

# Tourism Marketing Communication: A Case Study at The Tourism Office of Pasuruan Regency

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## ABSTRACT

This research examines the tourism marketing communication strategies implemented by the Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office, considering the region's significant potential yet facing challenges in the digital era. Aiming to identify existing strategies and formulate effective innovations, this study employs a descriptive qualitative method. Data collection involved observation, interviews, and documentation, analyzed through data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. Findings reveal the office has implemented comprehensive and integrated strategies through meticulous market segmentation, targeting, and positioning. Integrated Marketing Communication, predominantly utilizing digital media and influencer collaborations, complemented by offline promotions, serves as a core pillar. This holistic approach proves effective in informing, persuading, and building tourist loyalty, contributing to the sustainable development of the tourism sector and local economy.

**Keywords:** Marketing Communication, Tourism, Strategy, Digital Media.

## I. Introduction

The Introduction serves as the gateway to your research, providing readers with the necessary context, significance, and objectives. Start with a broad overview of the research topic, highlighting its importance and relevance to the field. Discuss current trends, unresolved issues, or controversies in the area of study, supported by recent and relevant literature. This demonstrates your awareness of the field's state and establishes the gap your research intends to fill. Tourism is a vital sector that significantly contributes to a region's economy. Pasuruan Regency, with its rich and diverse tourism potential—ranging from natural charms like Mount Bromo and Kakek Bodo Waterfall, popular artificial destinations such as Taman Safari Prigen, to unique local culture and culinary delights—inherently possesses strong appeal. Amidst the increasingly competitive global tourism industry, marketing communication plays a crucial role in attracting tourists and shaping a positive destination image. Therefore, the Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office bears a significant responsibility in promoting the region's potential through various marketing strategies, both conventional and digital.

However, despite its immense potential, the development of the tourism sector in Pasuruan Regency still faces various empirical challenges, especially in the aspect of marketing communication in the digital era. Initial observations and available data indicate sub-optimal utilization of digital media, inconsistent promotional messages, and limited collaboration with local tourism industry players. Concrete indicators of these issues are evident in the low tourism revenue generated through online platforms, as well as a declining trend in tourist visits over recent years when compared to competitors in East Java, like Malang Regency.



Furthermore, changing post-pandemic tourist preferences demand more innovative and adaptive marketing strategies, yet the sub-optimal response in this regard hinders Pasuruan's competitiveness. These empirical phenomena give rise to theoretical problems in tourism marketing communication. Theoretically, a destination's success heavily relies on the precise implementation of Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP) concepts, as well as consistent and integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). The sub-optimal use of digital media and inconsistent promotional messages in Pasuruan suggest a failure in applying IMC principles and firmly establishing the destination's position in consumers' minds. Moreover, the lack of collaboration with local industry players reflects an underdeveloped utilization of networks and strategic partnerships, which are crucial for building sustainable competitive advantage and clearly communicating the core benefits of the tourism product.

The main gap identified in this research lies between the extraordinary tourism potential of Pasuruan Regency and the reality of the effectiveness of its marketing communication strategies, which have not yet reached their peak. Theoretically, an ideal marketing strategy should effectively disseminate information, persuade, and remind the target market to accept and be loyal to a destination. However, the situation on the ground shows that the implemented strategies have not been entirely successful in overcoming these obstacles, resulting in disproportionate declines in visits and revenue compared to the existing potential. This gap emphasizes the urgency of gaining a deeper understanding of how current marketing communication strategies operate, their extent of effectiveness, and how strategic interventions can be made to achieve more ambitious marketing objectives. The main objective of this research is to identify the marketing communication strategies implemented by the Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office in promoting tourist destinations. Furthermore, this study aims to formulate more effective and innovative marketing communication strategies to enhance the appeal of tourism in Pasuruan Regency, and to provide concrete recommendations for the Tourism Office in optimizing the utilization of digital media and collaboration with various parties to encourage sustainable growth of the local tourism sector.

