

## Transformation of Tourism Marketing Communication Strategies through a Hybrid Approach (Online-Offline): A Case Study of The Lodge Maribaya

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### Abstract

This study aims to comprehensively dissect the dynamics of marketing communication strategies implemented by The Lodge Maribaya in maintaining visitor volume amidst the transition of the post-pandemic era and the massive digital disruption. The central focus of this inquiry highlights how the integration of digital marketing channels is juxtaposed with conventional approaches, specifically personal selling, particularly in targeting the corporate market segment characterized by complex decision-making processes. Adopting an interpretivist paradigm with a descriptive qualitative approach, data validity was rigorously tested using triangulation of sources and techniques, encompassing in-depth interviews with marketing policymakers, participant observation in the field, and digital footprint analysis. The analytical results indicate that The Lodge Maribaya implements an *Ambidextrous Marketing* strategy. In the retail segment (B2C), marketing maneuvers rely on *User Generated Content* (UGC) and social media virality to manufacture a *Fear of Missing Out* (FOMO). Conversely, for the corporate segment (B2B), the personal touch through sales visits and intensive follow-up mechanisms proves irreplaceable in mitigating client perception risks. The synergy of these two approaches is empirically capable of boosting *Brand Awareness* while simultaneously converting prospects into sales (*Sales Conversion*). These findings proffer theoretical and practical implications that digitalization does not necessarily annul the role of human interaction, especially within the hospitality industry.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing Communication; Personal Selling; Digital Marketing; Ambidextrous Marketing; Sustainable Tourism.

### Introduction

The dynamics of the tourism industry in the Greater Bandung area, specifically Lembang, is currently undergoing a significant tectonic shift. Post-COVID-19, tourist behavior has experienced fundamental transformation, demanding industry players to redefine their engagement strategies. The Lembang area, renowned as a premier destination in West Java, now faces market saturation due to the proliferation of new destinations offering uniform value propositions, namely the "Instagramable" concept and selfie-tourism. Data from the West Bandung Regency Tourism and Culture Office (2024) recorded a surge in the number of tourist destinations by 15% annually; however, the occupancy rates and average visits per destination tend to be stagnant or even declining for incumbent players who fail to innovate.

From the perspective of **Porter (2023)**, competitive advantage in a fragmented and player-dense industry (*red ocean*) is not solely determined by physical product differentiation or price wars, but rather by how skillfully a company designs a unique strategic architecture to create distinction from its competitors. This challenge is palpably felt by The Lodge Maribaya. As a pioneer of pine forest nature tourism with iconic attractions such as the *Sky Tree* and *Bamboo Sky*, The Lodge must now contend with aggressive competitors such as Lembang Park & Zoo, The Great Asia Africa, and Orchid Forest Cikole.

Pre-research observations identified an intriguing phenomenon regarding the duality of The Lodge's market characteristics. On one hand, there is the individual tourist segment (*Free Independent Travelers* - FIT), dominated by Generation Z and Millennials. This segment is highly responsive to digital trends, price-sensitive, and possesses low switching costs. On the other hand, there is the corporate market segment (*Group/B2B*) comprising companies, government agencies, and educational institutions. This segment exhibits a far more complex purchasing pattern, involving multiple decision-making units, and prioritizes service quality assurance and safety over price.

A problematic gap arises as much of the contemporary marketing literature overly glorifies digitalization as a panacea, implying that conventional marketing methods have become obsolete. However, empirical findings in the Mulberry Hill case study (Wibowo & Ilyasa, 2025) demonstrate that *sales visit* activities in fact still hold a vital role in this all-digital era, especially for high-credibility services. This discrepancy between "digital-first" rhetoric and the reality of "human-touch" necessities constitutes a crucial research gap to be explored.

Departing from this urgency, this study aims not merely to describe marketing strategies per se, but to delve deeper into: (1) How does The Lodge Maribaya construct distinct marketing communication messages for two contrasting segments?; (2) Why is the *personal selling* approach maintained amidst the cost efficiencies offered by digital marketing?; and (3) How does the synergy mechanism between online and offline channels operate to enhance sales conversion?

