

Digital Integrated Marketing Communications Strategies in Building Local Cultural Image for Achieving Tourism Sustainability: The Role of Local Community Involvement

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: DIMC strategies, local cultural image, local community involvement, tourism sustainability.

This study explores the impact of Digital Integrated Marketing Communications (DIMC) strategies and local cultural image promotion on tourism sustainability, with a focus on local community involvement as a moderating factor. The primary objective is to understand how effective digital marketing and cultural promotion contribute to sustainable tourism practices and how community engagement enhances these effects. A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for data analysis. Data were collected from 200 respondents, including tourists and stakeholders at cultural tourism destinations, using a structured questionnaire with a 1-5 Likert scale to measure DIMC strategies, cultural image promotion, tourism sustainability, and community involvement. The study finds that both DIMC strategies and the promotion of local cultural image positively impact tourism sustainability. Furthermore, local community involvement significantly moderates these relationships, enhancing the effectiveness of marketing and cultural promotion efforts in supporting sustainable tourism. This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of the interplay between digital marketing, cultural promotion, and sustainability by highlighting the crucial role of community involvement. Practically, it underscores the need for tourism managers to integrate local perspectives into their marketing strategies and cultural promotion efforts to achieve more sustainable outcomes. The study provides valuable insights for enhancing the effectiveness of tourism marketing and promoting cultural heritage while supporting sustainable tourism development.



Introduction

In the era of rapid globalization and digitalization, tourism marketing has undergone a massive transformation (Imamov & Semenikhina, 2021). Digital Integrated Marketing Communications (DIMC) has become a key approach in promoting tourist

destinations by leveraging various digital platforms in an integrated and consistent manner (Balasubramanian, Kunasekaran, Konar, & Sakthivel, 2022). The use of DIMC allows tourist destinations to deliver cohesive and coordinated messages to a wider audience, while also building a strong and attractive brand image (Bassano et al., 2019).

However, achieving sustainability in tourism requires not only effective marketing strategies but also an approach sensitive to the cultural and social aspects of the tourist destination. (Budeanu, Miller, Moscardo, & Ooi, 2016). Local cultural image is a highly valuable asset in tourism promotion, as it can provide a unique and attractive identity for the destination. (Manhas, Manrai, & Manrai, 2016). Therefore, promotion highlighting local cultural elements—such as traditions, arts, and cuisine—can enhance the appeal of the destination and enrich the tourist experience. (Baratta, Bonfanti, Cucci, & Simeoni, 2022).

Tourism sustainability encompasses the ability to manage economic, social, and environmental impacts in a balanced way. (Edgell Sr, 2019). A successful tourist destination can attract visitors while preserving and maintaining its cultural and environmental values. (Vuković, 2022). In this context, local community involvement plays a crucial role. Communities actively engaged in the development and promotion of tourism can not only improve service quality and tourist experience but also ensure that the benefits of tourism are distributed fairly and sustainably. (Streimikiene, Svagzdiene, Jasinskas, & Simanavicius, 2021).

Recent research suggests that digitally integrated marketing communications (IMC) strategies can have both positive and negative impacts on tourism sustainability. Digital marketing can effectively influence tourist behavior and drive engagement. (Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa, 2023);(Sudrajat, 2024), its sustainability implications are complex. Digital technologies, including social media and data analytics, can enhance marketing communication and improve tourist experiences (Rosário et al., 2021). However, the rapid pace of technological change requires constant adaptation of strategies, potentially challenging long-term sustainability (Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa, 2023). The tourism industry must balance the benefits of digital marketing with the need for sustainable and responsible practices (Karakaş & Ağca, 2023). To achieve this balance, businesses should focus on developing sustainable digital marketing strategies that align with changing consumer expectations and environmental concerns. (Sudrajat, 2024). Further research is needed to fully understand the long-term impacts of digital IMC on tourism sustainability.

This study aims to explore how digitally integrated Marketing Communications strategies can be applied to build a local cultural image and how these efforts can support tourism sustainability. By focusing on cultural tourism destinations as a case study, this research will identify effective ways to use DIMC to promote local cultural elements and examine how local community involvement can moderate the relationship between DIMC strategies and tourism sustainability. Through this research, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of the integration of digital marketing strategies with local cultural promotion and its impact on tourism sustainability will be achieved. The findings are

expected to provide valuable insights for destination managers, marketers, and other stakeholders in designing holistic and sustainable strategies for the future of tourism.

