



## Digital Marketing Technology Transformation as Instrument for Enhancing Community Creative Economy through Owabong Tourism Attraction

<sup>1</sup>Rohmah Nia Chandra Sari, <sup>1</sup>Ulfah Rosyidah, <sup>1</sup>Resya Nur Intan Putri

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Social and Political Science, Jenderal Soedirman University, Indonesia

### Article Info

#### Article History:

Received: 11 March 2026

Revised: 1 April 2026

Accepted: 8 April 2026

Published: 4 May 2026

#### Keywords:

*Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), Digital Marketing, Owabong Purbalingga, Creative Economy, Tourism Attraction*

### ABSTRACT

The tourism sector serves as a primary driver for the creative economy, with effective marketing communication being the key to its sustainability. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategy at Owabong Tourism, Purbalingga, in enhancing tourist attraction and its impact on the community's creative economy. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative research method, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with the marketing division, field observations, and documentation studies. The findings indicate that Owabong has undergone a strategic transformation from conventional media to an integrated digital ecosystem. Analysis based on Kotler's eight IMC elements reveals that interactive marketing via social media (Instagram and TikTok) and segmented sales promotions are the most dominant instruments in attracting visitors. While digital marketing has successfully expanded market reach, challenges such as audience digital literacy and reliance on paid advertising remain significant hurdles. This study concludes that the synergy between digital marketing technology and adaptive regional enterprise governance not only significantly boosts tourist visits—reaching 150,000 during peak periods—but also creates a multiplier effect for local creative economy actors.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license



### Corresponding Author

Rohmah Nia Chandra Sari

Email: rohmah.sari@unsoed.ac.id

### INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector currently holds a strategic position in the global economy as a primary driver of growth and a catalyst for cross-sector innovation. According to data from the World Travel & Tourism Council (2024), the global tourism industry is projected to

contribute more than 11.6% to the global GDP by 2025. In Indonesia, this positive trend is reflected in the significant rise of domestic travel, reaching 282.41 million trips in the first quarter of 2025 alone, a 12.71% increase compared to the previous year (Wardana, 2025). However, despite this immense potential, the industry faces a major shift in consumer behavior, now dominated by digital platforms. This necessitates a technological transformation in communication strategies to ensure tourist destinations remain competitive.

Purbalingga Regency has successfully positioned tourism as a cornerstone of its local economy. Its flagship destination, Owabong Water Park, recorded a remarkable surge in visitors, exceeding 150,000 people during the 2025 Eid holiday season (Diskominfo Purbalingga, 2025). As the largest water attraction in Central Java, Owabong plays a vital role in boosting hotel occupancy and stimulating local economic growth. This success is largely attributed to a strategic shift in marketing that began in 2013, where the management transitioned from traditional media, such as billboards, to digital platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. Digital social media is considered the most effective tool today, as it allows users to easily access information through keywords and hashtags via their smartphones (Yandip, 2024).

Theoretically, maintaining such high levels of attraction requires the implementation of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). IMC is viewed as a strategic business process designed to coordinate and evaluate persuasive brand communication programs over time. Drawing from the work of Kotler and Keller (2012), the IMC framework encompasses a mix of communication tools, including advertising, sales promotion, and interactive marketing. At Owabong, this technological transformation is realized through intensive digital content management posting at least five times per week—and the strategic use of paid advertisement to reach specific market segments.

Furthermore, this digital marketing transformation serves as a key instrument for empowering the local creative economy. As a Regionally Owned Enterprise (BUMD), Owabong collaborates with the local government on various initiatives and involves local musicians in events to enrich the visitor experience. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these strategies is still influenced by national economic factors and the level of digital literacy among the audience (Abdulrahman, 2025). Based on these phenomena, this research aims to provide an in-depth analysis of how "Digital Marketing Technology Transformation as an Instrument for Enhancing Community Creative Economy through Owabong Tourism Attraction" can be optimized to ensure sustainable regional economic growth.

