



The implementation of integrated marketing communication strategies to enhance the appeal of ngargoretno tourism village in the digital era

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the implementation of integrated marketing communication strategies in enhancing the appeal of Ngargoretno Tourism Village in the digital era. With its significant potential as a prominent tourism destination, the management of Ngargoretno Tourism Village requires a holistic and synergistic marketing approach to strengthen its competitiveness in an increasingly digitized tourism market. The research questions addressed in this study include: (1) what forms of integrated marketing communication are employed by the management of Ngargoretno Tourism Village, and (2) what challenges and obstacles are encountered in the implementation of these strategies. Utilizing a qualitative approach with interactive model analysis, this research collects data through in-depth interviews and field observations with key stakeholders. The study aims to provide strategic insights into the role of integrated marketing communication in reinforcing the positioning of Ngargoretno Tourism Village in the digital era, while also identifying operational barriers that must be addressed to ensure the sustainability of digital-based tourism growth.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving digital age, the marketing communication landscape has changed drastically. One of the most prominent approaches is *Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)*. IMC is a strategy that combines various communication channels such as advertising, promotion, *public relations*, digital marketing, and social media, which is geared towards creating a consistent and coherent message (Alameda & Garcia, 2019; Duralia, 2018). This strategy allows managers or organizations to reach their target audience more effectively, by taking advantage of the advantages of each communication channel used (Englund et al., 2020).

Digital marketing is becoming increasingly important in integrated marketing communication strategies. Digital technology provides opportunities for *brands* to interact more closely and personally with consumers. Through platforms such as social media, websites, and *email marketing*, managers can establish interactive and relevant two-way communication (Abdulaziz, 2023). In this context, consumer data can be leveraged to create more targeted and efficient campaigns,

according to their needs and preferences. Along with the development of the internet and mobile technology, digital marketing has become one of the essential components of modern IMC strategies (Rehman et al., 2022a).

The implementation of integrated marketing communication is very important to build awareness and interest of tourists towards certain destinations (Said & Ensaad, 2022). The global tourism industry is now in the midst of increasingly fierce competition, where many destinations are competing for the attention of tourists. The use of IMC in tourism allows destinations to convey compelling and relevant messages through a variety of media, creating cohesive experiences and increasing appeal (Morrison, 2013; Pike, 2017). Especially in the digital age, where information can be accessed quickly and easily by potential tourists, an integrated marketing communication strategy is becoming increasingly important to ensure the message conveyed reaches the target in the right way.

Ngargoretno Tourism Village, located in Magelang Regency, Central Java, is one of the tourist destinations that has great potential to be developed. Known for its natural beauty, local wisdom, and distinctive cultural products, Ngargoretno has an attraction that is able to attract tourists. However, this potential has not been fully utilized due to limitations in terms of marketing and promotion. The implementation of integrated marketing communication, especially those that utilize digital media, can be an effective solution to increase the attraction of tourists to this village.

In this modern era, tourists tend to look for information about tourist destinations through the internet before traveling. They utilize search engines, social media, and review sites to get a clearer picture of the destination they want to visit. Therefore, it is important for the managers of Ngargoretno Tourism Village to increase their digital presence. Digital marketing through various online platforms not only helps to reach a wider audience, but also allows village managers to interact directly with tourists, respond to their inquiries, and provide needed information in *real-time*.

However, the implementation of an integrated marketing communication strategy in Ngargoretno Tourism Village is not without challenges. Limited resources, both in terms of finance and people, are one of the main obstacles. In addition, access to digital technology and knowledge on how to use it optimally is also still limited among tourism village managers. This challenge has become increasingly complex with competition from other tourist destinations that are also competing to attract tourists' attention.

In this context, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth study to identify the forms of integrated marketing communication that have been and are being implemented by the Ngargoretno Tourism Village manager. In addition, it is also important to explore the challenges and obstacles faced in the implementation of the strategy. By understanding these two aspects, it is hoped that solutions and recommendations can be found that can help Ngargoretno Tourism Village to maximize their potential in the digital era.