## Literature Review

### Evolution of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

The concept of *Integrated Marketing Communication* (IMC) has evolved from mere visual logo alignment across media to the strategic orchestration of all customer touchpoints. Kotler and Keller (2022) define modern IMC as a company's effort to blend and coordinate communication channels—mass advertising, sales promotion, events and experiences, public relations, direct marketing, and personal selling—to convey a clear, consistent, and compelling message. In the tourism context, IMC becomes crucial because tourism products are intangible and inseparable (production and consumption occur simultaneously); thus, the perception built through communication becomes the sole anchor for potential consumers before visiting (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2021).

### The Digital Marketing Paradox and Consumer Behavior

The Fourth Industrial Revolution and Society 5.0 have transformed the face of social media from a mere socialization tool into a strategic business instrument. The mechanism of *Electronic Word of Mouth* (e-WOM) has now become a new currency. Sugiyono (2022) highlights that in the digital ecosystem, visual content possesses far higher persuasive power compared to textual narratives. However, literature also notes the existence of a "Digital Paradox," where the higher the digital interaction, the higher the consumer yearning for authentic human interaction, especially when facing high purchasing risks or information uncertainty (Tjiptono & Chandra, 2016).

### Relevance of Personal Selling in the Hospitality Industry

Although Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Chatbot technologies are developing rapidly, the aspect of trust in large-scale hospitality sales (B2B) often requires inter-human validation. Wibowo and Ilyasa (2025) in their research assert that *sales visits* are not merely sales activities, but a process of "trust transfer." Through face-to-face interaction, salespeople can read body language, respond to client objections in real-time, and conduct flexible negotiations—capabilities that have yet to be perfectly replicated by any digital algorithm.

## Ambidextrous Marketing

This concept refers to an organization's ability to exploit existing competencies (conventional/offline marketing) while simultaneously exploring new opportunities (digital/online marketing). Ambidextrous firms are capable of balancing operational efficiency with market innovation, a dynamic capability highly necessitated in the fluctuating tourism industry (Wheelen & Hunger, 2023).

## Research Method

### Research Design

This study adopts an interpretivist paradigm with a descriptive qualitative approach. The selection of this design is grounded in the research objective to understand the meaning behind the implemented marketing strategies, rather than merely measuring correlations between variables. The researcher acts as a key instrument, immersing directly into the natural setting at The Lodge Maribaya, Cibodas, Lembang.

### Participants and Data Sources

Informant selection was conducted using *purposive sampling* techniques with "Information-Rich Cases" criteria. Key informants include:

1. **Head of Marketing & Sales:** To understand the macro strategic vision of the company.
2. **Sales Executive (Corporate):** To excavate field tactics and B2B negotiation challenges.
3. **Digital Marketing Specialist:** To dissect social media performance metrics.
4. **Visitors (Retail & Group):** As triangulation data sources to verify strategy effectiveness from the consumer's perspective.

### Data Collection Procedure

The data acquisition process was conducted iteratively over a 3-month period (October - December 2025) through three channels:

- **In-depth Interviews:** Conducted semi-structurally with flexible interview guidelines. Interview duration ranged between 45-90 minutes for each informant.
- **Non-Intervention Participant Observation:** The researcher observed service processes at

the front office, accompanied the sales team during inspection trips by corporate clients, and monitored interactions in social media comment sections.

- **Documentation Study:** Analysis of internal documents such as proposal offers (sales kits), monthly visit reports, and Instagram/TikTok content archives.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis techniques refer to the interactive model of **Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014)**, consisting of:

