

THE APPLICATION OF CAUSALITY AND STRUCTURAL CORRELATION OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION (IMC) AT THE YOGYAKARTA CULTURAL FESTIVAL (FKY)

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ABSTRACT

To preserve, develop, and celebrate the diversity of Yogyakarta's arts and culture, the Yogyakarta Provincial Government organizes the Yogyakarta Cultural Festival (FKY) annually. From arts and crafts exhibitions to theater, dance, and music performances, the festival offers a wide variety of arts activities. Interaction and appreciation of local culture are fostered at all levels of society. This study examines the causal and structural relationships between Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) using a quantitative approach called Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). One hundred fifty (150) people who had visited the Yogyakarta Cultural Festival (FKY) were selected using purposive sampling. SmartPLS 4 software was used for analysis after data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The findings indicate that IMC has a significant positive impact on brand equity and perceived value. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that brand equity and perceived value serve as mediators, enhancing the impact of IMC on visitor loyalty. The high R-squared value of the visitor loyalty variable in the structural model test indicates the model's capacity to account for variations in customer behavior. These results highlight the importance of consistent and integrated Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) in building destination reputation, increasing perceived value, and encouraging repeat business. The practical implication of this study is that destination managers, local governments, and tourism stakeholders should collaborate to enhance the digital marketing communication ecosystem. Thus, the Cultural Festival, which has inspired many other independent arts festivals, will continue to compete as the most prestigious cultural event destination in Indonesia.

Keywords: Brand Equity, Yogyakarta Cultural Festival, Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), Perceived Value

Introduction

The Yogyakarta Cultural Festival (FKY) is an annual event that showcases a diverse range of local arts and traditions, serving as a platform for artists and the public to celebrate cultural diversity. The purpose of FKY is to celebrate, preserve, and introduce Yogyakarta's rich cultural heritage to the broader community and the

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younger generation. Activities include an opening parade, competitions (such as Village Banners, Healthy Livestock, and Citizen Journalism), a cultural exploration (Telusur Tuter, workshops), an art exhibition, an FKY stage, and a traditional market.

Current dynamics indirectly demand that Yogyakarta have an effective, integrated, and adaptive marketing communication strategy to keep pace with the development of the digital era. The concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is an essential approach because it allows for the coordination of various promotional instruments, such as digital advertising, social media, public relations, sponsorship, and word of mouth, within a consistent communication framework. IMC not only helps convey the destination message but also strengthens the brand image and builds emotional closeness with tourists (Muna, 2020). In addition, the success of IMC is also closely related to the formation of Brand Equity. Brand equity is a tourist's perception of a destination's uniqueness, attractiveness, and quality, which differentiates it from competitors. Destinations with substantial brand equity can create differentiation, expand the market, and increase tourists' preference for repeat visits.

In the context of tourism, brand equity encompasses not only logos or symbols but also the holistic experience tourists experience when interacting with a destination (Romadhoni & Nugroho, 2025). Furthermore, Perceived Value is a crucial variable mediating the relationship between marketing communications and tourist loyalty. Perceived value is defined as a tourist's assessment of the benefits received compared to the costs or efforts incurred during a trip. Destinations with high perceived value are seen as providing a satisfying experience, thus encouraging tourists to return and recommend the destination to others. At the Yogyakarta Cultural Festival (FKY), perceived value can be influenced by visitors' subjective assessments of the benefits or experiences they gain compared to the costs or sacrifices they incur. This value is non-financial mainly and is driven by the richness of cultural content and authentic experiences offered.

The relationship between IMC, brand equity, and perceived value ultimately leads to the formation of tourist loyalty. Loyalty is a key indicator of a destination's sustainability, as loyal tourists tend to revisit, share positive experiences on social media, and provide word-of-mouth recommendations. Loyalty also helps destinations reduce promotional costs, as image and reputation strengthening can be achieved through tourists' direct experiences (Wahyuningsih et al., 2025). In a tourism industry that relies heavily on image and knowledge, tourist loyalty is a crucial factor in maintaining long-term competitiveness.

Several previous studies have highlighted the relationship between these variables. For example, research by (Safitri et al., n.d.) confirms that IMC plays a significant role in building brand equity through the consistent delivery of marketing messages. Meanwhile, research by (Porcu et al., 2012) shows that substantial brand equity can increase consumers' perceived value and has implications for loyalty. Another study by (Cahyarani

& Santoso, 2023) confirms that perceived value serves as an essential mediator between brand equity and loyalty, particularly in the context of tourist destinations. This demonstrates that allegiance is not formed instantly, but rather through a series of experiences that build positive perceptions.

