



Developing an IMC Strategy for Ethno-Wellness Tourism in Sidorejo Tourism Village

Janitra Fullaroa Salsabil^{1*}, Nurbaeti¹, Saptarining Wulan¹ & Myrza Rahmanita¹

¹ Trisakti Institute of Tourism, Indonesia

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Integrated marketing communication, Ethno-wellness tourism, Tourism promotion, Village tourism.

Abstract.

This research investigates the implementation and effectiveness of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) for promoting Pawukon-based ethno-wellness tourism in Sidorejo Tourism Village, Indonesia. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through tourist surveys, management interviews, and field observations to analyze the five IMC components: advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing. The findings identify a critical implementation gap. The village's strategy relies heavily on organic personal selling, which is effective for on-site visitor conversion, but lacks coordinated advertising, digital marketing, and proactive public relations to build broader market awareness. This creates a paradox where communication deepens the experience for existing visitors but fails to attract new audiences. The study concludes that Sidorejo's current promotional efforts are fragmented and not strategically integrated, significantly limiting its growth potential. The main argument is that transitioning from an informal, community-based promotional model to a structured IMC strategy is essential. Such a strategy must amplify authentic narratives through digital content and media engagement to bridge the gap between the destination's unique offerings and its market visibility.

Kata Kunci:

Komunikasi pemasaran terpadu, Parwisata kesehatan berbasis kearifan lokal, Promosi parwisata, Desa wisata.

Abstrak.

Penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan dan efektivitas Komunikasi Pemasaran Terpadu (IMC) untuk mempromosikan wisata ethno-wellness berbasis Pawukon di Desa Wisata Sidorejo, Indonesia. Dengan pendekatan metode campuran, data dikumpulkan melalui survei wisatawan, wawancara pengelola, dan observasi lapangan untuk menganalisis lima komponen IMC: periklanan, promosi penjualan, penjualan langsung, humas, dan pemasaran langsung. Temuan menunjukkan adanya kesenjangan kritis dalam penerapan IMC. Strategi promosi desa saat ini terlalu bergantung pada penjualan langsung secara organik. Metode tersebut efektif untuk mengonversi pengunjung yang sudah datang, namun tidak didukung oleh periklanan terkoordinasi, pemasaran digital, atau humas proaktif yang dapat membangun kesadaran pasar yang lebih luas. Hal ini menciptakan paradoks di mana komunikasi memperdalam pengalaman bagi pengunjung yang ada tetapi gagal menarik audiens baru. Studi menyimpulkan bahwa upaya promosi Sidorejo saat ini terfragmentasi dan tidak terintegrasi secara strategis, yang sangat membatasi potensi pertumbuhannya. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini adalah bahwa peralihan model promosi informal berbasis komunitas ke strategi IMC yang terstruktur sangat penting dilakukan. Strategi tersebut harus mampu memperkuat narasi autentik melalui konten digital dan keterlibatan media, guna menjembatani kesenjangan antara keunikan destinasi dan visibilitasnya di pasar.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: janitrafs@gmail.com (Janitra Fullaroa Salsabil).

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1. Introduction

The global tourism industry has undergone a profound transformation, shifting towards experiences that prioritize personal well-being, cultural immersion, and holistic health. This evolution has cemented wellness tourism as one of the fastest-growing sectors, a trend accelerated by the post-pandemic quest for mental and physical restoration (Amrullah et al., 2023; Gutierrez & Fernandes, 2023). Within this expansive domain, a distinct niche known as ethno-wellness tourism has gained prominence. It integrates indigenous knowledge systems, traditional healing practices, and cultural spirituality into the tourist experience, positioning local communities as custodians of both cultural heritage and personal well-being (Hariyadi et al., 2024). The Asia-Pacific region, with its deep-rooted traditions connecting nature, spirituality, and health, is a pivotal arena for this trend. Indonesia, particularly cultural heartlands like Yogyakarta and Central Java, possesses immense potential due to its rich biodiversity and practices such as Javanese jamu (herbal medicine) and philosophies of life balance (Wicaksana & Rachman, 2018).