## II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Marketing communication, as defined by Tjiptono, encompasses a range of activities aimed at disseminating information, influencing, persuading, and reminding target markets about a company or its products, to encourage consumer acceptance, purchase, and loyalty. In successful marketing communication, Philip Kotler (1980) outlines three continuous stages: segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP). Morissan (2014) further explains that market segmentation is an effort to divide a broad market into smaller, more homogeneous consumer groups with similar needs and responses to marketing actions, which is essential for better consumer service and persuasive communication. This segmentation can be based on demographics (e.g., age, gender), geography (regions), geodemographics (a combination of geographic and demographic factors), or psychographics (lifestyle and personality). Following segmentation, targeting involves selecting the specific consumer segments to focus marketing efforts, while positioning aims to form a product image or perception in the consumer's mind, which is crucial amidst high competition. Myers (1996) outlines competition structures at three levels: superiority, differentiation, and parity.

The concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has become increasingly vital. Kotler and Keller (2012) define IMC as an organization's effort to inform, persuade, and remind consumers about their products and brands. Morissan (2010) adds that IMC strives to unify all company marketing and promotional activities to produce a consistent image for consumers. Philip Kotler and Garry Armstrong (2001) further define IMC as a concept where a company carefully integrates and coordinates its many communication channels to deliver clear, consistent, and persuasive messages about the company and its products. To achieve effective marketing communication within the IMC framework, companies utilize a comprehensive promotion mix, consisting of five main tools (Morissan, 2014). These include advertising, which is a paid non-personal presentation of information intended to influence consumer cognition and affection (Peter & Olson, 2014). Second is direct marketing, an effort to communicate directly with target customers to elicit a response or

sales transaction, now recognized as an integral part of IMC programs (Belch & Belch, 2001). Furthermore, sales promotion is a direct stimulus to consumers to make a purchase, often in the form of incentives such as discounts (Peter & Olson, 2014). Personal selling involves direct, face-to-face interaction between a salesperson and prospective buyers to introduce a product and build customer understanding, making it a cost-effective tool for building preference (Agus Hermawan, 2012). Lastly, public relations is a critical component where an organization systematically plans and distributes information to control and manage its image and receive publicity (Belch & Belch, 2001).

### III. Research Method

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. Qualitative research was chosen to understand the phenomena of tourism marketing communication strategies holistically, in-depth, and within the natural context of the Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office. The descriptive approach is used to systematically, factually, and accurately describe the facts and characteristics of the strategies implemented. The research location is focused on the Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office as the main entity managing regional tourism. Additionally, the research also involves the Tourism Awareness Group (POKDARWIS) in Cendono Village, Purwosari District, Pasuruan Regency, to gain perspectives from the implementation level in the field and the synergy between the office and local communities.

Data collection in this research was conducted through several techniques. Primary data sources were obtained through direct observation of promotional and communication activities in the field, as well as in-depth interviews with relevant parties from the Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office and members of POKDARWIS Cendono Village. Secondary data (supporting data) were obtained through documentation studies, including reports, statistical data, and relevant publications from related agencies, as well as various literature and scientific articles relevant to marketing communication and tourism. The data processing technique used in this research follows the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, which involves three main concurrent activities. First, data reduction, which is the process of selecting, focusing attention on simplifying, abstracting, and transforming raw data emerging from field notes. Second, data display, which is the organization of information in the form of narratives, matrices, or charts that facilitate understanding. Third, conclusion drawing/verification, where initial conclusions are drawn from the data display, then verified by reviewing the data and discussing to ensure the validity and clarity of the findings.

### IV. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1. Tourism Marketing Communication in Pasuruan Regency

The Tourism Office of Pasuruan Regency has systematically implemented a comprehensive Market Segmentation strategy. This process involves collecting data and grouping tourist attractions based on primary tourism categories: nature tourism, artificial tourism, religious tourism, cultural tourism, special interest tourism, and educational tourism. Furthermore, within each of these categories, the office conducts market segmentation of visitors by breaking down segments based on the types of tour packages offered. For instance, for destinations like Bromo, tour packages have been specifically tailored for different audiences, such as families, solo travelers, or youth groups, thereby allowing for a clear identification of the types of tourism available and the main target audience for each offering. In terms of Market Targeting, the Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office strategically focuses its attention on tourists from outside the Pasuruan area. This targeting choice is based on considerations to maximize profits and increase local revenue. The expectation is that out-of-area tourists will stay longer in Pasuruan Regency, which will directly impact their increased spending on accommodation (hotels or homestays) and the purchase of souvenirs such as handicrafts, fashion products, and batik. This tourist spending will significantly drive the local economy, especially the creative economy sector and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) located around tourist destinations.

