

Research Article

Proposed Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) Strategy for Pura Mangkunegaran as a Cultural Tourism Destination

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Abstract: Pura Mangkunegaran holds a role as a cultural heritage site and one of the primary historical attractions in Surakarta, Central Java. This study examines the strategic challenges faced by the palace as a cultural heritage destination with rising visibility but struggles with strong and meaningful brand understanding. The research adopts a qualitative methodology, collecting data through unstructured in-depth interviews supported by secondary data from the internal management visitor survey. The analysis began with an internal and external assessment using the VRIO and PESTLE frameworks, followed by thematic analysis using Nvivo. This approach ensures a thorough understanding of palace's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), which is then synthesized using the TOWS matrix and thematically analyzed to identify key themes leading to the formulation of strategic recommendations using integrated marketing communications (IMC) recommendations. Key findings from the internal analysis indicate that Pura Mangkunegaran possesses several valuable resources but tend to be constrained. The external analysis reveals that the rise of the cultural tourism trend and improved efforts of combining technology show opportunities, while competition with nearby cultural destinations, inconsistent digital communications, and public perception tend to pose challenges. The proposed business strategy using IMC integrates all media mix that Pura Mangkunegaran can utilize to improve visitor experience, specifically in the digital marketing aspect. To support the IMC strategy, the implementation plan for Pura Mangkunegaran combines all initiatives for the 2026 timeline, divided into four quarters. This research contributes to the field of cultural tourism marketing by providing a practical framework that can be applied to increase visit experience and brand understanding.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage; IMC; Pura Mangkunegaran; Thematic Analysis; Tourism Marketing

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1. Introduction

Tourism is a major industry that is essential to the development of the global economy, society, and culture. According to the OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2024 report, tourism has rebounded strongly following sharp declines triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic that led tourism flows to plummet in 2020-2021. Growth is anticipated to return to pre-pandemic trends as many countries must be resilient and adopt a new approach in maintaining or developing their business. In Indonesia, the tourism sector plays a significant role in stimulating economic growth. The rise in domestic and international tourist visits is a promising indicator of Indonesia's tourism sector rebounding from the pandemic's impact (Fauzi & Sumirat, 2023). In Q3-2024, the tourism sector contributed 4.01% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), where the number increased by 0.11% compared to 2023's productivity (Coordinating Ministry of Economy, 2025). The Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024 ranks Indonesia 22nd out of 119 countries overall, with an average score of 4.46 with a 4.5% increase from 2019 and placed 6th in the Asia-Pacific region. The report highlights that the rebound in travel

demand has been supported by improvements in accessibility as well as a rise in interest in and investment in natural and cultural resources that contribute to tourism.

One of the emerging subgenres of tourism is cultural tourism, which utilizes existing resources to gain economic growth in a region. UNWTO defines cultural tourism as an activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience, and consume tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. Indonesia is growing in terms of its cultural and creative industries, which serves as a booster in enhancing the cultural tourism concept. Indonesia's diverse cultural heritage occupies a central role within the creative economies of many cities, acting as a catalyst for regional creativity and cultural identity. The Tourist Attraction Object Statistics by BPS Indonesia reported that in 2023, cultural tourism only contributes 7.3% in general with a clear disparity in distribution, Java and Bali dominating compared to other regions. These provinces, long recognized for their deep cultural heritage, continue to serve as the main hubs of cultural tourism, where historical sites, museums, and cultural attractions are concentrated.