The opportunity for ethno-wellness tourism is substantiated by strong regional recovery data. The Special Region of Yogyakarta has witnessed a robust resurgence in domestic tourism post-pandemic, alongside a steady increase in the number of designated tourism villages, indicating a favorable environment for niche development (Bapperida Jogja, 2024). Within this context, Sidorejo Tourism Village in Kulon Progo emerges as a prime candidate for ethno-wellness development. It offers unique assets rooted in Javanese tradition, including Jamu Pawukon (personalized herbal medicine based on the Javanese calendrical system) and other culturally grounded wellness practices (Hariyadi et al., 2024). However, as evidenced in Table 2, its visitor numbers, while growing, remain modest and disproportionate to both its unique offerings and the scale of regional tourism activity. This disparity highlights a critical gap between potential and realized market interest.

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is defined as a strategic process for planning, creating, integrating, and implementing various forms of communications to ensure clarity, consistency, and maximum impact (Al Amin et al., 2022; Percy, 2023). Its core function is to inform, persuade, and influence consumer decisions through a coordinated mix of tools, including advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and direct and digital marketing (Belch & Belch, 2021; Boone & Kurtz, 2022; Kotler et al., 2023). In tourism, IMC is recognized as vital for building destination awareness, shaping a distinctive brand identity, and driving visitor interest (Pramanik & Khan Rakib, 2020). Research indicates that for niche tourism, a well-integrated strategy is essential to communicate a unique value proposition effectively (Álvarez-Sánchez et al., 2024).

This study addresses a significant gap in the intersection of IMC theory and community-based tourism development. While extensive literature exists on both IMC frameworks (Belch & Belch, 2021; Kotler et al., 2023) and wellness tourism (Smith, 2022; Sylchuk et al., 2023), there is limited empirical investigation into how IMC principles are operationalized in low-resource, community-driven cultural tourism contexts. Most IMC research assumes organizational structures with dedicated marketing budgets and professional staff, a condition rarely met in village-based tourism enterprises (Buhalis et al., 2023). Furthermore, the specific application of IMC to ethno-wellness tourism, where cultural authenticity is both the product and the brand, remains underexplored. Therefore, this study contributes theoretically by extending IMC discourse into the unique domain of community-managed cultural heritage tourism and practically by offering an evidence-based diagnostic framework for similar destinations seeking to transition from organic to strategic promotion.

The case of Sidorejo reveals that in low-resource contexts, IMC implementation is often fragmented and reliant on interpersonal channels, and that effectiveness is contingent on strategic coordination

rather than the mere presence of communication tools. This study aims to diagnose and analyze the current promotional efforts in Sidorejo through the lens of IMC theory. The findings are expected to yield actionable insights for developing an optimized, culturally attuned IMC strategy, offering a replicable model for similar destinations seeking to leverage strategic promotion for sustainable growth.

2. Literature Review

This chapter reviews relevant previous studies to establish the conceptual and theoretical foundation of the research. The literature is organized to build progressively from general tourism concepts to the specific analytical framework of IMC, with each sub-section directly informing the conceptual framework for empirical analysis.

2.1. *Village Tourism*

Village tourism is conceptualized in academic literature through several complementary definitions that emphasize its community-based nature and cultural-natural foundations. It is broadly understood as a community-based approach that integrates local cultural values and natural resources (Yusrizal et al., 2024). Similarly, it is described as a village formally designated as a tourist attraction, which combines attractions, accommodations, and supporting facilities within a community structure (Qahar et al., 2025). Further definitions characterize it as the transformation of village settlements into destinations that emphasize local arts, culture, and natural beauty (Badal & Adhiakri, 2024). This concept is also framed as tourism focused specifically on traditional villages and their cultural heritage, offering authentic local experiences (X. Chen & Li, 2022). In this context, it is likewise defined as a form of travel centered on rural areas, with a strong emphasis on indigenous culture, traditions, and vernacular architecture (Kurnaz & Aniktar, 2024). These definitions collectively present village tourism as a holistic model where rural communities use their unique cultural, social, and environmental assets to create sustainable visitor experiences. This framework establishes Sidorejo as a community-based destination where cultural assets serve as the primary attraction.

