



IMC and Digital Marketing in Event Tourism to Enhance Tourist Visits: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the integration of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and digital marketing strategies within the context of event tourism to enhance tourist visits. Utilizing a systematic literature review (SLR) approach, the study synthesizes findings from 87 peer-reviewed articles obtained from reputable academic databases. The research examines key theoretical foundations, empirical evidence, and the practical use of digital tools and strategic communication to attract and engage tourists in event-based tourism. Theoretical frameworks underpinning the study include communication theory, the marketing mix, and audience engagement models, complemented by middle and applied theories related to IMC, digital marketing, and event tourism. The results highlight IMC as a central theme in the literature, with growing emphasis on tourist engagement, experience personalization, and authentic messaging. Social media and data-driven marketing are found to play significant roles in influencing tourist decision-making and increasing destination appeal. This review contributes to the academic discourse by identifying gaps in research and suggesting future empirical directions, especially regarding the application of advanced technologies like artificial intelligence and virtual reality in promoting event tourism. Practically, the study offers strategic insights for tourism stakeholders to design integrated marketing efforts that effectively boost tourist attendance and support sustainable growth in event destinations.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing Communication, Digital Marketing, Event Tourism, Systematic Literature Review, Social Media Marketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

The intersection between Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and digital marketing in the context of event tourism has become a rapidly expanding field of inquiry. This convergence is of increasing relevance as destinations seek innovative ways to boost tourist engagement and enhance their visibility in an increasingly competitive global tourism market (Dewi et al., 2022). Event tourism, defined as the strategic use of festivals, cultural programs, and special events to attract visitors, has been recognized as a vital driver of regional development and place branding (Királ'ová & Pavlíček, 2015). In the digital age, the tourism industry is undergoing profound transformation, reshaping how destinations and tourism-related organizations operate. Advances in digital technology have influenced marketing structures, business models, and customer engagement methods, particularly within the event tourism sector (Rathore, 2019). Digital platforms now enable real-time interaction, customized experiences, and global outreach, fundamentally altering the way destinations promote their offerings to potential travelers. The ubiquity of the internet and mobile technologies has also accelerated the spread of tourist information, influencing visitor decision-making and reshaping destination marketing strategies (Ali & Xiao-ying, 2021). In Indonesia, event tourism plays a strategic role in national tourism development. Initiatives such as the *Kharisma Event Nusantara* and *100 Wonderful Events Indonesia*—launched by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy—highlight the government's commitment to using cultural and creative events as tools for boosting both domestic and international tourist arrivals. For instance, events like the *Bali Arts Festival*, *Toraja International Festival*, and *Lake Toba Festival* not only showcase local heritage but also serve as focal points for marketing campaigns across various digital channels. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism (2023), over 110 official events were held across provinces as part of the Kharisma Event Nusantara program, contributing to significant increases in regional tourism traffic and local economic activity. These events, supported by integrated marketing strategies and digital engagement efforts, illustrate the practical application of IMC and digital marketing in enhancing tourist visits.

Despite the increasing use of these strategies, academic research that systematically explores the integration of IMC and digital marketing within the Indonesian event tourism context remains scarce. Given the country's vast cultural diversity and growing digital ecosystem—with over 200 million internet users—Indonesia represents a fertile ground for exploring how technology-enabled communication strategies influence tourist behavior and destination competitiveness. This systematic literature review aims to synthesize scholarly findings on the application of IMC and digital marketing to improve tourist attendance in event-based tourism. The review seeks to identify core theories, empirical patterns, and strategic insights from the literature, while also highlighting existing research gaps. It further underscores the role of digital transformation—defined as the organizational integration of advanced digital technologies—as a key force in reshaping how tourism destinations communicate, compete, and deliver value to increasingly connected and experience-driven travelers (Rathore, 2019). This study seeks to answer the following research question: How do IMC and digital marketing strategies affect tourist visit enhancement in event tourism settings?. While previous research has explored the