Method

This study employs a quantitative research design utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to explore the impact of Digital Integrated Marketing Communications (DIMC) strategies and the promotion of local cultural image on tourism sustainability, with local community involvement as a moderating variable. SEM is chosen for its ability to simultaneously assess multiple relationships among variables and test theoretical models with both latent and observed variables. The study will focus on collecting data from tourists and stakeholders involved in cultural tourism destinations using a structured questionnaire with a 1-5 Likert scale to measure DIMC strategies, local cultural image promotion, tourism sustainability, and local community involvement.

A stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample of approximately 300 respondents, including 100 tourists and 100 stakeholders in Serang Regency. This approach ensures that different segments of the population are adequately represented. Data will be collected through both online surveys and in-person questionnaires distributed at cultural tourism sites. The survey instrument will include validated scales using a 1-5 Likert scale to assess the following constructs:

1. DIMC Strategies: Questions will evaluate the effectiveness and coordination of digital marketing efforts adopted by (Manser Payne, Peltier, & Barger, 2017).
2. Local Cultural Image Promotion: Questions will measure the emphasis on promoting local cultural elements adopted by (Mele, Kerkhof, & Cantoni, 2021)
3. Tourism Sustainability: Questions will gauge perceptions of economic, environmental, and social sustainability practices adopted by Asmelash & Kumar (2019).
4. Local Community Involvement: Questions will assess the level of community engagement in tourism activities adopted by (Kia, 2021).

Once data collection is complete, it will be analyzed using SEM software namely Smart PLS. The analysis will involve two main components: the measurement model and the structural model. The measurement model will assess the validity and reliability of the constructs, while the structural model will evaluate the direct and indirect effects of DIMC strategies and local cultural image promotion on tourism sustainability, with local community involvement serving as a moderator. Model fit will be assessed using indices Chi-Square.

The results will be interpreted to understand the relationships among the variables and the moderating effect of local community involvement. Findings will be reported with path diagrams and statistical outputs, providing insights into how DIMC strategies and local cultural image promotion influence tourism sustainability. The study will also discuss implications for tourism practice and theory, highlighting the role of community involvement in achieving sustainable tourism outcomes. Limitations of the study, such as potential biases and generalizability issues, will be acknowledged to provide a comprehensive view of the research findings.

Results and Discussion

Validity and Reliability

The confirmatory factor analysis presented in Table 2 demonstrates robust psychometric properties for all constructs in the study. For DIMC Strategies, the indicators show high outer loadings (0.908 to 0.934) and strong reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.970 and a Composite Reliability (CR) of 0.975, alongside an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.849, indicating excellent convergent validity. The Local Cultural Image construct also exhibits high outer loadings (0.840 to 0.955) and strong internal consistency with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.956 and a CR of 0.963, supported by an AVE of 0.789. Local Community Involvement is measured reliably with outer loadings ranging from 0.844 to 0.941, a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.969, and a CR of 0.974, with an AVE of 0.844. Finally, Tourism Sustainability shows good psychometric properties with outer loadings between 0.729 and 0.925, a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.940, a CR of 0.944, and an AVE of 0.737. Overall, these results confirm that the measurement model is both reliable and valid, ensuring that the constructs are effectively captured and measured.

Table 1
Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Const ruct	Items	Indicators	Outer Loadin g	Cronbach 's Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
DIMC Strateg ies	S1	Our digital marketing campaigns deliver a consistent message across all platforms	0.908	0.970	0.971	0.975	0.849
	S2	Our various digital platforms work together cohesively to promote the destination	0.927				
	S3	Our use of social media is effective in increasing the destination's visibility	0.932				

	DIMC S4	The content published across digital channels is well-integrated and supports our marketing goals	0.926					
	DIMC S5	We actively respond to audience feedback on digital platforms	0.913					
	DIMC S6	The digital content we create is of high quality and engaging for our target audience	0.934					
	DIMC S7	We regularly analyze the performance of our digital strategies and make necessary adjustments to enhance effectiveness	0.910					
Local Cultural Image	LCIM 1	Marketing materials effectively highlight local traditions and customs	0.840	0.956	0.970	0.963	0.789	
	LCIM 2	Our promotional efforts showcase	0.928					

		local arts and crafts as key attractions					
	LCIM 3	We promote local cuisine as a significant part of the cultural experience	0.936				
	LCIM 4	Cultural festivals and events are prominently featured in our marketing campaigns	0.920				
	LCIM 5	Our marketing accurately represents the authentic culture of the destination	0.955				
	LCIM 6	Historical landmarks are a focal point in our promotional activities	0.905				
	LCIM 7	Local communities are involved in the promotion of their cultural heritage	0.944				
Local Community Involvement	LCIN1	Local communities are actively involved in decision-making	0.844	0.969	0.978	0.974	0.844