2.2. *Cultural Tourism*

Cultural tourism, defined by the interplay between cultural heritage and travel, has evolved substantially from an elite niche market in the early 1990s to a major segment representing 39% of international arrivals (Smith, 2022). Fundamentally, it involves the tourist consumption of culture, encompassing both tangible heritage sites and intangible living experiences (Richards, 2022). This broad field is characterized by the exploration of a community's arts, traditions, and lifestyle (Benhaida et al., 2024), inviting deeper engagement with history, art, and social practices (Richa & Naithani, 2024). Ultimately, cultural tourism is understood as a dynamic interrelationship that enriches both the cultural meaning of places and the quality of the tourist experience itself (Vaz Serra et al., 2023). This literature establishes the theoretical basis for understanding how cultural heritage can be transformed into a marketable tourism product, which is essential for analyzing Sidorejo's ethno-wellness offerings.

2.3. *Wellness Tourism*

Wellness tourism is broadly defined as travel aimed at improving and balancing all domains of human life, including physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects (Smith, 2022). This form of tourism emphasizes proactive lifestyle choices, such as fitness, healthy eating, and relaxation, distinguishing it from medical tourism, which focuses on treatment (Sylchuk et al., 2023). Furthermore, wellness tourism focuses on customization, quality, and sustainability, catering to consumers' desires for

unique wellness programs while integrating cultural elements into tourism operations (Talukder et al., 2025). It encompasses activities that enhance personal well-being, emphasizing service experience, perceived value, and experiential satisfaction, ultimately contributing to an improved quality of life for individuals or tourists (Nguyen-Van et al., 2024). This body of literature provides the theoretical foundation for positioning Sidorejo within the broader wellness tourism market and understanding tourist expectations of wellness experiences.

2.4. *Ethno-wellness Tourism*

The concept of ethno-wellness is defined as a holistic health paradigm that incorporates traditional beliefs and cultural practices (Gunawijaya et al., 2023). Building upon this, McKinley (2024) elaborates that such an approach integrates cultural, spiritual, familial, mental, behavioral, and physical dimensions. Furthermore, Wenning (2021) provides a more focused perspective, characterizing ethno-wellness as the state of an individual's well-being as directly influenced by their cultural milieu. In essence, these practices represent a comprehensive system that unites body, mind, and spirit through local wisdom and inherited tradition (Kusumawidjaya et al., 2023). When applied within tourism, this concept evolves into ethno-wellness tourism, a travel form where culture is central to creating experiences that fuse cultural traditions with local practices, thereby enhancing authenticity and strengthening destination appeal (Bakhtin, 2022). Consequently, this tourism modality extends beyond mere physical health to promote psychological and spiritual well-being, aligning with a multidimensional understanding of health (Pirastyo et al., 2023). This literature directly informs the analysis of Sidorejo's unique value proposition as a destination offering culturally grounded wellness experiences based on Javanese traditions.

2.5. *Integrated Marketing Communication*

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) synthesizes advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and direct marketing to disseminate a consistent brand message across multiple platforms, thereby strengthening brand awareness and fostering consumer engagement (Belch & Belch, 2021; Noveriyanto, 2021). Within this framework, advertising functions as a fundamental instrument for building brand recognition and broadcasting messages, with its efficacy heightened by the shift toward digital platforms that enable more interactive and personalized outreach (Wang, 2021). Complementing this, sales promotions provide short-term incentives, such as discounts or contests that spark immediate consumer action and support both customer acquisition and retention (Christian & Dominik, 2022). Simultaneously, public relations cultivates a positive brand reputation and nurtures stakeholder relationships, which is especially critical in an era where transparency builds credibility (Hudders & Lou, 2022). Personal selling adds a direct, interpersonal dimension, allowing for customized communication that can decisively influence purchase decisions and loyalty (Kerr et al., 2024). Finally, direct marketing employs data-driven, personalized appeals, often through digital channels, to deepen customer intimacy and engagement, thereby constituting an essential element of contemporary marketing practice (Liu et al., 2024). These enable a cohesive and persuasive communication strategy which guides the diagnosis of Sidorejo's current promotional strategy and provides the theoretical basis for analyzing the empirical data.

