. They cover general intention, the likely effect of technologies, and behavioral preference.

Based on the literature review already presented and the initial problem, the research model is presented as follows:

Fig.1. The research model



The following hypotheses were formulated to test the research variables:

H1: traditional communication campaigns have a strong positive effect on the intention to repurchase hotel services

H2: The quality of published content and its updating is significantly linked to the customer intention to repurchase hotel services

H3: interaction with customers online reinforces customer intention to repurchase hotel services offered by the hotel establishment

H4: the hotel's presence on several platforms has a positive influence on customer on the intention to repurchase hotel services

H5: Hotel service repurchase intention plays a mediating role in the relationship between digital communication and customer loyalty

4. 2. Data collection

The procedure for developing the study sample begins with determining the population to be studied. In our research, the parent population used as a basis for the survey was the clientele of the two Atlantis hotels in the Wilaya de Bejaia (Bejaia and Akbou), who had stayed at least once in the hotel or used the services offered by the establishment (party room, conference room, catering, etc.).

The non-random sample was selected in view of the impossibility of having a sampling frame. We administered our questionnaire to the customer with the help of the hotel services as well as through the use of the face-to-face method when the customer accepted.

The survey was conducted from March 1st, 2025 to March 30, 2025, and a total of 170 questionnaires were completed, with 20 invalid questionnaires. The response rate was 88%.

The results were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 24 analysis software.

5. Results and discussion

5.1. validity of the quality of measuring instruments

Before beginning to test the research hypotheses, scientific rigor requires us to test the validity of the measurement scales, following the approach proposed by (Malhotra , 2019) to reinforce and ensure the validity and reliability of the measurements the researcher makes.

For the scale measuring brand loyalty, we carried out a factorization (KMO index = 0.758, which explains why the items are of good quality) which checks whether the data accept a factorization, then an identification of the number of factors with their interpretation (three-dimensional scale) which enabled us to delete two items from the scale, to arrive at Cronbach's Alpha reliability test as The current loyalty scale used exhibits acceptable internal consistency reliability, with an alpha coefficient of 0.771.

For the scale measuring repurchase intention, we assessed its internal reliability to verify the internal consistency of the 5 items, the value of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient estimated at 0.801 indicating good internal consistency follows:

Table N° 02: Reliability of the service loyalty scale

	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	Number of items
Reliability of the service loyalty scale	0,771	9

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the SPSS software

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5.2. Hypothesis testing

5.2.1. Formation of service repurchase intention

As stated above, the model tests the relationship between four aspects of the hotel's digital communication and service repurchase intention. The following table shows the relationships observed after data analysis:

Table N°03: Correlation between repurchase intention and the four aspects of digital communication

	Intention to repurchase	Communication Campaign	update of published content	Interaction	Presence on several platforms
Intention to repurchase	1	,542	,786	,730	,801
Communication Campaign	,542	1	,509	,611	,534
update of published content	,786	,509	1	,720	,674
Interaction	,730	,611	,720	1	,730
Presence on several plateforms	,801	,534	,674	,730	1

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the SPSS software

Calculating the correlation coefficient provides a synthetic measure of the strength of the relationship between two variables. It thus provides information on the existence of a linear relationship (in the form of a straight line) between the two variables considered.

Through this examination of the correlations carried out above, the coefficients all fall between 0.509 and 0.801, which means that the correlations are moderate to strong positive, and the more developed an aspect of digital communication is, the higher the repurchase intention.

We also found that presence on multiple platforms is the most strongly correlated aspect with repurchase intent, followed by content updates and interaction.

However, the communication campaign variable has a weaker correlation with the other dimensions (0.509 to 0.611), indicating that traditional communication campaigns are less influential than the hotel establishment's presence and active and ongoing engagement on digital platforms.

From these results, we support the following hypotheses: (H2), (H3), and (H4), and reject the first hypothesis (H1).

In order to determine which independent variable determines the most, or participates the most in the formation of the concept of intention to repurchase the service, we will try in a second step, to carry out a multiple regression, the type of regression used is hierarchical multiple regression. Through this method, we seek to estimate if and to what extent an independent variable or a group of independent variables adds to the prediction, beyond the other variables already in the equation. This type of regression allows us to know the added contribution of one or more variables.