On the other hand, the development of digital technology has driven a transformation in tourism marketing and communication strategies. Social media platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, have become primary channels for tourists to seek information, share experiences, and shape their perceptions of destinations (Butkouskaya et al., 2023). FKY is an annual event that showcases Yogyakarta's rich arts and culture. It serves as a platform for arts appreciation, cultural preservation, and community unity, often featuring a variety of performances and attractions, which are widely promoted through viral digital content. However, this social media-based communication strategy must be managed in an integrated manner to not only generate immediate interest but also build long-term brand equity and loyalty .

The context of this research is essential because there are still limited empirical studies that examine the causal relationship between IMC, brand equity, perceived value, and tourist loyalty simultaneously in the Yogyakarta Cultural Festival (FKY) destination. Practically, this research provides input to destination managers, local governments, and tourism industry players on the importance of consistent, collaborative, and digitally based communication strategies.

This study employs a quantitative approach based on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), utilizing SmartPLS 4 software for analysis. This technique was chosen because it enables the testing of causal relationships between latent variables with a relatively small sample size. A total of 150 respondents who had visited the Yogyakarta Cultural Festival (FKY) were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire that measured tourists' perceptions of the variables IMC, brand equity, perceived value, and loyalty. The results of the analysis are expected to provide an empirical picture of the mediating role of brand equity and perceived value in strengthening the influence of IMC on tourist loyalty. Thus, this study focuses on the analysis of causality and structural correlation between IMC, Brand Equity, Perceived Value, and Tourist Loyalty at the Yogyakarta Cultural Festival (FKY). The urgency of this study lies in its academic contribution to enriching the tourism marketing literature while providing strategic policy recommendations to maintain the competitiveness of the Yogyakarta Cultural Festival (FKY).

Theory and Methodology

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and Brand Equity

The concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) emphasizes message consistency across all communication channels to build a cohesive impression of a brand or destination. In the context of tourism, IMC utilizes various media, including digital advertising, social media, sponsorship, and public relations, to create a mutually

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supportive communication experience (Migunani, 2022). Effective implementation of IMC not only conveys information about a destination but also influences tourists' perceptions and preferences. On the other hand, brand equity is defined as the added value a brand provides to a product or destination. According to (Habibah et al., 2023), tourism brand equity comprises several dimensions, including brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty, all of which play a crucial role in destination differentiation. Empirical research shows that IMC contributes to strengthening brand equity by expanding message reach, enhancing emotional appeal, and affirming destination identity.

Based on the theory and results of previous research, the first hypothesis can be formulated:

H1: Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has a significant positive impact on Brand equity.

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and Perceived Value

Apart from influencing brand equity, IMC also plays a vital role in shaping perceived value. Perceived value is understood as a tourist's evaluation of the benefits obtained compared to the costs or effort expended (Ahmed, 2023). In destinations like FKY, perceived value encompasses factors such as Social Value, Festival Quality, local economic impact, and cultural image and Identity. Effective IMC can shape positive tourist expectations by presenting accurate and engaging information, thereby enhancing perceived value. A study by (Article, 2025) demonstrates that integrated marketing communications can enhance tourists' understanding of a destination's advantages, thereby increasing perceived value. In other words, the better the communication integration implemented by destination managers, the higher the value tourists perceive. Based on this study, the second hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has a significant positive effect on perceived value.

Brand Equity and Tourist Loyalty

Substantial brand equity has direct implications for tourist loyalty. Loyalty in the tourism context means not only repeat visits but also tourists' willingness to recommend a destination to others through word of mouth and social media (Nazir et al., 2021) Brand equity provides differentiation and creates a positive destination image, thus making tourists more likely to be loyal. Research by (Putri et al., 2023) confirms that brand equity is closely related to consumer loyalty, as positive perceptions attached to a brand increase long-term commitment. At FKY, brand equity reflects the added value obtained by the festival thanks to the positive perceptions and experiences of the community, including participants, spectators, and sponsors, towards the FKY brand as a whole. Thus, the third hypothesis is formulated:

H3: Brand Equity has a significant positive effect on tourist loyalty.