In addition to internal challenges such as limited resources, Ngargoretno Tourism Village also faces external challenges, especially related to changes in tourist behavior in the digital era. Modern tourists tend to be more critical and selective in choosing tourist destinations. They seek information not only through brochures or print media, but also through online reviews, social media, and user-generated content-based platforms such as TripAdvisor and Google Reviews (Trinh Ngo et al., 2022; Zhou, 2021). Therefore, the manager of Ngargoretno Tourism Village needs to pay attention to the importance of online reputation and how this can influence the decision of tourists.

In the context of integrated marketing communication, one of the important components is message consistency. Every element of a marketing campaign, be it an ad, promotion, or social media content, should support each other and convey the same message. For Ngargoretno Tourism Village, this consistency is important to build a strong and clear image in the minds of tourists. For example, if the village wants to be known as an ecotourism destination, then all communication channels must reflect the message, from the visual design to the narrative used.

The importance of digital marketing strategies is also reflected in the increasing trend of using platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube for tourism marketing purposes (Sugandini et al., 2018). Through attractive visual content, such as photos and videos, the manager of Ngargoretno

Tourism Village can display the beauty of nature, local culture, and activities that can be done by tourists. This content can not only attract attention, but also create a stronger emotional attachment between potential tourists and destinations (Kotler & Keller, 2022; Morrison, 2013).

Through the implementation of effective integrated marketing communication, Ngargoretno Tourism Village can not only increase their attractiveness in the eyes of tourists, but also create a better and more satisfying experience for visitors. Ultimately, a good communication strategy will help the village achieve their long-term goal, which is to become a sustainable tourist destination and have a positive impact on the local community (Otiman, 2015; Pihanakealoha, 2022; Rocca & Zielinski, 2022).

Thus, this study aims to dig deeper into the forms of integrated marketing communication that have been implemented in Ngargoretno Tourism Village, as well as identify the challenges and obstacles faced in its implementation. The results of this study are expected to provide applicative recommendations for tourism village managers in designing more effective marketing strategies in the digital era, so that Ngargoretno Tourism Village can achieve its maximum potential as a leading tourist destination.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Tourism Integrated Marketing Communication Strategy

The concept of *Integrated Marketing Communication* (IMC) is a strategy designed to integrate various communication tools to convey a consistent and unified message to the audience. According to Kotler and Keller (2022), IMC involves coordinating various communication channels such as advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, and digital marketing to provide a coherent and integrated communication experience. This is done to ensure that the messages that consumers receive through various media support and reinforce each other, thereby increasing the overall effectiveness of marketing. According to Obinwanne & Ukabuilu (2019) also stated that IMC aims to create synergies between various communication channels, which will ultimately strengthen the relationship between brands and consumers.

The important elements of an integrated marketing communication strategy are also emphasized by Rehman (2022b), which identifies the five key elements of the IMC, namely coherence, consistency, continuity, complementarity, and consequences. Coherence refers to the importance of ensuring that all messages conveyed through various channels are aligned with the purpose of communication. Consistency means that the message conveyed must be maintained in all forms of communication, both visual and verbal, to avoid confusion. Continuity emphasizes the importance of continuous repetition of messages, while complementarity refers to how different communication elements complement each other to create a greater impact. Finally, the consequences ensure that the outcomes of this communication strategy are aligned with the goals of the business or organization.

In the tourism industry, the implementation of IMC is becoming increasingly important because tourism is a sector that relies heavily on image and reputation. Previous research has shown that IMC plays an important role in increasing the attractiveness of tourist destinations by conveying a consistent message through various media. According to a study conducted by Pike (2017), IMC helps create brand awareness and brand equity for tourist destinations, thereby strengthening tourists' perception of the quality of these destinations. Similarly, research by (Tibebe & Ayenew, 2020) shows that the use of IMC in tourism can increase interaction with tourists through digital and social media, which ultimately increases the number of visits. The use of social media as part of IMC is also considered very effective in reaching global audiences, especially in the context of digitalization of the tourism industry.

Tourism Village

Tourism village is a community-based tourism concept that focuses on the involvement of local communities in the management and development of destinations. According to (Suansri, 2003), Tourism villages are a form of tourism that aims to improve the welfare of the community through sustainable management of natural and cultural resources. The tourist village not only offers natural beauty, but also an authentic experience of the daily life of the local people, including the culture,

customs, and handicraft products. In this context, tourism villages are expected to be able to become a driving force for the local economy based on the principles of sustainable tourism.