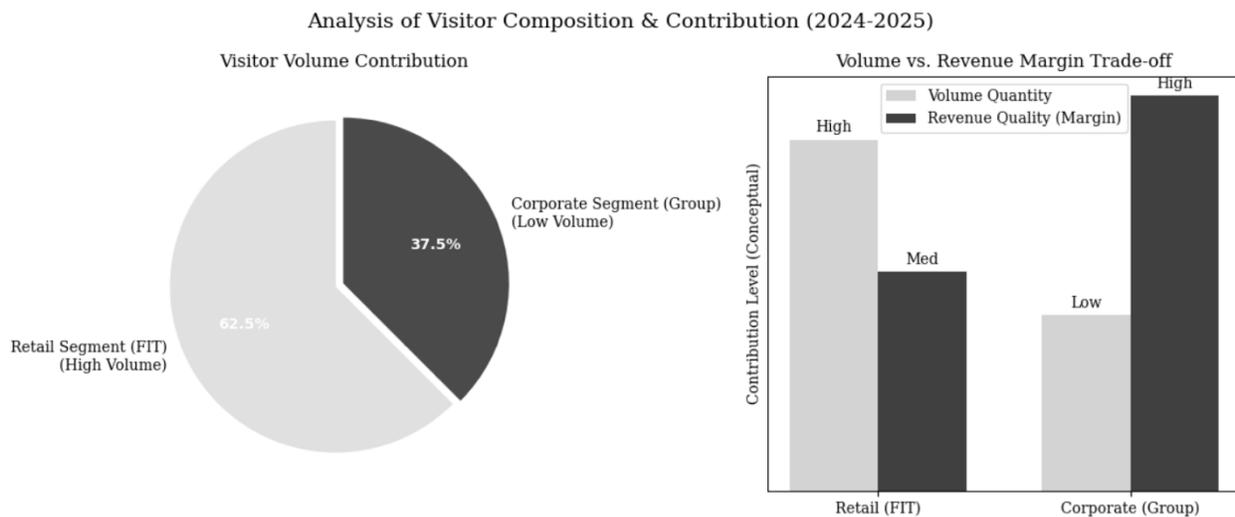
1. **Data Condensation:** Sorting and focusing raw data from interview transcripts.
2. **Data Display:** Arranging data in the form of matrices, graphs, and logical narratives.
3. **Conclusion Drawing/Verification:** Discovering patterns, themes, and causal relationships, and testing finding validity through source and method triangulation.

### Result and Discussion

#### A. Visitor Landscape Map and Market Segmentation

Before dissecting the strategy, it is imperative to understand the composition of the target visitors. Based on processed internal data, The Lodge Maribaya exhibits a unique market polarization.

**Table 1. Estimated Composition and Characteristics of Visitors (2024-2025)**



Source: Processed Interview Data (2026)