2.6. *Conceptual Framework*

The literature reviewed above establishes the theoretical foundation for this study. Village tourism and cultural tourism demonstrate that community-based destinations leverage cultural heritage as their primary attraction. Wellness tourism and ethno-wellness tourism establish the growing market demand for culturally grounded health experiences. The IMC literature provides the framework for understanding how destinations strategically communicate their value proposition. However, the

application of IMC principles to community-based ethno-wellness tourism remains under-researched. This study addresses this gap by applying the five-component IMC framework to diagnose the promotional practices of Sidorejo Tourism Village. The conceptual framework posits that tourist interest is influenced by the coordinated implementation of these IMC components, and that effectiveness is contingent on strategic integration rather than isolated activities.

3. Methodology

This research was conducted at Sidorejo Tourism Village, Kulon Progo Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, which is strategically developing all components of the Integrated Marketing Communication framework (Advertising, Sales Promotion, Public Relations, Personal Selling, and Direct and Digital Marketing). The location was selected purposively due to its status as a pioneer village developing Pawukon-based ethno-wellness tourism and its need for strategic communication development.

The Special Region of Yogyakarta, as shown in Table 1, displays a strong post-pandemic recovery in domestic travel alongside a growing number of tourism villages, providing a supportive foundation for niche tourism development (Bapperida Jogja, 2024).

Table 1. Tourism Growth in The Special Region of Yogyakarta (2020-2024)

Year	Tourism Villages in the Special Region of Yogyakarta	Annual Domestic Tourist Visits to the Special Region of Yogyakarta (Thousands)*
2020	67	307
2021	148	2.625
2022	125	908
2023	148	1.760
2024	181	2.350

Source: Bapperida Jogja, 2024

Sidorejo attracts relatively few visitors despite Yogyakarta's overall tourism growth. Table 2 highlights a significant gap between low arrival numbers and the village's unique ethno-wellness potential. This imbalance proves that the destination requires strategic marketing intervention.

Table 2. Tourism Growth in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (2021-2024)

Year	Total Visitors
2021	0
2022	0
2023	150
2024	151

Source: Sidorejo Tourism Village, 2024

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. This design was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of IMC implementation and effectiveness, as quantitative data capture tourist perceptions while qualitative data reveal the operational realities and contextual factors influencing those perceptions. The combination of methods enables triangulation, enhancing the validity and depth of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Primary quantitative data were obtained through surveys using questionnaires distributed to 50 tourists who had visited Sidorejo Tourism Village. Primary qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews with village managers, guides, and community representatives, as well as direct observation of promotional practices. Secondary data sources included tourism village management reports, relevant scientific literature, and supporting documentation from government agencies. Data were collected using four instruments: 1) A Questionnaire employing a 1-4 Likert scale to measure tourist perceptions of each indicator within the Integrated Marketing Communication components; 2) observation; 3) Documentation studies of village reports and archives; and 4) interviews with the management.

The research sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique, with the main criterion being tourists who had experienced Sidorejo's ethno-wellness activities. The quantitative sample consisted of 50 respondents, a sample size considered adequate for descriptive studies in tourism research (Hair et al., 2019). For qualitative data, key informants included village management, tour guides, and community representatives, selected based on their direct involvement in promotional activities.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 27. Validity tests employed Pearson correlation, with items deemed valid if the calculated r-value exceeded the critical r-table value of 0.273. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with a threshold of 0.70 indicating acceptable internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). Descriptive statistical analysis, including mean ratings, was performed to assess tourist perceptions of each IMC component. Qualitative data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (2020) through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results of both analyses were then integrated through triangulation to provide comprehensive findings.

4. Result

The study engaged 50 tourists who had experienced Sidorejo's ethno-wellness offerings. The demographic profile reveals a distinct market segment highly relevant for niche tourism development. The majority of respondents were female (74%), aged 22-31 years (70%), and held a bachelor's degree (66%). This profile indicates a young, educated segment that values cultural enrichment and experiential learning, aligning with the ethno-wellness concept. The dominance of female respondents is consistent with global wellness tourism trends, which often report higher female participation rates. Furthermore, Instagram (46.24%) and TikTok (29.03%) emerged as the primary social media platforms used by respondents, confirming that the target market is digitally native and receptive to visual storytelling. This demographic is inherently inclined to share experiences online, making them potential digital ambassadors for the destination. Understanding this profile is essential for designing an IMC strategy that effectively reaches and engages the core market.