The marketing strategy of the tourist village is an important factor in attracting tourists and maintaining the sustainability of the destination. According to Kotler, Bowen, and Makens (Kotler et al., 2017), Tourist destination marketing needs to pay attention to the uniqueness of the products offered and how communication about the uniqueness is carried out consistently to the audience. In this case, integrated marketing communication (IMC) is a very relevant approach to integrate various marketing elements such as advertising, promotion, social media, and public relations to create a cohesive and engaging message.

Previous research shows that the implementation of an integrated marketing communication strategy in the context of a tourist village can increase the attractiveness and visibility of the village in the eyes of tourists. Study conducted by (Eka Krisna Yanti, 2021; Laksmi Sari et al., 2022) about the management of tourist villages in Bali shows that the use of social media and collaboration with local influencers can significantly increase the number of tourist visits. Meanwhile, research from (Adawiyah & Mafudi, 2017) who analyzed tourist villages in Central Java found that tourism village management that incorporates the IMC approach is more effective in promoting local uniqueness and culture, compared to conventional marketing strategies.

From the review of the existing literature, it can be concluded that the implementation of the right marketing strategy and the integration of integrated marketing communication are key factors in increasing the attractiveness of tourist villages. However, challenges in the implementation of the strategy also need to be considered, especially related to the capacity of local resources and access to digital marketing technology.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with an interactive model analysis method developed by Miles and Huberman (Miles et al., 1994). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to analyze data in depth and systematically, especially in the context of implementing an integrated marketing communication strategy in Ngargoretno Tourism Village. This qualitative research aims to explore the forms of integrated marketing communication applied, as well as the challenges and obstacles faced in the implementation process (Moleong, 2006).

Data collection was carried out through two main techniques, namely participatory observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Participatory observation was carried out with the aim of directly understanding the marketing communication activities implemented by the manager of Ngargoretno Tourism Village. Researchers participate in the daily activities of tourism villages to get a real picture of the dynamics of marketing communication in the field.

In addition, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with around 20 key informants who were directly or indirectly involved in the management of Ngargoretno Tourism Village. The key informants include village heads, local heroes, heads of tourism awareness groups (pokdarwis), tourists who have visited the village, and representatives from the local government. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to provide flexibility in digging for more in-depth information, but still directed according to the focus of the research. The interview questions focused on how the integrated marketing communication strategy was implemented, the obstacles faced, and the informants' views on the effectiveness of the strategy.

The data obtained from observations and interviews were then analyzed using an interactive model consisting of three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. In the data reduction process, researchers will filter and simplify data that is relevant to the focus of the research. After that, the data is presented in narrative and visual form to make it easier to draw conclusions. The process of drawing conclusions is carried out by identifying the main themes and patterns that emerge from the collected data. This analysis will provide an in-depth understanding of the implementation of an integrated marketing communication strategy in Ngargoretno Tourism Village and the challenges faced in its implementation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study aims to identify the form of integrated marketing communication (IMC) that has been implemented by Ngargoretno Tourism Village and explore the challenges faced in the implementation process. Based on data obtained from participatory observation and in-depth interviews, the following are the results and discussion:

From the results of observations and interviews with key informants such as village heads, heads of pokdarwis, and local tourism actors, it was revealed that Ngargoretno Tourism Village has implemented several forms of integrated marketing communication as an effort to increase tourist attractions.

One of the most prominent forms of IMC is the use of social media. Ngargoretno Village actively uses platforms such as Instagram and Facebook to promote their tourism potential. An informant from the pokdarwis stated that social media is used to share visual content in the form of photos and videos that display natural beauty, local wisdom, and tourist activities that can be done in this village. This is in line with the opinion of experts who state that social media is effective in reaching a wider audience and increasing tourist awareness of tourist destinations (Sugandini et al., 2018). "We regularly update Instagram and Facebook for village promotion. We also upload testimonials from tourists who have already visited, because it is very effective in attracting new tourists." (Wawancara dengan Ketua Pokdarwis, 2024)

In addition to social media, Ngargoretno Tourism Village also has an official website as a means of communication with prospective tourists. This website provides complete information about the facilities, travel routes, and tour packages available. Some of the tourists interviewed admitted to accessing the website to plan their visit. This website is also one of the important elements of IMC's strategy, because it is able to convey messages in a more formal and detailed manner (Kotler et al., 2022).