	processes related to tourism development	
LCIN2	Tourism activities provide employment opportunities for residents	0.890
LCIN3	There is significant local ownership of tourism-related businesses and enterprises	0.941
LCIN4	There are community-based tourism initiatives that involve residents in providing services and experiences to tourists	0.904
LCIN5	Tourism activities encourage cultural exchange and interaction between locals and visitors	0.918
LCIN6	There are programs in place for training and capacity building of local communities	0.845

		s to enhance their participation in tourism						
	LCIN7	The benefits from tourism are equitably shared among the local community, ensuring inclusive growth	0.872					
Tourism Sustainability	TS1	The destination implements practices to minimize environmental impact	0.894	0.940	0.944	0.951	0.737	
	TS2	Tourism activities contribute positively to the local economy and provide employment opportunities	0.851					
	TS3	Efforts are made to preserve and protect the cultural heritage of the destination	0.925					
	TS4	There are effective waste management practices in place to reduce the	0.842					

	ecological footprint	
TS5	Tourists are educated about sustainable practices and responsible tourism behaviors	0.729
TS6	The benefits of tourism are fairly distributed among the local community	0.887
TS7	Measures are taken to manage visitor numbers to avoid overcrowding and overuse of resources	0.869

Hypothesis Results

Table 3 and Figure 2 summarize hypotheses testing regarding the impact of various factors on tourism sustainability (TS). The first hypothesis (H1) suggests a positive influence of DIMC Strategies (DIMCS) on tourism sustainability, evidenced by an original sample coefficient of 0.233, a T statistic of 3.230, and a P value of 0.001, leading to its acceptance. Similarly, the second hypothesis (H2) indicates that Local Cultural Image (LCIM) positively affects tourism sustainability, with an original sample coefficient of 0.177, a T statistic of 2.825, and a P value of 0.005. The third hypothesis (H3) explores the moderating role of Local Community Involvement (LCIN) in the relationship between DIMC Strategies and tourism sustainability, showing a significant moderating effect (coefficient of 0.190, T statistic of 3.174, P value of 0.002). Finally, the fourth hypothesis (H4) assesses the moderating effect of Local Community Involvement on the relationship between Local Cultural Image and tourism sustainability, with a significant effect (coefficient of 0.169, T statistic of 3.052, P value of 0.002). These results underscore the crucial role of DIMC Strategies, Local Cultural Image, and Local Community Involvement in supporting tourism sustainability, with significant moderating effects observed from community involvement.

Table 2
Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis	Construct*)	Original I Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Result
H1	DIMCS-> TS	0.233	3.230	0.001	Accepted
H2	LCIM> TS	0.177	2.825	0.005	Accepted
H3	Moderating Effect 1=DIMCS*LCIN -> TS	0.190	3.174	0.002	Accepted
H4	Moderating Effect 2=LCIM*LCIN - > TS	0.169	3.052	0.002	Accepted

*) DIMCS=DIMC Strategies; LCIM=Local Cultural Image; LCIN=Local Community Involvement; TS=Tourism Sustainability