The reliability of the IMC measurement scale was evaluated before the perceptual data was analyzed. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.911 comfortably exceeds the standard 0.70 threshold, confirming excellent internal consistency for the 20-item instrument across the five IMC components. Moreover, tourist perceptions were measured using a Likert scale 1-4. The mean ratings for indicators across the five IMC components are presented below (Table 3).

The operational practices within Sidorejo Village, as revealed through interviews and observations, provide essential context for interpreting the quantitative perceptual data. These real-world practices directly explain the strengths and weaknesses captured in the tourist survey scores.

Table 3. Mean Rating Analysis of IMC Components in Sidorejo Tourism Village

Components	Indicator	Mean Rating
Advertising	ADV1: I find village ads more appealing when they feature direct tourist experiences.	3.34
	ADV2: I find digital ads (video, social media) more effective than print ads (brochures, billboards).	3.18
	ADV3: I find the promotional ads for the village very informative.	2.74
	ADV4: I first learned about Sidorejo Tourism Village through social media ads.	2.58
Sales Promotion	SPR1: I am interested in revisiting if offered a special discount for repeat visitors.	3.34
	SPR2: I am interested in visiting if there are discounts or special offers on tour packages.	3.30
	SPR3: I find family packages appealing and a motivator to visit.	3.20
	SPR4: I am interested in revisiting if offered a free jamu or yoga session.	3.18
Personal Selling	PSS1: I am interested in buying a package after getting a recommendation from a tourist who has visited before.	3.24
	PSS2: I am interested in buying wellness products/services if there is a direct offer like a discount or special package.	3.24
	PSS3: I am satisfied with the wellness experience and products I bought directly at the destination.	3.22
	PSS4: The detailed explanation of tour packages directly by the manager helps me choose this village as a destination.	3.18
Public Relations	PRS1: The village would be more widely known if it participated in special ethno-wellness tourism events or exhibitions.	3.36
	PRS2: PR activities like media articles or press releases help me get clearer information about the wellness concept.	3.18
	PRS3: The information I get through articles or news matches my actual experience at the village.	3.00
	PRS4: I first learned about Sidorejo Tourism Village through media coverage.	2.38
Direct & Digital Marketing	DDM1: Promotions offered through digital marketing drive my interest to visit the destination.	3.22
	DDM2: Direct marketing using email or brochures provides clear information about the offered tour packages.	2.96
	DDM3: Information I receive via telemarketing, email, or SMS marketing sparks my interest to visit.	2.78
	DDM4: I learn about specific village attractions through email or WhatsApp.	2.50

Source: Data Processing Results, 2025

The analysis of the Advertising component reveals a significant implementation gap. The very low mean score indicating minimal awareness generated through social media ads, at 2.58, is a direct consequence of the village's non-formal promotional approach. Management interviews consistently described promotional activities as organic and community-reliant. There is no dedicated strategy, budget, or calendar for paid advertising campaigns on digital or traditional media. This operational reality explains why tourist perceptions of advertising effectiveness remain low, despite their acknowledged preference for digital and testimonial ad formats, which scored 3.34 and 3.18 respectively.

The qualitative data surrounding Sales Promotion uncovers a strategic oversight. Tourist survey results demonstrated high receptivity to incentives, with scores for loyalty discounts and package deals ranging from 3.18 to 3.34. However, management practices do not capitalize on this demand. Interviews confirmed that discounts or special offers are not part of a structured marketing plan. They are provided occasionally and on a discretionary basis rather than as strategic tools to drive bookings or encourage repeat visitation. This explains the component's status as a high-potential but unrealized avenue for growth.

Personal Selling emerges from the qualitative findings as the operational backbone of village promotion, which aligns perfectly with its strong quantitative scores between 3.18 and 3.24. This method is not a supplementary activity but the central promotional mechanism. Managers and guides engage extensively in direct, face-to-face communication, dedicating time to narrate the cultural significance of the wellness practices. This qualitative insight confirms that the high value tourists place on direct explanations and peer recommendations is rooted in an authentic and consistent interpersonal exchange that effectively builds trust and facilitates conversion.