The model's characteristics are presented in the following table:

Table 04: Explanation of the intention to repurchase by two models

Model	R	R-squared	R-squared ajusted	Standard error of estimate	Variation in R- squared
1	,829 ^a	,662	,685	,52 369	,662
2	,850 ^b	,705	,718	,50 896	,043

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the SPSS software

Predictors: (Constant), Interaction, Update of published content, presence on several platforms, communication campaign (a)

Predictors: (Constant), Interaction, Update of published content, presence on several platforms (b)

Dependent variable: Intention to repurchase

From the results displayed in the table, we can see that depending on a value of R, the correlation between the independent and dependent variables is stronger in the second model than in the first model.

he first model.

On the other hand, the value of R-squared, which represents the proportion of variance explained by the model, indicates that Model 2 better explains the variance of the dependent variable (.705 compared with .662 of variance explained by Model 1)

Also, the R-two adjusted for the number of variables penalizes the unnecessary variables, which further confirms that Model 2 remains better, given that it also has better precision according to the standard deviation of the residuals (standard error of estimation).

In fact, we can conclude that the intention to repurchase the service offered is explained by the three variables in Model 2, since traditional communication campaigns have little influence on it.

Intention to repurchase

= f (presence in several platforms, update of published content, interaction)

5.2.1. The mediating role of the intention to repurchase the service between the aspects of digital communication and service loyalty:

In order to test the role of service repurchase intention between loyalty and digital communication aspects, we will compare the performance indicators of the two models, the first of which explains loyalty only through digital communication aspects, and the second of which includes the three digital communication aspect variables as well as the service repurchase intention variable, as presented in the following table:

Table N° 05: Comparison of the two models explaining the service loyalty

Model	R	R-squared	R-squared ajusted	Standard error of estimate	Variation in R- squared
1	,740 ^a	,705	,703	,50 896	,705
2	,819 ^b	,687	,685	, 52 369	,018

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the SPSS software

Through this principle, we confirm that effectively, the intention to repurchase the hotel service plays the role of mediator between the aspects of digital communication used by the hotel establishment and customer loyalty to the service offered, because the adjusted R-squared decreased when the regression was established only between the explanatory variables and the dependent variable (loyalty), this same indicator was of the order of .819 when the loyalty explanation model took into consideration the customer's intention to repurchase the service, From these results we can confirm H5.

6. Conclusion:

The objective of this research was to understand and analyze the impact of digital communication through its aspects on the repurchase intention of customers of the Atlantis hotel in the Wilaya of Bejaia, this through a quantitative study with a model tested using statistical analysis, the following results were obtained:

- The first hypothesis (H1) was not confirmed, which showed that communication campaigns through traditional channels do not have a strong influence on the intention to repurchase the hotel service by hotel customers. This form of communication, although useful, seem less decisive, following the improvement in the model's overall performance, after removing the "communication campaign" variable. This suggests that the "communication campaign" variable does not provide a relevant explanation of repurchase intention (or introduces noise/non-significant statistics)
- the second, third and fourth hypothesis (H2, H3, H4) were confirmed, which showed that dynamic and interactive digital actions (multi-channel presence, frequent updates, interactions) have a strong impact on re-purchase intention. Indeed, clear, professional and regularly updated content (recent photos, precise descriptions, current offers, etc.) reinforces the credibility of the establishment, builds customer confidence and reduces the uncertainty that customers may feel before purchasing the service. The customer perceives the establishment as serious, organized and transparent.

Also, interactivity with online customers through rapid response to comments, questions or opinions creates a personal and direct link with customers and shows that the establishment cares about its customers, which reinforces attachment to the brand and services.

Ultimately, a multi-channel presence allows customers to access the hotel from multiple entry points, increasing re-purchase opportunities and also having an effect on brand visibility and awareness.

- This research also allowed us to confirm the mediation relationship of the variable intention to repurchase the hotel service between digital communication and its aspects and customer loyalty.

7. Suggestions :

Using the results of this research, we are able to present the following recommendations and suggestions:

- The hotel establishment should improve the navigation of its website and increase interactivity through the integration of live chat, contact forms, and other marketing aspects such as personalized services.
- Optimizing the website and mobile app by adding an interactive FAQ and online chat, as well as offering secure online payment and complete customer account management via the mobile app.
- Regularly updating content (photos, events, promotions) and developing engaging content through the creation of immersive videos (virtual room tours, guest testimonials).
- Publishing "behind the scenes" content (staff, event planning) on Instagram and TikTok.
- Launching a blog on the website about local tourism and travel tips.

Finally, we can suggest other avenues of research by introducing other variables into the research model, and an inter-sectoral comparison between the hotel sector and other sectors in services (banking, insurance, etc.)

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