## **IMPLEMENTATION METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach within a post-positivism paradigm to explore the transformation of digital marketing technologies at Owabong (Waruwu, 2023). Data were gathered through a triangulation technique involving in-depth interviews with the Digital Marketing Information and Promotion Division, direct field observations of tourism activities, and comprehensive documentation of digital content across various social media platforms. Informants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure the credibility and depth of information directly from the management (Owabong, 2025). Furthermore, the data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which entails data reduction, narrative data display, and conclusion drawing. This process serves to verify how digital innovation acts

as a strategic instrument in strengthening the community's creative economy surrounding the Owabong Purbalingga tourism area.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The marketing communication strategy at Owabong Tourism, Purbalingga, was analyzed using the eight elements of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) based on Kotler's (2009) theory. The research results indicate a strategic transition from conventional methods toward an integrated digital ecosystem.

### 1. Implementation of Integrated Marketing Communication

#### 1.1 Advertising

Owabong has a long history in the use of advertising media. Prior to 2013, the strategy focused on conventional media, such as billboards at strategic points on the border of Central and West Java, radio advertisements, and publications on Railway TV. A unique finding in this research is the use of profile VCDs during the early years of operation, which, despite the high costs involved, proved highly effective in building brand awareness. However, advertising focus has currently shifted toward the digital realm through social media ads (Instagram and TikTok), which are considered more efficient in reaching audiences with precision. This was stated by Mr. Imam Faudin, the Head of the Information and Online Marketing Promotion Division at Owabong:

*“Kalau dulu kan kita di bawah tahun 2013, walaupun berdiri tahun 2005 ya. 2005-2012 dan akhir, kita masuk konvensional. Jadi belum ada media sosial lainnya seperti ini. Sebenarnya hampir semuanya sudah pernah kami coba ya. Kalau banner, kalau yang di tepi jalan apa? Baliho ya? Baliho kita juga punya satu ada di Dayeuhluhur. Dayeuhluhur itu perbatasan antara Jawa Tengah sama Jawa Barat. Paham ya? Cilacap yang bagian sana. Dayeuhluhur masih kecamatan Cilacap, cuma bahasanya sudah Sunda. Sundanya memang belum halus disana. Jadi itu perbatasan. Kami punya Baliho disana sampai hari ini masih. Dan beberapa kami kerjasama dengan Baliho atau sewa Baliho di tempat-tempat strategis, termasuk di daerah Semarang, Jogja, Borobudur. Kami pernah pasang juga disana. Kalau untuk yang lain, TV sudah sering kali, TV sudah sering liputan ke kami. Radio juga sudah sering. Termasuk, oh dulu yang belum pernah, yang di tempat lain belum ada ya. Kami pernah cetak atau burning. Zaman dulu itu namanya VCD ya? Video Compact Disc itu ya? Apa ya? Yang bulat itu ya? Sekarang udah nggak ada ya? Sekarang zamannya itu ya, file ya? Dulu kita promosinya pakai itu. Isinya video profile Owabong sama lagu-lagu khas dari daerah Purbalingga. Kita bagi itu, memang biayanya luar biasa mahal, sampai milyaran. Cuman sangat efektif ya. Karena jadi viral, orang jadi tertarik, pada minta rebutan. Cuman ya biayanya besar banget. Kalau untuk brosur, leaflet, kerjasama dengan biro perjalanan, ada expo dan lain sebagainya, t-banner semuanya, sudah pernah kami coba. Termasuk yang di TV Kereta Api. Kita pernah juga. Jadi sudah banyak banget sih.”*

#### 1.2 Sales Promotion

Sales promotion strategies are conducted routinely through discounts of up to 50%. The forms of promotion implemented include: Segmented Discounts, such as price reductions for BPJS cardholders, teacher ID holders, and special discounts for local residents (Purbalingga-Banyumas). Economic Analysis: Research findings indicate a correlation between promotional effectiveness and public purchasing power. Although digital promotion is carried out extensively, macroeconomic factors significantly determine revenue conversion rather than just the volume of visitations

### **1.3 Events and Experience**

Owabong creates visitor experiences through the 'Sebar Hadiah' (Gift Giveaway) program and musical entertainment. In the post-pandemic era, this strategy has been reactivated by collaborating with local musicians. In addition to providing added value for visitors (*experience*), this initiative also serves as a form of support for the local creative economy.