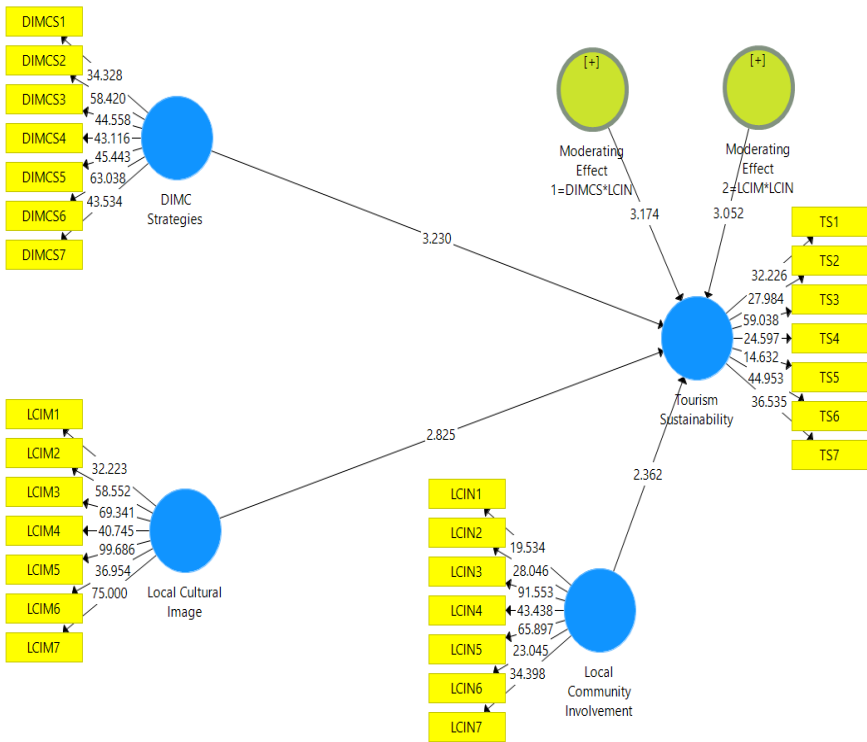


Figure 1 Bootstrapping Result

DIMC strategies that have a positive impact on tourism sustainability have been accepted based on the analysis results. It finding indicates that the implementation of Digital Integrated Marketing Communications (DIMC) strategies positively influences various dimensions of tourism sustainability, including economic, environmental, and social aspects. The positive impact suggests that well-coordinated and effective digital marketing efforts contribute to more sustainable tourism practices by enhancing

destination visibility, promoting responsible travel behaviors, and supporting local economies.

The acceptance of H1 aligns with several studies that have explored the relationship between digital marketing strategies and tourism sustainability. For instance, research by (Kim, Whitford, & Arcodia, 2021) Highlights that integrated digital marketing approaches can significantly enhance destination brand awareness and appeal, which, in turn, supports sustainable tourism development. Their study found that destinations employing comprehensive digital marketing strategies experienced increased tourist engagement and positive perceptions of sustainability initiatives.

Similarly, Buhalis & Sinatra (2019) emphasize the role of digital marketing in promoting sustainable tourism by providing platforms for destinations to communicate their sustainability efforts effectively. Their research demonstrates that digital marketing not only boosts the visibility of sustainability practices but also educates tourists about responsible behaviors, thus fostering a more sustainable tourism environment. Furthermore, Gretzel & Yoo (2008) found that effective digital marketing strategies enhance the reputation of destinations by highlighting their commitment to sustainability. This reputation improvement contributes to attracting tourists who are more likely to engage in sustainable practices and support local communities, thus reinforcing the positive impact of DIMC strategies on tourism sustainability. The acceptance of H1 supports the notion that DIMC strategies play a crucial role in advancing tourism sustainability. The results are consistent with existing literature, which underscores the effectiveness of digital marketing in promoting sustainable tourism practices and enhancing the overall sustainability of tourist destinations.

The promotion of local cultural image has a positive impact on tourism sustainability* has been confirmed by the analysis results. This indicates that efforts to highlight and promote the unique cultural attributes of a destination positively affect various aspects of tourism sustainability. The positive impact suggests that emphasizing local cultural heritage and traditions contributes to the economic, environmental, and social sustainability of tourism.

The acceptance of H2 is consistent with existing studies that underscore the importance of cultural image promotion in achieving tourism sustainability. For example, (Cheng & Chen, 2022) Argue that showcasing local culture not only enriches the tourist experience but also promotes sustainable tourism by encouraging visitors to engage with and appreciate the destination's cultural heritage. Their study found that destinations that actively promote their cultural assets tend to foster a deeper connection with tourists, which can lead to more sustainable tourism behaviors.

Additionally, Nocca (2017) emphasizes that cultural tourism, when managed effectively, supports the preservation of cultural heritage while providing economic benefits to local communities. Their research shows that promoting cultural image helps maintain the authenticity of cultural sites and traditions, which is crucial for sustaining both the cultural and environmental aspects of tourism. (Kim et al., 2021) further support this view by highlighting that cultural tourism initiatives that focus on the preservation

and promotion of local culture can enhance community involvement and support. This, in turn, contributes to a more sustainable tourism model by aligning economic benefits with cultural preservation efforts.

Moreover, (Bilynets, Knezevic Cvelbar, & Dolnicar, 2023) Suggests that the promotion of local cultural image can attract tourists who are more likely to respect and support sustainability efforts. By highlighting the cultural uniqueness of a destination, tourism marketing can foster a greater appreciation for and commitment to sustainable practices among visitors.

In conclusion, the acceptance of H2 reinforces the idea that promoting the local cultural image positively impacts tourism sustainability. The findings are in line with the literature, which demonstrates that emphasizing cultural heritage not only enhances the attractiveness of a destination but also supports sustainable tourism practices by encouraging respectful and responsible tourist behavior.