roles of IMC and digital marketing in general tourism contexts, a comprehensive synthesis specifically focused on event tourism particularly in emerging digital economies like Indonesia remains underdeveloped.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to thoroughly examine how Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and digital marketing strategies have been applied to increase tourist visits within the scope of event tourism. The primary objective was to identify, evaluate, and synthesize empirical studies that assess the effectiveness of these marketing approaches while also revealing research gaps and proposing directions for future investigation. To ensure methodological transparency and rigor, the review followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol. This framework provided a structured process for article selection, inclusion, and evaluation, thereby supporting a high level of replicability and clarity. The review specifically targeted peer-reviewed journal articles that directly addressed the intersection of IMC, digital marketing, and event tourism. Special attention was given to studies that investigated tourist behavior, visitor engagement, and destination promotion strategies.

The literature search was conducted using three major academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, and ProQuest. A combination of carefully selected keywords and Boolean operators was employed to ensure comprehensive coverage. Keywords included “integrated marketing communication,” “digital marketing,” “event tourism,” “tourist behavior,” and “destination promotion.” To maintain the relevance of findings to current trends, the search was restricted to English-language articles published between 2014 and 2024. The population of this review consisted of academic articles that served as the primary units of analysis. The final sample comprised 87 peer-reviewed studies, selected based on their methodological quality, empirical relevance, and thematic alignment with the research focus. Studies were excluded if they lacked peer-review status, were not published in English, or did not explicitly examine the integration of IMC and digital marketing in event tourism. The selected studies spanned both developed and emerging tourism markets, including case studies from Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries, thus providing a diverse contextual understanding. An initial set of retrieved articles underwent a multi-phase screening process, beginning with a review of titles and abstracts, followed by a full-text analysis to determine final eligibility. Only articles meeting all inclusion criteria were included in the synthesis phase. For each eligible study, data were extracted using a standardized coding template that captured key attributes such as authorship, year of publication, research objectives, methodological design, theoretical frameworks, and main findings. To interpret the extracted data, a thematic analysis technique was applied. This method facilitated the identification of recurring conceptual patterns, strategic marketing practices, and theoretical insights relevant to IMC and digital marketing in event tourism. The analysis emphasized how these strategies contribute to attracting tourists, enhancing visitor engagement, and reinforcing event-based destination branding. Key constructs that emerged from the reviewed studies included core IMC

elements (e.g., message consistency, multi-platform integration, audience segmentation), digital marketing tools (such as social media, email campaigns, SEO, and influencer collaboration), and tourism-related outcomes (including visitor satisfaction, behavioral intentions, and actual attendance levels). While this review did not involve primary data collection, it treated these constructs as analytical variables, systematically categorizing findings according to thematic relevance and empirical strength.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The systematic review of the selected studies identified several recurring themes and notable developments in the implementation of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and digital marketing strategies within the domain of event tourism. IMC consistently emerged as a dominant construct, reinforcing its strategic function in harmonizing promotional activities across multiple communication platforms (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015). A significant portion of the literature underscores the transformative role of digital marketing in shaping tourist perceptions, demonstrating that digital technologies extend beyond operational efficiency to directly affect visitor satisfaction and perceived value (Sharafuddin et al., 2024). Engaging tourists through interactive digital campaigns is a frequently emphasized success factor. Several studies revealed that participatory marketing approaches, such as real-time engagement via social media and event-specific digital content, effectively build community involvement and strengthen attendance. Another prevalent theme is the personalization of content, wherein digital tools enable event organizers to deliver customized messages based on user profiles, preferences, and behaviors—thereby improving relevance and tourist loyalty.