Lastly, the Market Positioning strategy is carried out by actively identifying and mapping the position of Pasuruan Regency's tourism resources. This effort is a strategic step to align tourism offerings with the previously established target and market segmentation. The Tourism Office also demonstrates a strong focus on community and village-based tourism development. This is realized through the empowerment of village governments and local communities, particularly through the establishment and support of Tourism Awareness Groups (POKDARWIS). POKDARWIS plays a crucial role in managing and developing village tourism potential independently, complementing destinations already managed by the regency government, while also expanding the reach of tourism to untapped areas. Based on research findings, the Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office actively implements an Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategy focused on digital promotion and third-party collaborations. They establish partnerships with international tourist talents to create promotional videos, clearly indicating Pasuruan's openness to foreign visitors. Furthermore, collaborations with local content creators and influencers are also crucial pillars for strengthening promotional reach on domestic social media. This strategy is integrated with the management of their own digital assets, such as the "ontrip" website and official Instagram account, to create a comprehensive marketing campaign, specifically aimed at increasing tourist visits from both domestic and international sources.

The "ontrip" (Online Tourism Information of Pasuruan) website serves as a crucial integrated information hub. It not only provides detailed tourist destination information but also offers access to transportation services, accommodation (hotels and homestays), and culinary options. This demonstrates the Tourism Office's commitment to managing tourism through extensive cooperation with local service providers such as hotels, transport providers, and restaurants. This collaboration extends to include Juanda Airport for tour guide information provision, illustrating the office's efforts to provide centralized and coordinated services for tourists. The Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office employs a robust multi-channel tourism promotion strategy, combining active digital efforts via their official YouTube channel and collaborations with local influencers/content creators on social media, with traditional offline participation in provincial exhibitions. This comprehensive approach is mirrored at the grassroots level by POKDARWIS Cendono Village, which similarly leverages social media, print media like catalogs and pamphlets, and engages in regency-organized exhibitions. This strong synergy highlights an effective transfer of marketing communication knowledge and coordinated promotional efforts from the regency office to local communities, significantly contributing to awareness and attracting tourists to community-managed destinations in Pasuruan Regency.

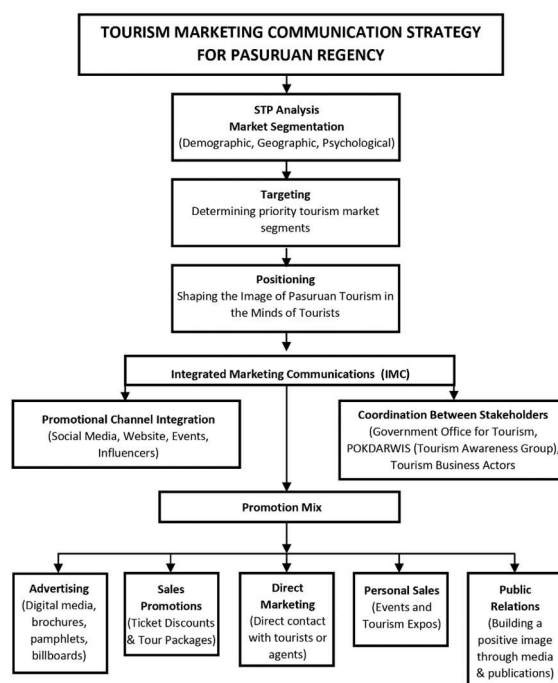
This research finding clearly indicates that the Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office has implemented a comprehensive and integrated tourism marketing communication strategy, aligning with modern marketing concepts. The meticulous application of Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP), as explained by Philip Kotler and Morissan (2014), forms the primary foundation. The Tourism Office has successfully identified various market segments based on tourism types and visitor preferences, targeted out-of-area tourists for maximum economic impact, and strategically positioned Pasuruan as a friendly, diverse, and modern destination. This approach is relevant to Tjiptono's (1997) definition of marketing communication, which emphasizes the dissemination of information, influence, persuasion, and the building of target market loyalty.