Ngargoretno Village also collaborates with local influencers to expand the reach of promotion. Several influencers who have a large following on social media are invited to visit the village and share their experiences through their platforms. Managers realize that influencers have a big influence in influencing the decisions of modern travelers, especially millennials and Gen Z who tend to trust personal reviews more than conventional advertising. "We are working with several local influencers to introduce this village. They have a large audience and the impact is felt, there is an increase in visits after their content is uploaded." (Interview with the Village Head, 2024)

Village managers also use public relations by collaborating with the local government and mass media to promote the village as an ecotourism destination. For example, several tourism promotion events at the district level involve the participation of Ngargoretno Village to showcase the uniqueness of its local culture and products. This strategy helps to increase the visibility of the village among local and regional tourists. However, although the implementation of the IMC strategy has had a positive impact, there are several challenges faced by tourism village managers in the implementation process.

The main challenge faced is the limited resources, both in terms of finance and human resources who have skills in managing digital marketing. The village head admitted that the village still does not have a large enough budget to carry out more aggressive promotions through paid media, such as digital advertising on social media platforms. "We are facing a problem of funds, because promotion requires a lot of money. In addition, experts in the field of digital marketing are also limited." (Interview with Village Head, 2023) Research by Morrison (2013) stated that one of the main obstacles in the implementation of IMC in the tourism sector is the lack of adequate resources, especially in rural tourist destinations.

In addition, there are limitations in access to technology and knowledge about digital marketing. Most tourism village managers are still unfamiliar with more complex digital marketing tools and strategies, such as the use of social media analytics or targeted advertising campaigns. This limits the effectiveness of the promotions carried out and has the potential to slow down the development of village tourism. "We still need more training related to digital marketing, especially

how to maximize advertising on social media." (Interview with the Chairman of Pokdarwis, 2024) Ngargoretno Tourism Village must also compete with other tourist destinations that have better access to marketing resources and technology. For example, the larger and more well-known tourist destinations in Central Java often get more attention from tourists compared to Ngargoretno. This requires a more creative and effective promotion strategy so that the village is able to compete in an increasingly competitive tourism market.

The implementation of integrated marketing communication (IMC) in Ngargoretno Tourism Village has shown positive results in an effort to promote local tourism potential. Based on the results of the research, it can be seen that marketing strategies through social media and official websites are the main effective instruments in reaching a wider audience. However, despite the initial success, the implementation of IMC in this village still faces some major challenges that need to be considered to improve the sustainability of the marketing strategy. Social media has become one of the most dominant elements in today's digital marketing landscape, especially in the tourism sector. In the context of Ngargoretno Tourism Village, the use of Instagram and Facebook provides an opportunity for the village to highlight the natural beauty, cultural attractions, and tourist activities offered. Several studies support this finding, such as Duralia (2018) who stated that social media is an important tool to attract the attention of millennials and Gen Z, who tend to be more active in using digital platforms to search for tourist information.

The use of social media also shows how visual content (such as photos and videos) can affect the perception of potential tourists. Interesting, authentic, and informative content helps the village to create a positive image in the minds of the audience. In this case, IMC is the right tool because it combines various communication channels to create a consistent and powerful message (Kotler et al., 2022). However, even though social media can reach a wider audience, without a mature strategy and effective content performance analysis, promotion through social media will not be optimal. For example, the use of Instagram Analytics or Facebook Insights has not been maximized by the Ngargoretno Tourism Village manager to measure the performance of their campaigns. According to Pike (2017), skills in analyzing marketing data are key to maximizing the impact of IMC campaigns. Although the Ngargoretno Village manager has understood the importance of using digital media, the limitations of digital knowledge and skills are a significant challenge. This is mainly related to the use of more complex digital marketing tools, such as SEO (Search Engine Optimization), targeted advertising, and more strategic social media management.