Table 1. IMC and Digital Marketing to Enhance Tourist Visit

Study	Findings	Key Components
Kitchen & Burgmann (2015)	IMC plays a strategic role in harmonizing multi-platform promotional activities.	IMC, Strategic Communication, Multi-Channel Messaging
Sharafuddin et al. (2024)	Digital marketing enhances tourist satisfaction and experience in tourism services.	Digital Experience, Tourist Satisfaction, Service Innovation
Arroyo et al. (2023)	Social media influences tourist perceptions and decision-making in choosing destinations.	Social Media Marketing, Destination Image, Tourist Behavior
Rathore (2019)	Data-driven strategies improve campaign effectiveness and marketing personalization.	Data Analytics, Personalization, ROI Optimization
Moreno et al. (2024)	Integration of IMC and digital marketing increases tourist visits and supports sustainability.	IMC, Digital Integration, Sustainable Growth
Kumar & Shekhar (2020)	Digitalization enables innovation in tourism promotion and expands marketing potential.	Digitalization, Innovation, Tourism Promotion
Reinhold et al. (2023)	Long-term digital marketing strategies contribute to destination resilience.	Digital Strategy, Sustainability, Tourism Resilience
Barashok et al. (2021)		Stakeholder Engagement, Digital Platforms, Tourism Collaboration

	Digital platforms support stakeholder interaction and efficient engagement.	
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The compiled table presents a synthesis of recent scholarly contributions that examine how Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and Digital Marketing (DM) contribute to enhancing tourist visits, particularly in the context of destination branding and event tourism.

Each study provides unique insights into the mechanisms through which IMC and digital strategies influence tourist behavior. For example, Kitchen & Burgmann (2015) emphasize that IMC functions as a unifying communication strategy that ensures consistency and clarity across multiple media platforms. This finding aligns with the Hierarchy of Effects Model, which posits that consistent and persuasive communication enhances awareness, interest, and eventual action (i.e., visiting a destination).

Sharafuddin et al. (2024) and Arroyo et al. (2023) highlight the role of digital marketing in shaping tourist experiences and perceptions. Their findings confirm that tools such as social media and interactive campaigns play a significant role in increasing destination appeal and satisfaction. This reflects principles of experience marketing, where the emotional and participatory aspects of engagement are key drivers of consumer behavior.

Rathore (2019) underscores the importance of data-driven marketing, noting that digital analytics empower marketers to personalize communication based on behavioral data, leading to higher efficiency and ROI. This is supported by Technology Acceptance Theory (TAM), which explains how perceived usefulness and ease of use in digital platforms influence user adoption and engagement.

In a broader context, Moreno et al. (2024) and Kumar & Shekhar (2020) emphasize that integrating IMC and digital tools fosters sustainable destination branding and strengthens strategic communication. These approaches enhance visibility, trust, and differentiation in a crowded tourism market. They also align with the Resource-Based View (RBV), suggesting that coordinated and technology-enhanced communication capabilities can serve as valuable, rare, and inimitable resources for competitive advantage.

Finally, Reinhold et al. (2023) and Barashok et al. (2021) extend the discussion to long-term impacts, asserting that digital and integrated communication strategies contribute to destination resilience and stakeholder collaboration—both essential for sustainable tourism development in the post-pandemic era.

In summary, the studies collectively affirm that the synergy between IMC and digital marketing is not only instrumental in increasing tourist arrivals but also in fostering long-term engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty. These strategies are vital for developing competitive, adaptive, and visitor-centered tourism destinations.

Authenticity in communication also emerged as a critical component of marketing effectiveness. Tourists increasingly value transparent, experience-based storytelling from organizers, and research suggests that authentic narratives significantly contribute to event credibility and attractiveness. The convergence of IMC and digital strategies is seen as essential in crafting such messaging while also enhancing the broader appeal of event tourism destinations. In addition, data-driven marketing has gained traction as a powerful tool for optimizing strategy. The use of digital analytics provides actionable insights into consumer behavior, helping marketers tailor content, predict trends, and allocate resources

more effectively. The integration of behavioral data with campaign performance metrics facilitates continuous improvement, maximizing both impact and return on investment. Social media, in particular, was highlighted across studies as a major influence on tourists' destination perceptions and travel decisions. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok enable not only the dissemination of promotional content but also the generation of user-driven media that can shape collective opinions about events and destinations (Arroyo et al., 2023).