A stark contradiction within the Public Relations data is clarified by examining its implementation. The component received the highest single score for the perceived benefit of event participation, at 3.36, yet the lowest score for awareness from media coverage, at 2.38. Field observations indicate that while the village participates in external events such as regional tourism exhibitions, this activity is not supported by professional PR execution. There is no evidence of proactive media outreach, press release distribution, or relationship management with journalists. Therefore, the high potential score reflects a market belief in what PR could do, while the low awareness score reflects what it currently does not achieve due to a lack of strategic effort and understanding.

Finally, the operational approach to Direct and Digital Marketing elucidates the disconnect in its perceptual scores. The general belief in the power of digital promotion scored a 3.22, but the effectiveness of specific tools like email and WhatsApp scored between 2.50 and 2.96. Observations of village practices show that social media platforms are managed reactively without a coherent content strategy, functioning as simple notice boards. The community struggles to use direct marketing broadcasts effectively to build personalized customer relationships. This qualitative finding confirms that low execution scores stem from a mismatch between channel usage and strategic digital engagement.

5. Discussion

This discussion examines the significance of the findings to address how Integrated Marketing Communication is implemented and how effective it is in generating tourist interest for Sidorejo's Pawukon-based ethno-wellness tourism. The results reveal an implementation that is predominantly organic and uncoordinated, with effectiveness being critically dependent on interpersonal channels rather than a strategic mix.

The findings situate Sidorejo within a well-documented challenge in cultural and rural tourism: the struggle to transition from a place of inherent value to a competitively positioned destination. This challenge is not merely operational but theoretical, testing the applicability of formal marketing frameworks like IMC in contexts where commerce is deeply intertwined with cultural preservation and community identity. The IMC paradigm, with its roots in commercial brand management, assumes a level of centralized control and strategic intent that often does not exist in village-based tourism enterprises, which frequently prioritize social capital and authenticity over market capture (Buhalis et al., 2023). Therefore, analyzing Sidorejo's communication efforts requires evaluating them against both the ideal of integrated strategy and the practical realities of community-led development.

5.1. *Advertising*

The Advertising component reveals a significant implementation gap between tourist preferences and actual practice. The very low mean score indicating minimal awareness generated through social media ads, at 2.58, is a direct consequence of the village's non-formal promotional approach. Management interviews consistently described promotional activities as organic and community-reliant, with no dedicated strategy, budget, or calendar for paid advertising campaigns. This operational reality explains why tourist perceptions of advertising effectiveness remain low, despite their acknowledged preference for digital and testimonial ad formats, which scored 3.34 and 3.18 respectively.

The findings demonstrate that while tourists strongly believe in the effectiveness of digital advertising featuring authentic experiences, the absence of structured advertising means these preferences are not being met. This gap aligns with findings by Kumar and Barua (2024), who noted a “digital presence gap” in emerging destinations where platforms exist but strategic utilization does not. The Sidorejo case illustrates that advertising as an IMC tool is currently non-functional for awareness creation. This contrasts with Sagitarini's (2024) research in other contexts, which found digital advertising to be a significant driver of visit intention. The difference lies in execution: Sagitarini's findings assume active advertising implementation, whereas Sidorejo's low awareness scores stem from implementation failure rather than channel ineffectiveness.

The high score for ads featuring direct tourist experiences (3.34) provides a clear strategic direction. This preference aligns with the broader literature on authentic content marketing, where user-generated and testimonial-style content is more trusted and engaging than corporate messaging (Prados-Peña et al., 2022). The management of Sidorejo Tourism Village must leverage its authentic storytelling strengths to produce short videos of actual visitor experiences. This strategy aligns current marketing practices with tourist preferences. The resulting media converts inactive advertising into an effective driver of destination awareness.

5.2. *Sales Promotion*

The Sales Promotion component reveals a critical strategic oversight. Tourist survey results demonstrated high receptivity to incentives, with scores for loyalty discounts (3.34), package discounts (3.30), family packages (3.20), and free jamu or yoga sessions (3.18). However, management practices do not capitalize on this demand. Interviews confirmed that discounts or special offers are not part of a structured marketing plan but are provided occasionally and on a discretionary basis.

