

The Influence of Experiential Marketing and Integrated Marketing Communications on Visitor Loyalty

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#### **ABSTRACT**

In responding to various tourism problems and competition between industries, as well as increasing the spirit of creativity in entrepreneurship in Indonesia, a special marketing strategy is needed in the tourism sector. In the context of tourism in the Lake Toba tourist area, several factors, such as experiential marketing and integrated marketing communication, can influence visitor loyalty. The main aim of this research is to analyze the influence of experiential marketing and integrated marketing communications on visitor loyalty in the Lake Toba tourist area. This research uses a literature and field research design with a causal associative approach with 130 respondents. The results of the data analysis confirm that there is a positive and significant influence between experiential marketing and integrated marketing communications on visitor loyalty. The conclusions of this research inform tourism actors in the Lake Toba area to utilize technology such as augmented reality (AR) or mobile applications to provide interactive experiences to visitors. Integrate technology to make it easier to access information and activities around Lake Toba. In addition, involving local communities in the planning and implementation of experiential marketing can create authentic tourist experiences. Through in-depth experiential marketing good integration between and communication channels, Lake Toba can build a strong image and attract visitors to experience its beauty and uniqueness.

# **Keywords:**

Experiential
Marketing,
Integrated
Marketing
Communications,
Visitor Loyalty

## INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is often measured based on a demand perspective or market perspective, which means that consumers are the ones who can most influence the type, quality, and quantity of products and services that determine the breadth of a tourist's tourism experience at a destination (Putri et al., 2020). The



current phenomenon is that many prospective tourists prefer tourist destinations that have not been exploited and have hidden beauty and special features, so the issue of sustainable development and sustainable tourism issues often become a concern (Bauer, 2009). From a strategic perspective, the competitive advantage of tourism product marketing strategies lies in the ability of tourism service businesses to implement product and tariff strategies with high performance (Evans, 2015). The development of tourism has resulted in the emergence of various industries providing various types of tourist needs and desires (Han & Hyun, 2015). This very rapid industrial development has resulted in high competition in attracting tourists to use the industry's services (Sangpikul Aswin, 2018). This happens because when stakeholders decide to develop a tourist destination (Eiseman, 2018), this concerns not only the advantages and uniqueness of a region but also various things related to the needs and desires of prospective tourists and vacationers (Bao, 2018), which will ultimately influence the condition of the tourist destination area both in terms of economic growth, environmental issues (Stylidis & Cherifi, 2018), utilization of various resources (Martínez et al., 2014), both natural and other resources so that it is hoped that the development process carried out will not damage areas which are indeed tourist objects (Kartal et al., 2015) and destinations so that their sustainability will be maintained (Qu et al., 2011).

Tourism marketing is the main activity in developing and maintaining the life of a tourism business (Campón-Cerro et al., 2017). The success or failure of a promotion will depend on the skills and abilities of each manager (Irwansyah et al., 2021). Marketing activities at each tourist attraction will differ in form but have the same goal and effort on goods offered by marketers (Sherly et al., 2020). One of the principles of tourism destination marketing is market orientation, which means the market, in this case, is the destination's customers. Market-oriented is an approach in all marketing activities that relies on the customer's point of view. This is done because all marketing activities attempt to align customer needs, desires, and expectations with destination offers to achieve customer satisfaction and loyalty (Putri, et al., 2021). Apart from matters relating to the promotion of tourist destinations, tourism industry players, especially tourism destination public relations actors, must be able to carry out publicity regarding the tourist destinations they manage (Silalahi et al., 2020). Tourism publicity is related to news about a tourist destination through the media. This means that publicity is an effort made so that the tourist destination can be reported through the mass media (Sinaga et al., 2020). Therefore, tourism actors must be able to form a positive image of the destination they manage so that the news tends to be positive for the public through management-experiential marketing and Integrated marketing communications.

Experience-based marketing can help businesses in the Lake Toba tourist area market their tourism brands and create memorable and positive experiences. Even though this experience is real and direct, business people still have to combine it with content marketing and social media to strengthen business people's efforts across all existing channels (Soelasih, 2016). When someone attends an event, you might offer a prize wheel or raffle coupon, but it must be more memorable. This type



of interaction is not experiential marketing (Pratminingsih et al., 2018). Practical examples of experiential marketing include exhibitions, promotional events, brand activations at large events, and interactive activities that involve consumers directly. This approach emphasizes the quality of the resulting experience, not just the quantity of brand exposure. In experiential marketing, companies strive to delight customers by providing memorable and unique experiences (Halim et al., 2021). This way customer loyalty will remain, and companies can stay ahead of their competitors and in business (Schmitt, 2010); (Abadi et al., 2020). This is supported by research from (Ari Wijaksono, 2019); (Noor et al., 2020), which states that tourist visitors will feel high loyalty when the tourism manager can establish a good emotional bond with them. Therefore, based on several previous research results, we can develop a hypothesis:

H1: Experiential marketing influences visitor loyalty

Competition in the tourism market emphasizes the importance of marketing communications (Sudirman et al., 2020). The marketing function is not only concerned with promoting a brand, organization or service to maximize sales, but also with understanding what consumers need and the value of the services offered and making changes according to the marketing mix (Nuraini et al., 2021). (Andrews & Shimp, 2018), define integrated marketing communication (IMC) as coordinating promotional mix elements with other marketing mix elements so that all elements speak with one voice. (Kliatchko, 2020), defines IMC as the concept and process of strategic management of brand communication programs that is audience-focused, over and results-oriented time. Integrated communications (IMC) has offered a very significant value for managers of the sustainable tourism industry amid rapidly changing communication traditions (France et al., 2016). In the 4.0 era, IMC activities are already moving towards digitalization (Sudirman et al., 2021). Therefore, business people in the Lake Toba tourist area must understand how to design, develop, and manage IMC in the digital era. The use of digital media and social media shapes new behavior for both consumers and company capabilities. Study results (Andrews & Shimp, 2018); (Seric et al., 2004), emphasized that integrated marketing communication has a significant effect on visitor loyalty. Therefore, based on several previous research results, we can develop a hypothesis:

**H2:** Integrated marketing communications influence visitor loyalty

In the tourism context, several factors can influence visitor loyalty, such as experiential marketing and integrated marketing communication as a whole, can influence visitor loyalty. To increase visitor loyalty, Lake Toba tourism stakeholders can focus on promoting sustainable tourism practices through experiential marketing practices and developing effective marketing strategies through integrated marketing communication. Based on the problems above, the formulation of this research problem is to analyze the model for increasing visitor loyalty to the Lake Toba tourist destination through experiential marketing management and integrated marketing communication. The urgency of this research can help identify special elements and experiences that can increase the tourist attraction of Lake



Toba. With this in-depth understanding, marketers can design more effective campaigns. In addition, this research can help understand consumer behavior on social media and how this platform can be used optimally to promote Lake Toba. This includes story building, hashtag campaigns, and content strategy. With experiential marketing and integrated marketing communications, the "TobaXperience" campaign aims to create an immersive and evocative experience and ensure a consistent and coordinated message across various communication channels.

### **METHOD**

This research uses a literature and field design with a causal associative approach. The research was conducted from June 2023 to August 2023. The population in this study was the total number of visitors to Lake Toba tourism. The sampling method used in this research is the convenience sampling method, this technique was chosen because it is the fastest method due to time constraints, and anyone who accidentally meets the researcher can be used as a sample if that person is deemed suitable as a data source. According to (Hair, 2014), if the population size is unknown, the sample size can be determined from 5-10 times the number of indicators used in a single construct. This research used 13 indicators from 3 existing variable dimensions, so the number of research samples obtained was  $130 \times 10 = 130$ Lake Toba tourist visitors. Data collection in this research used the observation method by observing directly in the field, and documentation came from secondary data in the form of documents and structured interviews using questionnaire instruments. This study uses a research instrument test consisting of validity and reliability tests. The quantitative analysis consists of a normality test, regression test, hypothesis test, correlation test, and coefficient of determination.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

## Validity and Reliability Test

**Table 1.** Validity Test Results

Variables	Corrected items - Total correlation	N of Items	Test results	
Experiential Marketing	0.565	5	Valid	
Integrated Marketing Communications	0.572	5	Valid	
Visitor Loyalty	0.520	3	Valid	

Source: Processed SPSS Data (2023)

Based on the validity test of Table 1 above, it is concluded that all indicators in the study have a value above 0.30, and the measurement items used in this research are valid. Next, a reliability experiment is carried out to measure the measurement items on the questionnaire items that describe the indicators of the variables. A questionnaire is reliable if a person's response to a question does not change or is normal occasionally.



**Table 2.** Reliability Test Results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Test results
Experiential Marketing	0.835	5	Reliable
Integrated Marketing Communications	0.861	5	Reliable
Visitor Loyalty	0.790	3	Reliable

Source: Processed SPSS Data (2023)

Based on the results of the reliability experiment shown in Table 2 above, it prove that all indicators have a Cronbach alpha value for each instrument > 0.60, so it can be concluded that all the instruments used are reliable.

## Multiple Regression Test

Table 3. Multiple Regression Test Results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		t-count	Sig.
		В	Std. Error		
	(Constant)	18,393	5,106	3,602	,001
1	Experiential Marketing	,310	,064	4,840	,000
	Integrated Marketing Communications	,413	,127	3,256	,002

Source: Processed SPSS Data (2023)

From the multiple linear regression above, the equation model is obtained: = 18.393 + 0.310X1 + 0.413X2, which means that experiential marketing and integrated marketing communications positively affect visitor loyalty. Based on these equations, it can be explained as follows:

- 1. The constant value of 18.393 can be interpreted if the variables of experiential marketing and integrated marketing communications are considered zero, then the value of visitor loyalty will be in the range of values of 18.393.
- 2. The value of the beta coefficient on the experiential marketing variable is 0.310, which means that every change in the experiential marketing variable by one unit will result in a change in visitor loyalty of 0.310 units with the assumption that the other variables are at a constant value.
- 3. The beta coefficient value on the integrated marketing communications variable is 0.413, which means that every change in the integrated marketing communications variable by one unit will result in a change in visitor loyalty of 0.413 units with the assumption that the other variables are at a constant value.