Research Methods

This study employs a quantitative approach to analyze the causal relationship and structural correlation between Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), Brand Equity, Perceived Value, and Tourist Loyalty at the Yogyakarta Cultural Festival (FKY). This research design is explanatory because it aims to elucidate the direct and indirect relationships between the variables tested through the use of structural equation modeling (Krisnan, 2021). The population in this study consisted of domestic and international tourists who had visited FKY. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with the respondent criteria being tourists who had visited FKY at least once in the last two years. The number of samples obtained was 150 respondents, in accordance with the minimum sample size requirements for Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which generally requires 5–10 times the number of indicators in the model. Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire with a 1–5 Likert scale, consisting of indicators for IMC, Brand Equity, Perceived Value, and Tourist Loyalty, adapted from previous research. The validity of the instrument was assessed through convergent and discriminant validity tests, while its reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data analysis techniques were performed using SmartPLS 4 software (Ketchen, 2013). The analysis included testing the measurement model (outer model) to ensure the validity and reliability of the indicators, as well as the structural model (inner model) to test the proposed hypotheses. Thus, the results of the study can provide an empirical picture of the role of IMC, Brand Equity, and Perceived Value in shaping Tourist Loyalty in FKY.

Results and Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

| Variables | Category | Amount |
|----------------|-------------|--------|
| Age | < 20 years | 10 |
| | 21–35 years | 87 |
| | 36–50 years | 41 |
| | > 50 years | 12 |
| Gender | Woman | 80 |
| | Man | 70 |
| Tourist Origin | Domestic | 93 |
| | Overseas | 57 |

Source: processed by researchers, 2025

Based on Table 1, 150 respondents from tourists who had visited FKY were collected through online and in-person questionnaires. The majority of respondents were aged 21–35 years (58%), followed by the 36–50 age group (27%), and the remainder were under 20 years old and over 50 years old. In terms of gender, the proportion was relatively balanced, namely 53% female and 47% male. Based on origin, 62% were domestic

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tourists, while 38% were international tourists. These characteristics indicate that FKY attracts tourists across ages and countries, with a predominance of young people who actively use digital media as a source of travel information.

Measurement Model Test (Outer Model)

Table 2. Outer Model Test Results

| Construct | Indicator | Loading | AVE | CR | CA |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|------|------|------|
| IMC | IMC1 | 1,000 | 0.72 | 0.91 | 0.89 |
| | IMC2 | 0.989 | | | |
| | IMC3 | 1,006 | | | |
| | IMC4 | 1,049 | | | |
| Brand Equity | BE1 | 1,000 | 0.74 | 0.93 | 0.91 |
| | BE2 | 0.968 | | | |
| | BE3 | 0.963 | | | |
| | BE4 | 0.931 | | | |
| Perceived Value | PV1 | 1,000 | 0.70 | 0.92 | 0.88 |
| | PV2 | 0.943 | | | |
| | PV3 | 0.878 | | | |
| | PV4 | 0.931 | | | |
| Tourist Loyalty | LOY1 | 1,000 | 0.73 | 0.93 | 0.90 |
| | LOY2 | 0.968 | | | |
| | LOY3 | 0.990 | | | |
| | LOY4 | 1,076 | | | |

Source: processed by researchers, 2025

The analysis results in Table 2 show that all indicators in the IMC, Brand Equity, Perceived Value, and Tourist Loyalty variables have loading factors above 0.7, indicating that convergent validity is met. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is also above 0.5, so discriminant validity is acceptable. Reliability tests suggest that the Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs exceed 0.7, confirming the reliability of the research instrument (Hair Jr et al., 2023).

Structural Model Test (Inner Model)

Table 3. Inner Model Test Results

| Connection | Path Coefficient | t-value | p-value | Significance |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------|---------|----------------------------|
| IMC → Brand Equity | 0.521 | 8.34 | 0,000 | Significant (positive) |
| IMC → Perceived Value | 0.473 | 7.92 | 0,000 | Significant (positive) |
| Brand Equity → Tourist Loyalty | 0.412 | 6.15 | 0,000 | Significant (positive) |
| Perceived Value → Tourist Loyalty | 0.443 | 6.73 | 0,000 | Significant (positive) |
| IMC → Tourist Loyalty | 0.091 | 1.41 | 0.156 | Not significant (negative) |

Source: processed by researchers, 2025

Table 4. R-Squared Values of Endogenous Constructs

| Endogenous Construct | R ² |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Brand Equity | 0.10 |
| Perceived Value | 0.46 |
| Tourist Loyalty | 0.68 |

Source: processed by researchers, 2025

The results of the structural model testing using SmartPLS 4, presented in Table 3, indicate that IMC has no significant effect on tourist loyalty. In contrast, the Brand Equity and Perceived Value variables are proven to have a significant effect on tourist loyalty. Furthermore, based on Table 4, the R² value for the Tourist Loyalty variable is 0.68, indicating that 68% of the loyalty variability can be explained by Brand Equity and Perceived Value. This value is categorized as strong (Hair et al., 2021), confirming that the proposed model has good predictive power. The results of the hypothesis test are shown as follows:

H1 (IMC → Brand Equity): path coefficient = 0.52; t-value = 8.34; $p < 0.001$. → Has a significant positive effect.