This finding indicates a significant missed opportunity. Literature positions tactical promotions as highly effective for stimulating demand in growing destinations, particularly for encouraging trial and repeat visitation (Setegn & Japee, 2025). The expressed interest in family packages aligns with broader tourism trends favoring multi-generational travel focused on shared experiences (Qenaj & Beqiri, 2022). The failure to act on this clear market signal represents a strategic misalignment between tourist preference and operational practice, a problem noted by Devkota et al. (2023) in other cultural tourism villages where community management lacks marketing expertise.

The Sidorejo case demonstrates that tourist interest, while present, is not being systematically converted into visitation due to the absence of promotional incentives. This has practical implications for similar destinations: understanding tourist preferences for incentives is insufficient without the operational capacity to implement them strategically. The simple development of a framework for seasonal promotions, early-bird booking discounts, or value-added family packages could directly

translate market interest into concrete bookings, addressing the visitor number gap identified in the introduction.

5.3. *Personal Selling*

Personal Selling emerges from the findings as the operational backbone of village promotion, aligning perfectly with its strong quantitative scores between 3.18 and 3.24. This method is not a supplementary activity but the central promotional mechanism. Managers and guides engage extensively in direct, face-to-face communication, dedicating time to narrate the cultural significance of the wellness practices. This qualitative insight confirms that the high value tourists place on direct explanations and peer recommendations is rooted in an authentic and consistent interpersonal exchange that effectively builds trust and facilitates conversion.

This finding strongly supports literature on experiential tourism, which argues that for intangible, culture-heavy services, interpersonal trust and narrative are the primary drivers of value and conversion (Prados-Peña et al., 2022). It also echoes research by Jing and Loang (2024), which emphasizes the guide's role as a cultural mediator in achieving perceived authenticity. However, this stands in contrast to studies in more mainstream destinations where personal selling's impact is often limited (Azmi et al., 2025). This difference underscores a key theoretical insight: the efficacy of specific IMC tools is contingent on the product's nature. For Sidorejo's complex ethno-wellness offering, personal selling is not merely a promotional tool but a core part of the product delivery itself.

The over-reliance on personal selling, while effective for conversion, introduces a vulnerability to the destination's long-term sustainability. This model is highly dependent on the knowledge and charisma of individual guides and the spontaneous generation of positive word-of-mouth. It lacks the systematic lead generation and brand-building functions of advertising and PR that ensure a pipeline of new visitors. As Chen et al. (2023) note in wellness tourism, destinations must balance deep, authentic engagement with strategic outreach to ensure economic viability. A lack of balance will keep Sidorejo permanently in the "pioneer" phase of development. This position leaves the destination vulnerable to unpredictable guide availability and stops the community from turning its unique assets into shared prosperity. Empirical evidence shows that their marketing impact is highly unequal. Personal recommendations drive strong interest during visits, but strategic media fails to build early public awareness.

5.4. *Public Relations*

The Public Relations data reveals a stark contradiction between perceived potential and actual effectiveness. The component received the highest single score for the perceived benefit of event participation, at 3.36, yet the lowest score for awareness from media coverage, at 2.38. Field observations indicate that while the village participates in external events such as regional tourism exhibitions, this activity is not supported by professional PR execution. There is no evidence of proactive media outreach, press release distribution, or relationship management with journalists. Therefore, the high potential score reflects a market belief in what PR could do, while the low awareness score reflects what it currently does not achieve due to a lack of strategic effort.

This "credibility deficit" is particularly consequential in the current media landscape. In an era where consumers are skeptical of paid advertising, earned media and third-party endorsements are critical for building legitimacy (Yen & Yu, 2022). Sidorejo's absence from media narratives means it misses out on this powerful form of social proof. While the community may participate in events, the failure to translate this into press releases, influencer collaborations, or feature stories means these activities

do not amplify the brand. This contrasts with successful case studies where cultural villages have used strategic PR to become known for specific traditions, effectively moving from local sites to points of interest on the cultural tourism map (Phuanpoh & Ketsomboon, 2023). The evidence suggests that PR effectiveness in community-based tourism requires not just participation in events but also professional media relations and proactive storytelling.