Local community involvement moderates the relationship between DIMC strategies and tourism sustainability has been confirmed. This means that the extent of local community engagement significantly influences how DIMC strategies impact tourism sustainability. Specifically, the positive effects of DIMC strategies on tourism sustainability are enhanced when there is strong involvement of the local community. Similarly, Local community involvement moderates the relationship between the promotion of local cultural image and tourism sustainability has also been confirmed. This indicates that the impact of promoting the local cultural image on tourism sustainability is significantly influenced by the level of local community involvement. Strong community engagement amplifies the positive effects of cultural image promotion on sustainability.

The confirmation of H3 and H4 aligns with a growing body of research emphasizing the critical role of local community involvement in enhancing the effectiveness of tourism strategies. Previous research, such as (Zhang et al., 2020), highlights that local community involvement can significantly enhance the outcomes of tourism marketing strategies. Scheyvens (2012) argues that community engagement ensures that marketing strategies are aligned with local values and needs, which can improve the sustainability of tourism initiatives. When communities are actively involved, they provide valuable insights that can make DIMC strategies more relevant and effective in promoting sustainable tourism practices.

Research by (Dodds, Ali, & Galaski, 2018) supports the idea that local community involvement is crucial for the success of cultural tourism initiatives. (Dodds et al., 2018) study finds that community participation in cultural promotion helps to ensure that cultural representations are authentic and respectful, which can enhance the sustainability of tourism practices. Timothy further adds that when local communities are engaged in promoting their cultural heritage, they are more likely to support and benefit from sustainable tourism efforts, leading to a more balanced and effective promotion of cultural image. Li et al. (2021) also emphasize the importance of community involvement in moderating the relationship between cultural promotion and tourism sustainability. They

argue that community participation helps to integrate local perspectives into tourism strategies, which can improve the sustainability of both cultural promotion and overall tourism practices.

The acceptance of H3 and H4 underscores the significant role of local community involvement in moderating the relationships between DIMC strategies, promotion of local cultural image, and tourism sustainability. The findings are consistent with existing literature, which highlights that active community engagement enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of tourism strategies by ensuring that they are well-aligned with local values and needs.

Conclusion

This study confirms the hypotheses that Digital Integrated Marketing Communications (DIMC) strategies and the promotion of local cultural image positively impact tourism sustainability. Additionally, it finds that local community involvement plays a significant moderating role in these relationships. Specifically, the involvement of local communities enhances the effectiveness of DIMC strategies and the promotion of cultural heritage in contributing to more sustainable tourism practices. These findings suggest that integrating local perspectives and ensuring community participation are crucial for maximizing the benefits of digital marketing and cultural promotion efforts in achieving tourism sustainability.

The study contributes to the theoretical understanding of how marketing strategies and cultural promotion intersect with tourism sustainability. It extends existing models by incorporating the role of local community involvement as a moderating variable, thereby offering a more nuanced perspective on the dynamics between DIMC strategies, cultural promotion, and sustainability. This research supports the notion that sustainability in tourism is not solely dependent on marketing and promotional activities but also on the active participation of local communities. The study's findings reinforce theories related to stakeholder engagement and community-based tourism, highlighting the importance of incorporating local perspectives into sustainable tourism frameworks.

For practitioners, the findings underscore the importance of integrating local community involvement into tourism marketing strategies. Tourism managers and marketers should focus on developing DIMC strategies that are not only digitally effective but also engage local communities in the planning and execution of marketing activities. This approach ensures that digital campaigns and cultural promotions are aligned with local values and needs, which can enhance the sustainability of tourism practices. Additionally, promoting local cultural heritage through digital channels should be accompanied by active community involvement to ensure authenticity and effectiveness. Engaging local stakeholders can improve the quality of tourism experiences and support sustainable development goals.

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. First, the sample is limited to cultural tourism destinations, which may affect the generalizability of the

findings to other types of destinations. Second, the cross-sectional nature of the study provides a snapshot of relationships at a single point in time, potentially limiting the ability to capture long-term effects and changes. Third, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases related to respondents' perceptions and social desirability. Finally, while SEM provides a robust framework for analyzing relationships, it may not account for all potential variables affecting tourism sustainability.

Future research should consider longitudinal studies to explore how DIMC strategies, cultural promotion, and community involvement impact tourism sustainability over time. Expanding the research to include a broader range of destinations, including non-cultural ones, could enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could provide deeper insights into the dynamics of community involvement and its influence on sustainability. Finally, researchers should explore other potential moderating variables and contextual factors that may affect the relationships between marketing strategies, cultural promotion, and tourism sustainability.

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