#### 4.2. The Most Dominant Media Used in the Marketing Communication Strategy at the Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office

The Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office clearly positions digital media and content-based collaborations as the most dominant channels in its marketing communication strategy. They actively leverage social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook—both through official accounts and by partnering with local and international content creators and influencers. Via YouTube, the office publishes documentary videos and destination profiles, while Instagram and Facebook serve as vital platforms for digital advertising and direct interaction. Collaborations with influencers, including foreign talents, play a strategic

role in expanding reach and demonstrating Pasuruan's openness to international tourists. At the core of their digital strategy is the "ontrip" website, a strategic digital asset functioning as an integrated information hub. This website not only promotes destinations but also integrates crucial information such as transportation access, accommodation options (homestays and hotels), and culinary recommendations. This function makes "ontrip" a comprehensive information bridge, connecting various elements of the tourism experience. The availability of this centralized information reflects the office's commitment to providing integrated services, while also strengthening Pasuruan's image as a modern and easily accessible destination. Various partnerships with hotels, transport providers, restaurants, and even Juanda Airport are all connected and informed through this digital platform, ensuring a consistent and compelling message is delivered.

Despite the strong dominance of digital media, the Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office complements it with a touch of offline media. Participation in provincial-level exhibitions, such as Gebyar Wisata Nusantara, serves as a sales promotion strategy. These exhibitions provide a space for direct interaction, allowing for face-to-face presentations and the distribution of physical promotional materials like catalogs and pamphlets. This offline approach complements digital efforts, creating a holistic brand experience and enhancing the overall effectiveness of marketing communication. This synergy is also evident at the village level, where POKDARWIS Cendono Village actively utilizes social media and participates in exhibitions, reflecting strong coordination between the regency government and local communities in promoting Pasuruan tourism. In the context of the promotion mix, this research highlights the significant dominance of digital media as the primary marketing communication channel used by the Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office. The utilization of platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, as well as the "ontrip" website and collaborations with influencers and content creators, aligns with the evolution of the promotion mix described by Morissan (2014) and the concepts of digital advertising (Peter & Olson, 2014) and direct marketing (Belch & Belch, 2001). This dominance of digital media indicates a strong adaptation to the preferences of modern tourists who heavily rely on online information and social media interaction.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Tourism Marketing Communications in Pasuruan Regency**

In formulating the conclusions, it is crucial to honestly acknowledge the limitations of this research. Although maximum effort has been made to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, every study has

limitations that need to be considered. The primary limitation in this study may lie in its specific research scope, focusing only on the Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office and POKDARWIS Cendono Village, as well as its reliance on an in-depth qualitative approach to gain data on the effectiveness of marketing communication. The implication of these limitations might affect the generalizability of the findings to broader contexts or more in-depth and different studies. Nevertheless, these limitations do not diminish the significance of the existing findings, namely a deep understanding of the comprehensive Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategy implemented by the Pasuruan Regency Tourism Office, the dominance of digital media in its promotion mix, and the synergy established with POKDARWIS at the village level. Therefore, future research is suggested to broaden the geographical scope, utilize a mixed-methods approach to measure quantitative impact, or analyze other factors influencing the effectiveness of marketing communication to provide a more comprehensive and generalizable overview.

## V. Conclusion

This research confirms that the application of STP (Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning) and IMC (Integrated Marketing Communication) is highly relevant and effective in regional tourism development. Pasuruan's success in coordinating digital promotions and community involvement (POKDARWIS) proves IMC's effectiveness in advancing the regional tourism sector while addressing existing competition. The dominance of digital media also aligns with the evolution of modern promotional mixes. Managerially, these findings suggest that tourism offices should focus on in-depth STP analysis and integrated IMC strategies, combining digital promotion (e.g., "ontrip" website, influencers) with offline efforts (e.g., exhibitions). Empowering POKDARWIS is crucial for community-based tourism. The importance of adapting to the dominance of digital media is also emphasized, including investing in digital platforms and content partnerships, while still maintaining the personal touch of offline promotion.

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