Without expertise in advanced digital marketing, villages will find it difficult to compete with other tourist destinations that have better access to resources and technology. Rehman (2022) emphasized that the success of IMC's strategy is highly dependent on in-depth digital marketing skills, including an understanding of online consumer behavior and the use of the latest marketing technologies. In addition, the lack of training for local staff is one of the obstacles to the implementation of a more sophisticated IMC strategy. Ngargoretno Tourism Village also faces a classic problem that is often encountered in many rural tourist destinations, namely limited budget and human resources. As revealed by the village manager, they still face difficulties in providing enough funds to carry out more aggressive marketing campaigns. This impacts their ability to run paid campaigns, such as digital ads on social media platforms or Google, which can actually be very effective in attracting more specific tourists. Tibebe and Ayenew (2020) mentioned that many tourist destinations in remote areas are experiencing the same obstacles, where limited budgets make it difficult to adopt the latest marketing technology and carry out wider promotions. In the context of Ngargoretno Village, this limitation is a barrier to compete with other tourist destinations that have a larger marketing budget. As a solution, villages should focus more on organic or word-of-mouth marketing strategies that can reduce promotional costs, but still have a significant impact.

One of the aspects that needs to be strengthened in the implementation of IMC in Ngargoretno Village is collaboration between tourism village managers, the government, and the private sector. Cooperation with the government can provide financial and technical support, such as access to digital marketing training and financial assistance for promotion. In addition, collaboration

with the private tourism industry (such as travel agencies or tour service providers) can also open up opportunities for mutual promotion, where both parties benefit each other. Village managers can also collaborate with online tourism platforms, such as Traveloka, Agoda, or TripAdvisor, to increase the visibility of the village among domestic and international tourists. According to Morrison (2013), cross-sector collaboration like this is very important to increase the competitiveness of small tourist destinations, especially in the digital era where online platforms have a great influence on tourist decisions. Ngargoretno Tourism Village also faces stiff competition with other tourist destinations in Central Java that are more established and popular. For example, tourist destinations such as Borobudur Temple or Parangtritis Beach have better infrastructure, easier access, and stronger promotional support from the government. This competition requires villages to develop a unique selling proposition (USP) that is different from other destinations. In this case, the village can highlight the uniqueness of local culture, ecotourism, and community-based activities that are the main attraction for tourists looking for an authentic experience. Tibebe and Ayenew (2020) stated that tourist destinations that are able to integrate cultural and natural elements with personalized experiences will have a competitive advantage in the global tourism market.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research and discussion, the implementation of the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategy in Ngargoretno Tourism Village has gone well, but there are still several challenges that need to be overcome to increase the effectiveness of village promotion as a leading tourist destination. The use of social media as the main promotional platform has proven to be effective in attracting tourists, especially millennials and Gen Z, who tend to rely on digital platforms to find tourist information. Interesting and authentic visual content also succeeded in improving the image of the village in the eyes of tourists. However, limitations in human resources and digital knowledge are still obstacles that hinder the development of more sophisticated marketing. Village managers have not been able to fully utilize digital marketing tools such as SEO, social media analytics, and digital advertising. Budget constraints are also an inhibiting factor in more aggressive promotional efforts, so a more effective organic marketing strategy is needed. In addition, competition with other more established tourist destinations requires Ngargoretno Village to have a strong Unique Selling Proposition (USP), by taking advantage of the potential of ecotourism, the uniqueness of local culture, and community-based activities as the main attraction. To overcome these challenges, there needs to be additional support in the form of digital marketing training, increased promotional budgets, and cross-sector collaboration with the government and the private sector. This collaboration will allow villages to get better resources to strengthen marketing strategies, increase competitiveness with other destinations, and expand market reach. Overall, Ngargoretno Tourism Village has great potential to develop as a unique and interesting tourist destination. However, to make this happen, the implementation of IMC must be supported by upskilling, resource optimization, and a better-integrated promotion strategy in the future. As a suggestion, the manager of Ngargoretno Tourism Village is advised to further increase the capacity of human resources in the field of digital marketing through intensive training, especially in the use of digital tools such as social media, SEO, content creation, and digital analytics. Managers can also consider allocating more budget to promotional activities, such as paid advertising on social media and online tourism platforms. To expand the reach of marketing, strategic collaborations with third parties such as local governments, online travel agencies, and local influencers are also indispensable. This collaboration will not only strengthen the promotion of the village, but can also attract more tourists through stronger integrated tourism campaign programs. On the other hand, the emphasis on the uniqueness of local culture and community-based tourism must continue to be increased to create a strong differentiation compared to other tourist destinations. The integration of digital innovation and local uniqueness is expected to increase the attractiveness of Ngargoretno Tourism Village and maximize its potential as a leading ecotourism destination.

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