### Visitor Volume Contribution (2024-2025)

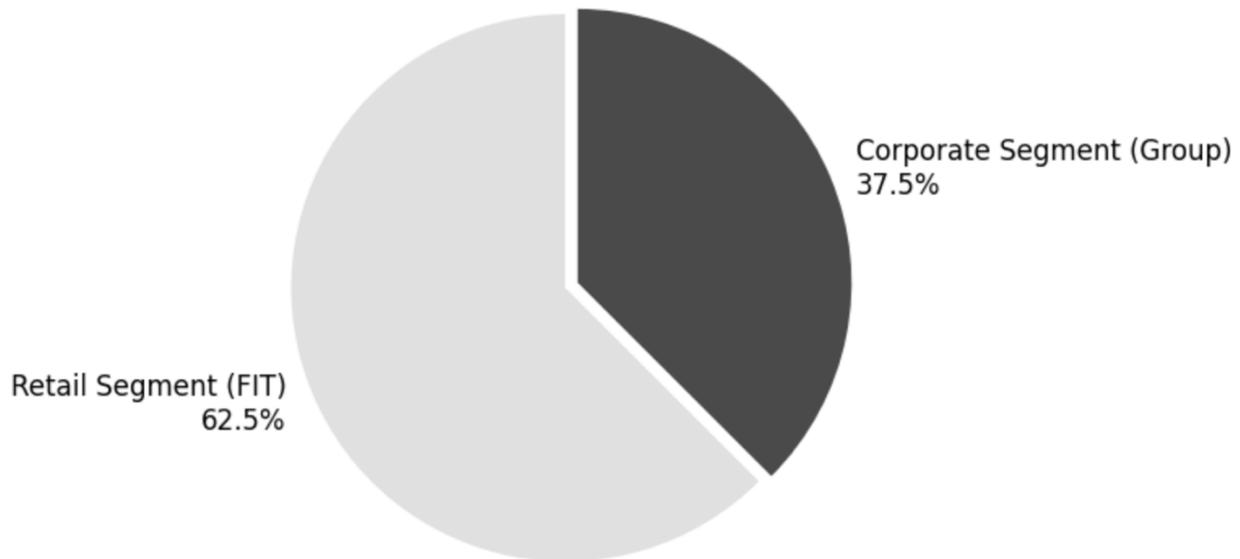


Figure 1. Visual Representation of Visitor Volume Contribution (Source: Author's Analysis)

The data in Table 1 and Figure 1 indicates that although the retail segment dominates in quantity, the corporate segment provides crucial revenue stability, especially on weekdays when retail visits tend to be sparse.

#### B. Digital Strategy: Creating "Digital Craving"

Field findings reveal that for the retail segment, The Lodge implements a "Visual Storytelling" strategy. The digital marketing team does not merely post landscape photos but designs short video content (Reels/TikTok) that triggers emotions.

One informant (Digital Specialist) stated:

*"We are no longer selling entrance tickets on social media. What we sell is 'Fear of Missing Out' (FOMO). We display the happy expressions of visitors, dramatic sunset*

*views, and trending music. The goal is singular: to make people feel they must come here for the content."*

This strategy is supported by the use of micro *Key Opinion Leaders* (KOL) who possess high engagement rates in specific communities (e.g., photography communities or mom-influencers). Furthermore, the function of social media admins has transformed. No longer acting merely as information disseminators, they act as "Digital Concierges" responding to queries (ticket prices, routes, weather) within minutes. This response speed is crucial given the characteristics of Gen-Z who desire instant gratification.

### **C. Existence of Sales Visits: The Art of Selling Trust**

The most significant finding, aligning with the research of Wibowo & Ilyasa (2025), is the continued relevance of sales visits. Why is it that corporate clients (Private Companies, State-Owned Enterprises, Schools) are not satisfied with merely viewing the website?

The Head of Marketing explained in an interview:

*"For a gathering of 200 people with a budget of hundreds of millions, a company HRD will not dare to decide based solely on Instagram photos. They need face-to-face interaction. They need to see 'who' will be taking care of them. The sales visit is our moment to convince them that we are professional and safe."*

This personal selling process involves structured stages:

1. **Prospecting:** Mining potential company data via LinkedIn or association databases.
2. **Approaching:** Initial contact via personal WhatsApp Business (not rigid broadcasting).
3. **Presentation (Sales Visit):** Visiting the client's office with a customized proposal (*tailor-made*).
4. **Handling Objection:** Addressing client doubts directly (e.g., regarding large bus access or food menus).
5. **Closing & Maintenance:** Contract signing and maintaining post-event relationships.

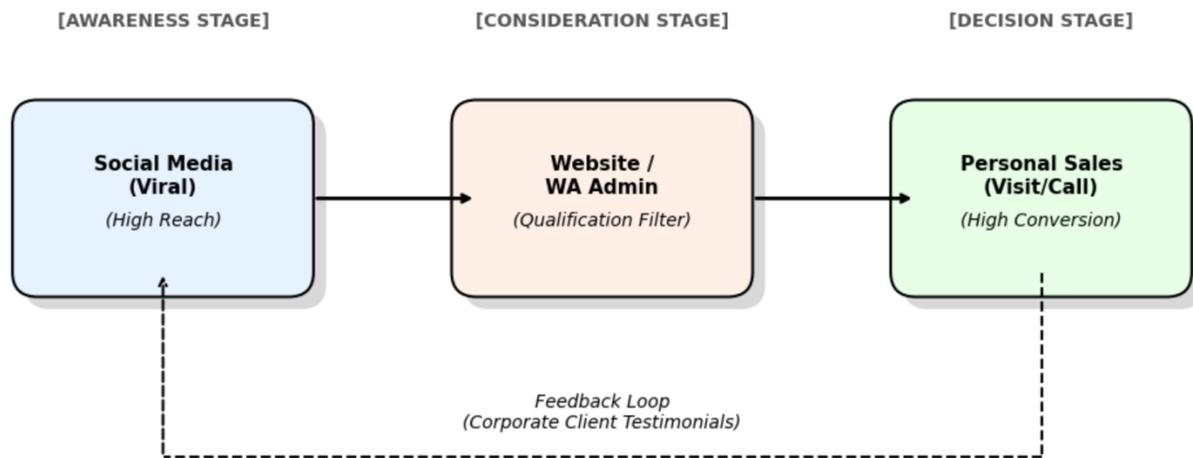
### **D. Hybrid Synergy: The "Online-to-Offline" (O2O) Model**