### **1.4 Public Relations and Publicity**

As a Regionally-Owned Enterprise (BUMD), Owabong carries out its Public Relations functions through close collaboration with the Local Government, specifically the Department of Youth, Sports, and Tourism (Dinporapar) of Purbalingga. This synergy is manifested through participation in various regional and national tourism expos—such as those held in Semarang, Tegal, and Cirebon—to strengthen the positive image of the destination.

### **1.5 Direct Marketing**

Direct marketing is conducted through WhatsApp Blasting and email marketing. However, research results indicate that these methods are less effective and efficient. The primary constraints include high third-party service costs (reaching IDR 85 million), the risk of accounts being banned, and low audience response as users tend to ignore messages due to prevalent cybersecurity concerns (such as APK-based fraud schemes).

### **1.6 Interactive Marketing**

This has become the most dominant and effective element in Owabong's current strategy. The management utilizes Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Threads. The primary advantage of interactive marketing lies in the ability to track through hashtags and keywords, which enables consumers to find information independently. The main challenge for this element is the low digital literacy of some audience members, who frequently inquire about information despite it being clearly stated within the content's narrative.

### **1.7 Word of Mouth**

Based on the interview results, Owabong has deliberately ceased relying on this strategy as a planned program. In the era of globalization, this method is considered to have excessively limited reach and a slow information dissemination process compared to the power of social media virality.

### **1.8 Personal Selling**

This strategy is maintained by the offline marketing division to foster institutional relationships. The primary focus is on building rapport with educational institutions (such as IGTKI and RA), schools, and travel agencies (including organizations like *Puja Wisata* in the former Pekalongan Residency). The utilization of a well-organized database serves as the key to success in implementing a persuasive personal approach toward travel agents.

These findings demonstrate that the transformation of digital marketing technology is not merely a modernization effort, but a strategic instrument for empowering the community's economy. Owabong's success in consistently integrating various communication channels (IMC) has created an adaptive tourism ecosystem. The synergy between tourism appeal, the application of digital technology, and the involvement of the local creative economy serves as a key model for the sustainability of Regionally-Owned Enterprises (BUMD) within the tourism sector.

Based on the research results, Owabong implements an Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategy through several key elements, particularly digital media, sales promotion, event marketing, personal selling, and public relations. The shift in societal behavior—which has become highly dependent on digital media—has led Owabong to pivot its promotional focus from conventional media toward digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. Informants explained that since almost all information is now accessed via smartphones, digital channels are considered the most effective media for building awareness and attracting tourist interest.

## **2. Digital Marketing as Dominant Strategic**

In the contemporary landscape of tourism promotion, digital marketing has emerged as the most dominant and strategic element within

Owabong's Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) framework. The management has shifted its paradigm, viewing social media not merely as a unidirectional tool for broadcasting information, but as a dynamic, two-way interactive space that bridges the gap between the organization and its visitors. This interactive ecosystem allows for real-time feedback, fostering a sense of community and brand loyalty that traditional media could never achieve.

To maintain a consistent and influential digital presence, Owabong's marketing team adheres to a rigorous content management schedule, setting a minimum target of five high-quality posts per week. This content strategy is meticulously categorized into three functional pillars:

1. **Educational and Informative Content:** These posts serve as a primary guide for potential visitors, offering detailed insights into the various water attractions, updated facility descriptions, and essential safety regulations. By providing clarity on operational standards, Owabong builds trust and reduces uncertainty for first-time tourists.
2. **Engagement-Driven Content:** Recognizing the power of viral trends, Owabong actively participates in TikTok challenges and produces organic, 'behind-the-scenes' content. These posts are designed to be relatable and humanized, effectively stimulating audience interaction through likes, comments, and shares, which in turn boosts the brand's visibility within the platform's algorithm.
3. **Strategic Promotional Content:** This pillar is dedicated to specific marketing campaigns, seasonal offers, and holiday discounts. To ensure maximum conversion, the majority of this content is integrated with paid advertising (Ads).