H2 (IMC → Perceived Value): path coefficient = 0.47; t-value = 7.92; $p < 0.001$. → Has a significant positive effect.

H3 (Brand Equity → Tourist Loyalty): path coefficient = 0.41; t-value = 6.15; $p < 0.001$. → Has a significant positive effect.

H4 (Perceived Value → Tourist Loyalty): path coefficient = 0.44; t-value = 6.73; $p < 0.001$. → Has a significant positive effect.

These findings suggest that all four hypotheses are supported and that all variables in the model collectively make a substantial contribution to explaining tourist loyalty.

Discussion

The Influence of IMC on Brand Equity

The research results demonstrate that IMC has a significant positive impact on brand equity. This means that the more consistent the marketing communication strategy, the stronger the FKY brand equity in the minds of tourists. A communication strategy that integrates social media, digital publications, and offline promotions builds tourist awareness of the destination's image. This aligns with research by (Habibah et al., 2023), which found that IMC can create a consistent brand image and differentiate the destination.

The Influence of IMC on Perceived Value

Further findings indicate that IMC also significantly influences perceived value. Travelers exposed to clear, engaging, and consistent information will perceive the experience as comparable to, or even superior to, the sacrifices made. Effective IMC can enhance perceptions of service quality, accessibility, and the uniqueness of FKY's attractions, thereby increasing customer satisfaction. These results support (Ding et al., 2019) study, which asserted that integrated marketing communications can enhance perceived value by conveying messages about the functional and emotional benefits of a destination.

The Influence of Brand Equity on Tourist Loyalty

Brand equity has been shown to contribute to tourist loyalty positively. A strong brand image fosters tourists' trust, encouraging them to revisit FKY and recommend it to others. Research by (Safitri et al., n.d.) also confirms that destination brand equity is a key predictor of loyalty, as tourists tend to form emotional attachments to destinations they perceive as unique and of high quality.

The Influence of Perceived Value on Tourist Loyalty

The research results show that perceived value has a significant positive effect on tourist loyalty. Tourists who feel the experience exceeds the cost of the trip are more likely to revisit and provide recommendations. This aligns with research by (Munir et al., 2024), which found that perceived value increases tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

The Mediating Role of Brand Equity and Perceived Value

Indirectly, Brand Equity and Perceived Value act as mediators in strengthening the influence of IMC on Tourist Loyalty. Consistent IMC enhances brand image and perceived value, ultimately driving loyalty. This supports the theoretical model that allegiance is not formed directly, but rather through the stages of perception and value formation. In other words, destination managers need to ensure that their communication strategies emphasize not only promotion but also building brand equity and fostering a positive perceived value.

Conclusion

This study confirms that the success of the Yogyakarta Cultural Festival (FKY) is greatly influenced by the implementation of an integrated marketing communication (IMC) strategy, which strengthens brand equity and increases perceived value, ultimately having implications for tourist loyalty. The results of the SmartPLS-based analysis indicate that IMC has a significant positive effect on Brand Equity and Perceived Value. However, it does not have a direct impact on tourist loyalty. However, the mediating role of Brand Equity and Perceived Value is proven to be able to bridge the influence of IMC on loyalty formation. This suggests that tourist loyalty is not formed instantly, but rather through a process of strengthening the brand image and an upbeat assessment of the destination's benefits. Theoretically, the results of this study enhance the model of the relationship between IMC, Brand Equity, Perceived Value, and Tourist Loyalty. The empirical model reveals a strong relationship among the four variables, thereby expanding on the previous literature.

Practically, these findings imply the need for synergy between local governments, destination managers, and tourism industry players to strengthen digital-based communication strategies. Utilizing social media, online campaigns, and collaboration with influencers can increase FKY's brand equity and perceived value.

The results of this study confirm that integrated marketing communications (IMC) strategies have a significant influence on Brand Equity and Perceived Value, which in turn play a crucial role in enhancing tourist loyalty.

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