## Simultaneous and Partial Hypothesis Testing

To examine the variable binding simultaneously, experiment F is used. Simultaneous hypothesis testing attempts to analyze whether the variables of experiential marketing and integrated marketing communications can simultaneously influence visitor loyalty.

Table 4. Simultaneous Test Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.
	Regression	588,210	2	41,145	,000b
1	Residual	334,370	137		
	Total	912.010	139		

Source: Processed SPSS Data (2023)



Based on the results of the simultaneous test analysis in Table 5, the Fcount value is 41.145 > from Ftable with (0.05; 2 vs 158) of 3.06 or with a significant 0.000 < 0.05, it can be interpreted as experiential marketing, and integrated marketing communications affects visitor loyalty simultaneously. Subsequently, a partial test was conducted to partially analyze the effect of experiential marketing and integrated marketing communications on visitor loyalty. Based on the results of data analysis in Table 3, the results of the t-test in this study are as follows:

- 1. Experiential marketing has a significant level of 0.000 < 0.05, meaning that experiential marketing has a significant effect on visitor loyalty.
- 2. Integrated marketing communications obtained a significant level of 0.002 < 0.05, meaning that integrated marketing communications significantly influence visitor loyalty.

### **Coefficient of Determination Test**

The coefficient of determination is used to measure the ability of a model to explain the variation of the dependent variable. The results of the determination test in this study can be explained in Table 5 below:

**Table 5. Coefficient of Determination Test Results** 

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.796a	,636	,621	2,662

Source: Processed SPSS Data (2023)

Based on the results of the data analysis in Table 6 above, the coefficient of determination value is 0.636, which means that the level of visitor loyalty of 63.6% can be explained by experiential marketing, and integrated marketing communications, while other factors can explain the remaining 36.4% not discussed in this study.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of this research conclude that experiential marketing has a positive and significant effect on visitor loyalty. Experiential marketing provides direct experiences to consumers, and when it is applied in the tourism industry, its impact can be very significant on visitor loyalty. Positive or unique experiences tend to trigger positive emotions in visitors. The emotions associated with the experience can create long-lasting memories. People are more likely to return to a place that has given them a memorable experience. Experiential marketing is a marketing approach that focuses on creating direct and memorable experiences for consumers. Rather than just emphasizing product or service promotion, experiential marketing seeks to actively involve the audience in an event or interaction that creates a lasting impression. The experience offered must be unique and creative in order to stand out and impress consumers. Innovative and unexpected concepts have the potential to create a much stronger impression. The experiential marketing concept requires active participation from consumers. This can involve various activities, such as competitions, performances, or user content creation. Experiential marketing can spark conversation and shared experiences among consumers. Word of mouth can be a powerful lever to create brand awareness and expand the impact of a campaign.



The results of this research conclude that integrated marketing communications significant effect on visitor loyalty. Integrated Communications (IMC) combines various marketing elements such as advertising, sales promotions, public relations, direct marketing, and other communication strategies into one coordinated whole. Until now, quite a few marketing managers (including tourism) still believe that the most effective promotion is advertising through mass media. Therefore, many tourist destination managers are scrambling to place advertisements in mass media such as television, radio, or newspapers. This view has made the promotional function in the last decades dominated by advertising in the mass media. As a form of product marketing activity, promotion is one of several main elements of marketing activity that continues to dominate. According to Morissan (2015), in the 1980s, various companies in developed countries began to realize the importance of integrating all promotional instruments to increase sales. Promotional orientation focuses not only on the media used as a promotional tool. At that time, many companies began to implement integrated marketing communications. Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is an effort to coordinate promotional elements with various other marketing activities. At that time, marketing managers relied on more than just product marketing through advertising in the mass media. Therefore, an integrated marketing communications (IMC) strategy consisting of a combination of promotional tools can be an important element of a business's overall marketing strategy.

This research has suggestions to be used as a reference for research and as a reference for decision-making for parties who are related to increasing the loyalty of tourism visitors in the Lake Toba area. Improving experiential marketing and integrated marketing communications (IMC) for Lake Toba tourism could be a strategic step to attract more visitors and increase tourist loyalty. Lake Toba tourism businesses can use social media to spread stories and experiences of visitors through photos, videos, and positive reviews. Build a hashtag campaign that can engage visitors in sharing their experiences. On the other hand, business people can also create interesting multimedia content, such as virtual reality videos or online tours that allow people to experience Lake Toba virtually. Use a strong visual story to attract attention and increase the attractiveness of the destination. Through a combination of in-depth experiential marketing and good integration between various communication channels, Lake Toba can build a strong image and attract visitors to experience its beauty and uniqueness. This research also confirms the weakness in the aspect of the sample size used, which is still unable to generalize the characteristics of tourists as a whole; therefore, for further research, it is necessary to add a larger sample size and include several research variables that are not discussed in this research. Apart from that, on the other hand, for more complex models, you can use data analysis methods with the CB-SEM approach using the Amos application.



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