The strategic integration of paid advertisements (Social Media Ads) has become an indispensable aspect of their operations. Empirical data from the management reveals that without a dedicated ad spend, the organic reach and engagement of Owabong's content suffer a drastic decline, making it difficult to penetrate markets outside the local region. This deliberate use of sponsored content aligns perfectly with modern IMC principles, which advocate for precise audience segmentation and the utilization of digital channels that provide measurable, data-driven insights. By leveraging these tools, Owabong can track visitor behavior, optimize marketing budgets, and ensure that every digital touchpoint contributes effectively to increasing tourist attraction and regional economic growth."

## CONCLUSION AND REKOMENDATION

Overall, the dynamics of Owabong Waterpark demonstrate how a regional tourist destination can thrive through a blend of historical potential, institutional governance, and sustainable communication strategies. Owabong's developmental journey from a simple colonial-era bathhouse to the largest tourism-based Regional Owned Enterprise (BUMD) in Purbalingg illustrates that a destination's success does not rely solely on physical rides or facilities. Rather, it hinges on the organization's ability to build a strong brand image, understand its audience, and maintain alignment between its vision, mission, and day-to-day operational practices.

The vision "to become the most complete and prominent tourist attraction in Central Java" essentially reflects an ambition that goes beyond mere promotion; it indicates a strategic direction that demands consistent service quality. However, in a qualitative context, it is crucial to note that such a vision only gains meaning when it is effectively translated into the visitor experience, the strengthening of human resource capacity, and a clear commitment to the local community. Missions related to education, economic contribution, and environmental sustainability serve as vital indicators of whether Owabong is merely an entertainment venue or a true instrument for regional development. In practice, Owabong's stable operations characterized by consistent operating hours and a relatively established service structure show an ongoing effort to maintain the quality of the tourist experience. Nevertheless, a critical space remains regarding how management ensures that these service standards evolve in line with growing public needs, particularly during peak visitation periods that often strain facility capacity and human resources.

Consequently, Owabong Waterpark can be viewed as an intriguing case study on how a regional tourism institution formulates identity, manages services, and executes strategic communication. For public relations research, this context provides ample room to examine how an organization builds relationships with visitors, the community, and local government, as well as how Owabong negotiates its image and public expectations through daily communication practices. The overall findings suggest that the sustainability of a destination is determined not just by government policy or promotional strength, but by the harmony between historical values, institutional strategy, and the way the organization delivers experiences that remain relevant to its public.

## REFERENCES

- Abdulrahman, R. (2025, April 5). *Lebih dari 150 Ribu Wisatawan Serbu Owabong Selama Libur Lebaran*. RRI. <https://rri.co.id/wisata/1434545/lebih-dari-150-ribu-wisatawan-serbu-owabong-selama-libur-lebaran>
- Agustin, I. D. (2019). *Strategi Public Relations dalam Mempromosikan Wisata Religi di Kota Gresik* [Skripsi, UIN Sunan Ampel]. UIN Sunan Ampel Repository.
- Aisyah, S. N., Wisudawanto, R., & Azis, H. (2024). Penerapan IMC (Integrated Marketing Communications) oleh Pemerintahan Kabupaten Sukoharjo pada Kegiatan Sukoharjo Expo 2023. *TUTURAN: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi, Sosial dan Humaniora*, 2(4), 61–74. <https://doi.org/10.47861/tuturan.v2i4.1219>
- Anugrah, A. (2025, April 5). *Owabong Water Park Masuk 5 Besar Wisata Terpadat di Jateng Selama Libur Lebaran 2025*. iNews Purwokerto. <https://purwokerto.inews.id/read/578120/owabong-water-park-masuk-5-besar-wisata-terpadat-di-jateng-selama-libur-lebaran-2025>