The high score for event participation (3.36) indicates that tourists perceive PR activities as valuable when they are visible and engaging. This aligns with research by Sawir et al. (2024), who found that community participation in events can be transformative for tourism development when supported by clear communication strategies. The management of Sidorejo's village requires a shift from random participation to targeted public relations planning. Effective implementation involves producing media kits, networking with specialized wellness influencers and journalists, and using events for media exposure instead of treating them as isolated activities.

5.5. *Direct and Digital Marketing*

The Direct and Digital Marketing component exposes a fundamental misalignment between channel availability and strategic utilization. The general belief in the power of digital promotion scored a 3.22, but the effectiveness of specific tools like email and WhatsApp scored between 2.50 and 2.96. Observations of village practices show that social media platforms are managed reactively without a coherent content strategy, functioning as simple notice boards. Similarly, direct marketing channels are used for irregular broadcast messages rather than for fostering personalized dialogue or customer relationships.

This misalignment between channel potential and execution effectiveness is consistent with research by Islami et al. (2024), who found that the success of digital promotion depends on content alignment with platform trends and audience preferences. Sidorejo's social media presence functions as a static information board rather than an interactive engagement platform, failing to leverage the algorithms and interactive features that drive discovery on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. This gap represents a significant missed opportunity given the digital-native profile of the target demographic, with 46.24% using Instagram and 29.03% using TikTok as primary platforms.

The findings contrast with research on digitally mature destinations where social media is a primary awareness driver (Ozer et al., 2025). Instead, Sidorejo's situation echoes the challenges noted by Kumar and Barua (2024) in emerging destinations, where a lack of digital marketing literacy leads to ineffective promotion. The low scores for email and WhatsApp information (2.50-2.96) further indicate that direct marketing tools are not being used effectively. According to Kotler et al. (2023), direct marketing should facilitate personalized, two-way communication to foster long-term customer relationships, but Sidorejo's current approach is largely one-way and passive. The strategic realignment should involve a content strategy for Instagram and TikTok that embraces storytelling, user-generated content, and interactive engagement.

6. Conclusion

This study accomplished its objective by diagnosing the implementation and effectiveness of Integrated Marketing Communication for Pawukon-based ethno-wellness tourism in Sidorejo Village. The findings reveal a critical gap: IMC is implemented informally, relying almost exclusively on organic personal selling and word-of-mouth, while strategic components like advertising, digital marketing, and public relations are severely underutilized. Consequently, its effectiveness is paradoxical. Communication is highly effective at building trust and converting visitors who are already on-site but is strikingly ineffective at performing the essential marketing function of

generating initial awareness and attracting a broader tourist base. This asymmetry between strong experiential delivery and weak market outreach fundamentally limits the destination's growth potential.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in extending IMC discourse into the unique domain of community-managed cultural heritage tourism. The findings demonstrate that the efficacy of IMC tools is contingent on the product's nature, with personal selling being paramount for complex, culture-intensive experiences. Furthermore, the study reveals that in low-resource contexts, IMC implementation is often fragmented and reliant on interpersonal channels, and that effectiveness depends on strategic coordination rather than the mere presence of communication tools. This contributes to a more nuanced understanding of IMC in niche tourism contexts.

Tourism practitioners must realize that a unique, high-quality product is not enough for ethno-wellness destinations. Long-term sustainability depends entirely on strategic, integrated marketing. Village management should develop a minimum viable IMC plan that systematically captures and amplifies its authentic personal narratives into targeted digital content, pursues proactive media partnerships, and implements simple sales promotions to leverage expressed market demand.

The primary barrier is not the absence of communication tools, but the lack of strategic planning, professional skills, and organizational capacity to coordinate these tools effectively. Investment in marketing skills and strategic planning may be as important as investment in infrastructure and product development. Future research should investigate the measurable impact of such an integrated strategy on visitor growth and community benefit, providing a replicable model for similar cultural tourism villages. In addition, transitioning from disorganized promotion to a structured communication strategy is the key step for Sidorejo Tourism Village to turn its hidden potential into actual success.

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