Tabel 2. Comparative Finding of IMC, DM, TV

Aspect	Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)	Digital Marketing (DM)	Tourist Visits (TV)
Concept Overview	A strategic communication process that ensures consistency across all marketing channels to reinforce brand identity and value.	The use of internet-based platforms and tools (social media, SEO, content, analytics) to engage consumers in real time.	The actual number of people traveling to a destination, influenced by marketing, experience, and accessibility.
Key Variables	Message consistency, media synergy, audience targeting, communication clarity	Social media usage, content quality, personalization, influencer presence, online engagement metrics	Tourist arrivals, length of stay, repeat visits, behavioral intention, satisfaction level
Strategic Focus	Building coherent brand image through multi-channel promotion to influence tourist perception and decision-making	Enhancing interaction, reach, and personalization through digital ecosystems to drive engagement and destination interest	Measuring marketing effectiveness, understanding traveler behavior, and optimizing strategies for tourism growth
Impact on Tourism	Improves perceived image of destinations, increases trust, and supports higher recall and recommendation rates	Expands reach, enables data-driven targeting, improves engagement, and accelerates booking decisions	Acts as the primary indicator of tourism success; increased visits lead to higher economic returns and better destination value

The comparative table outlines the interrelationship between Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), Digital Marketing (DM), and Tourist Visits (TV) as critical elements in modern tourism promotion strategies, especially within the context of event tourism. From a conceptual standpoint, IMC is defined as a coordinated communication strategy that integrates various promotional tools to deliver a unified and consistent message across multiple channels. This aligns with Kitchen and Burgmann's (2015) view that IMC ensures message consistency and media synergy, which is essential for creating a strong destination image. In contrast, Digital Marketing encompasses the use of online platforms such as social media, search engines, email, and content marketing to reach and engage target audiences. As Rathore (2019) suggests, the power of digital transformation lies in its ability to enable real-time interaction, personalized experiences, and data-informed decision-making.

The key variables associated with IMC include media integration, clarity of communication, and targeted messaging—factors that directly influence how a destination is perceived. On the other hand, digital marketing strategies rely heavily on variables like social media engagement, influencer effectiveness, personalization, and content relevancy (Sharafuddin et al., 2024; Arroyo et al., 2023). These digital variables serve as operational mechanisms that facilitate more customized and efficient interactions with potential tourists.

Strategically, IMC focuses on shaping a coherent brand identity and reinforcing it through multiple communication channels to increase tourist interest and recall. Digital marketing, however, emphasizes interaction and reach, using technology and consumer data to craft tailored campaigns that respond to changing behaviors and preferences. This reflects the technological shift highlighted by Kumar and Shekhar (2020), who argued that digitalization promotes innovation in tourism promotion and enhances competitiveness. In terms of outcomes, both IMC and DM have a measurable impact on tourism, particularly in boosting tourist visits. A consistent IMC campaign contributes to trust, emotional connection, and perceived value of destinations, which ultimately increases the likelihood of tourist arrivals and repeat visits (Moreno et al., 2024). Meanwhile, digital marketing directly influences decision-making processes by enhancing visibility, facilitating online bookings, and providing immersive content experiences (Reinhold et al., 2023).

Overall, Tourist Visits (TV) serve as the ultimate performance indicator, capturing the tangible results of strategic marketing efforts. Increases in tourist visits reflect the effectiveness of both IMC and digital marketing in attracting and retaining travelers, which is critical for sustainable tourism growth (Rathore, 2019; Styliadis et al., 2014).