- Ariyanti, F. T. (2023). *Strategi peningkatan kinerja karyawan pada destinasi wisata Owabong Water Park Purbalingga*[Skripsi, UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto]. UIN Saizu Repository.
- Atika, N. (2018). *Pengaruh strategi pemasaran terhadap kepuasan pengunjung pada Owabong Waterpark Purbalingga*[Skripsi, IAIN Purwokerto]. UIN Saizu Repository.
- BPK RI. (2011). *Peraturan Daerah Kabupaten Purbalingga Nomor 09 Tahun 2011 tentang Perusahaan Daerah Obyek Wisata Air Bojongsari*. Database Peraturan BPK. <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/>
- Chatamallah, M. (2020). Strategi Public Relations dalam Promosi Pariwisata Provinsi Banten. *Jurnal Komunikasi Pariwisata*, 8(2), 45–57.
- Cutlip, S. M., Center, A. H., & Broom, G. M. (2013). *Effective Public Relations* (11th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Diskominfo Purbalingga. (2025, April 5). *Owabong Water Park Masuk Top 5 Wisata Teramai di Jawa Tengah*. Pemerintah Kabupaten Purbalingga. <https://www.purbalinggakab.go.id/>
- Feky Reken, S. E., et al. (2024). *Pengantar Ilmu Manajemen Pemasaran*. CV. Gita Lentera.
- Irawati, D., Natsir, N. F., & Haryanti, E. (2021). Positivisme, Pospositivisme, Teori Kritis, dan Konstruktivisme dalam Perspektif “Epistemologi Islam”. *JIIP-Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan*, 4(8), 870-880. <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v4i8.358>
- Jakarta Daily. (2024, December 30). *Indonesia’s foreign tourist arrivals up 20.7 percent in Jan–Nov 2024 from a year ago; domestic tourism also on the rise*. <https://www.jakartadaily.id/>
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2012). *Marketing Management* (14th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Mandagi, D. W., Indrajit, I., & Wulyatiningsih, T. (2024). Navigating digital horizons: A systematic review of social media’s role in destination branding. *Journal of Enterprise and Development*, 6(2), 373–389. <https://doi.org/10.20414/jed.v6i2.10075>
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Rehman, S. ul, Gulzar, R., & Aslam, W. (2022). Developing the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) through Social Media (SM): The Modern Marketing Communication Approach. *SAGE Open*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221099936>
- Sari, C. D. (2023, Juni 30). *Owabong, Water Park Unik Purbalingga*. Kumparan. <https://kumparan.com/cindydwipbg/owabong-water-park-unik-purbalingga-20bVoYML397>
- Schultz, D. E., & Schultz, H. F. (1998). Transitioning marketing communication into the twenty-first century. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 4(1), 9–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/135272698345649>
- Shimp, T. A. (2003). *Periklanan promosi & aspek tambahan komunikasi pemasaran terpadu* (Jilid I, Edisi 5). Erlangga.
- Sugiyono. (2012). *Memahami Penelitian Kualitatif*. Alfabeta.
- Wardana, A. W. (2025, April 4). *Lebih dari 110.885 Wisatawan Kunjungi Objek Wisata di Purbalingga*. Radar Banyumas. <https://radarbanyumas.disway.id/>

- Waruwu, M. (2023). Pendekatan penelitian pendidikan: metode penelitian kualitatif, metode penelitian kuantitatif dan metode penelitian kombinasi (Mixed Method). *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 7(1), 2896-2910.
- World Travel & Tourism Council. (2024). *Economic Impact Report: Indonesia*. WTTC. <https://wttc.org/>
- Yandip. (2024, June 3). *Kunjungan Wisata Terus Meningkat, Pemkab Purbalingga Perkuat Sinergi dengan Pelaku Ekonomi Kreatif*. Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Tengah. <https://jatengprov.go.id/>