The uniqueness of The Lodge Maribaya lies in the integration of these two worlds. Digital

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marketing often serves as a door opener for the sales team. Many cases were found where company HRDs initially viewed viral content of The Lodge on TikTok, then contacted the admin. The admin then filters these prospects (whether "hot" or "cold" leads) and forwards them to the Corporate Sales team for follow-up via visits or Zoom meetings.

**Figure 2. Hybrid Marketing Communication Integration Model**



**Figure 2. Hybrid Marketing Communication Integration Model**

(Corporate Client Testimonials reposted to Social Media)

*Source: Author's Analysis (2026)*

The cycle in Figure 2 demonstrates a mutualistic symbiosis. Digital content generates leads, the sales team converts them into revenue, and corporate client satisfaction is documented back into digital content to build further credibility. This creates a sustainable marketing flywheel.

### **E. Discussion: Confirming Theory in Local Context**

These findings reinforce **Wheelen & Hunger's (2023)** proposition regarding adaptive strategic management. The Lodge is not trapped in the "Traditional vs. Digital" dichotomy but embraces both. In the context of tourism service marketing, these findings also validate the

*Service-Dominant Logic* (Vargo & Lusch) theory, where human interaction (sales) is part of the value proposition itself. Clients do not just buy tour tickets; they buy "peace of mind" delivered through warm interactions with the sales team.

## Managerial Implications

Based on the findings above, several strategic recommendations can be proposed for tourism industry practitioners:

1. **Investment in Hybrid Human Capital:** Tourism companies should not only recruit social media admins but must also retain sales teams competent in B2B negotiations. Public speaking and negotiation training are as important as TikTok algorithm training.
2. **Data Integration (CRM):** A centralized *Customer Relationship Management* system is required. Retail visitor data obtained from online reservations should be accessible to the sales team to identify potential corporate prospects (e.g., a retail visitor turns out to be an HR manager at their company).
3. **B2B Content Customization:** Social media should not only contain content for retail tourists. There needs to be a specific content slot displaying the excitement of corporate gatherings ("Behind the Scenes") to build trust with other potential corporate clients.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that the transformation of marketing communication strategies at The Lodge Maribaya is not substitutive (replacing old ways with new ones) but complementary. The implemented *Hybrid Marketing* strategy proves effective: Digital Marketing functions as a giant net to capture attention (*Awareness*) and the high-volume retail market, while *Personal Selling* functions as a precision spear to penetrate the high-value corporate market (*Conversion*) and build long-term loyalty. The primary implication of this study is the affirmation that amidst the onslaught of AI and automation, the human touch remains an irreplaceable luxury element in the service industry. The success of The Lodge Maribaya is proof that technology is the accelerator, but humans remain the primary navigators.

## Limitations & Future Research

This study has limitations in its focus on a single object (single case study), so the generalization of findings must be done with caution. Future research is suggested to: (1) Conduct comparative studies with tourist objects in other provinces; (2) Use quantitative approaches to measure statistically how significant the influence of sales visits is on revenue; and (3) Analyze cost-effectiveness (*Return on Marketing Investment*) between digital and conventional channels.

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