The reviewed studies encompassed a diverse range of research methodologies, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches. A significant proportion of the literature was drawn from countries in Asia and Europe, with notable case studies focusing on Indonesia, the United Kingdom, and Spain. Approximately 60% of the articles employed quantitative methods, often utilizing survey-based analysis to examine tourist behavior and marketing effectiveness, while the remainder consisted of qualitative case studies and conceptual frameworks exploring strategic communication within event tourism. This variation reflects the multidimensional nature of research in IMC and digital marketing, as applied to different event tourism contexts across various cultural and technological landscapes. Despite these insights, the review is not without limitations. The inclusion criteria restricted the selection to peer-reviewed articles published in English between 2014 and 2024, which may have excluded relevant studies from non-English publications or grey literature. Moreover, the findings tend to reflect contexts with relatively advanced digital infrastructure and active tourism economies, potentially limiting the generalizability of conclusions to regions with less developed technological capabilities. Therefore, caution should be exercised in applying these results universally, particularly in emerging tourism destinations with unique socio-cultural and digital adoption dynamics. Future studies are encouraged to expand the scope of data sources, incorporate multilingual and regional literature, and conduct comparative research across different tourism markets to strengthen the external validity of findings.

4. CONCLUSION

This systematic review underscores the significant role of IMC and digital marketing in enhancing tourist visits within the context of event tourism, highlighting the importance of integrated strategies in attracting, engaging, and retaining tourists. The synthesis of findings from 87 peer-reviewed articles reveals the effectiveness of digital tools and strategic communication in influencing tourist decision-making and promoting sustainable growth in event destinations. The review identifies several gaps in the current literature, particularly regarding the application of advanced technologies like artificial intelligence and virtual reality in promoting event tourism, presenting opportunities for future empirical research; further exploration is needed to understand how these technologies can be leveraged to create immersive and personalized experiences for tourists. Practically, this study offers valuable insights for tourism stakeholders to design integrated marketing efforts that effectively boost tourist attendance and support sustainable growth in event destinations (Moreno et al., 2024). By adopting data-driven approaches and focusing on authentic messaging, event organizers can create more engaging and personalized experiences for tourists, ultimately enhancing destination appeal and competitiveness (Rathore, 2019). Moreover, future studies should explore the long-term impact of digital marketing strategies on destination resilience and sustainability, contributing to the responsible development of event tourism (Reinhold et al., 2023; Styliadis et al., 2014). Government officials and destination marketing organizations should utilize strong branding initiatives to attract more visitors and investors (Kim et al., 2017).

The integration of digital transformation significantly enhances marketing management strategies by providing access to real-time consumer data, facilitating more informed decision-making through advanced analytical tools that dissect consumer patterns and predict trends (Rathore, 2019). It has revolutionized existing marketing management strategies by blending technology with traditional marketing methods, expanding the scope of marketing activities and fostering a shift towards data-driven strategies that focus on understanding customers' behaviors, preferences, and feedback (Rathore, 2019). Digital platforms are essential instruments for effective engagement among different actors in the tourism sector (Barashok et al., 2021). These platforms facilitate connections and communications, characterizing a new phase of digitalization in tourism, despite highlighting differences in analysis and knowledge at both theoretical and operative levels (Marino et al., 2022). Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality technologies offer enormous potential to enhance customer experiences and drive engagement by providing immersive experiences that allow customers to interact with products and services before purchase (Rathore, 2019) (Ворожкова, 2018). The growing essence of sharing economy and presence of social media are important contributors to the enhancement of digitalization in tourism industry (Kumar & Shekhar, 2020).

The digital transformation encourages businesses to experiment with new techniques and strategies, fostering continuous learning and adaptation, enabling organizations to rapidly refine their strategies based on insights derived from digital initiatives, which leads to more effective resource allocation and improved marketing performance, and ultimately driving enhanced customer engagement and heightened brand loyalty through meticulously tailored marketing interventions. However, this review is subject to certain limitations. The selection criteria were restricted to peer-reviewed articles published in English between 2014 and 2024, which may exclude relevant perspectives from non-English or regional literature. Additionally, the heterogeneity of study designs

and contexts across the reviewed articles limits the ability to draw generalized conclusions. Future research should consider expanding data sources, integrating multilingual studies, and conducting comparative analyses across diverse cultural and technological settings to strengthen the external validity and contextual relevance of findings.

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