One of the most prominent examples is Yogyakarta City, widely regarded as Indonesia's cultural capital and, alongside Bali, one of the country's most popular destinations. Yogyakarta serves as a major hub for the fine arts and classical Javanese culture, supported by its strategic location near the world-famous Hindu and Buddhist temples of Prambanan and Borobudur, which significantly enhance its appeal. Complementing Yogyakarta's prominence in the cultural richness, Surakarta, commonly called Solo City, stands as another key cultural hub in Central Java with the potential to amplify heritage-based tourism. Traditional handicrafts, dances, and ceremonies are deeply embedded in Solo's identity, reflecting its long-standing reputation as a guardian of authentic Javanese culture. According to the British Council report, the city's royal heritage remains an active part of its social and cultural fabric, and the Pura Mangkunegaran stands out as its most prominent cultural landmark. As a living palace and tourism icon, Mangkunegaran showcases the continuity of court traditions while positioning Solo as an increasingly important counterpart to Yogyakarta in advancing Indonesia's cultural tourism.

Pura Mangkunegaran was established originally as the residence of the Kadipaten (Principality) Mangkunegaran royal family and has grown into a prominent cultural tourist attraction. The palace showcases a unique blend of Javanese and European-influenced architectural features and serves as a center for cultural preservation. Up until now, the monarch has had no governing position, unlike the Keraton in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, and therefore, the palace area is ineligible to be funded by the government. As a result, Pura Mangkunegaran must adapt and utilize its resources in tourism as a cultural heritage icon to attract more tourists. Recent efforts to promote the modernized Pura Mangkunegaran have been done mainly by leveraging social media as a platform to interact, holding big events in the palace other than traditional ceremonies, and even building revitalization. In addition to the revitalization of the palace and the various newly opened attractions, the information has not been communicated and reached the public evenly yet. Therefore, there remains a significant opportunity to enhance brand awareness, be it domestically or internationally, to strengthen its position as the center of Javanese cultural preservation.

Given the background of its rich historical value and unique identity as a Javanese royal palace, Pura Mangkunegaran has not reached its full potential as a cultural tourism destination yet. The palace must go beyond cultural value to remain relevant and competitive, especially in digital platforms as there is a shift in the behavior of tourists relying on digital content and online platforms to make travel decisions. Tourism destinations like Pura Mangkunegaran are just like any other consumer product in which brands must have competitive advantage to differentiate themselves from other products and convey positive messages in the industry. The low public familiarity is a clear signal that the destination needs a more focused targeted marketing and promotional efforts. Without these, even the most culturally rich and significant sites will remain hidden and mismatched on how the management intended it to be with public's perception. This research will propose a solution as a bridge to the gap of why the visibility keep increasing but the understanding of the destination is still not optimal.

2. Literature Review

This literature review will cover the flow of scientific development in the topic of study. The chapter will elaborate on the overview of the development of knowledge underlying the writing of the research.

Cultural Tourism

Cultural heritage tourism is defined as a form of travel that involves visits to historical places, archaeological sites, museums, and cultural markers to understand the past and cultural heritage of a region (Lahagu & Pranoto, 2025). Moreover, Richards (2018), cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. Tourists are believed get distinctive memories from interactive or sensory encounters, such as a “mental souvenir” and an essential perspective on the area through the destination cultural characteristics. A range of cultural experiences are what cultural tourists desire to indulge in; hence cultural heritage assets must be transformed into cultural tourist products. Increased cultural tourism assets can enhance local community income, opening new employment opportunities, and increase a sense of pride among communities. However, on the other hand, exploring cultural tourism also carries the risk of negative impacts on conservation efforts (Mochlasin & Anwar, 2023) and uneven benefits towards key stakeholders such as local communities, workers, and tourists (Mundi, 2025). Finding a balance between tourism and cultural heritage management is the difficulty facing the cultural tourism industry. Through mutual understanding, community and management can build their shared interest in cultural assets ensuring the long-term preservation and operation of the destination.

Internal and External Analysis

Internal analysis examines a company's internal environment to identify its strengths and weaknesses. This analysis focuses on factors within the organization that influence its ability to compete and succeed. The microenvironment consists of the actors close to the company that affect its ability to engage and serve its customers, the company, suppliers, marketing intermediaries, customer markets, competitors, and publics. Tools like SWOT analysis (strengths and weaknesses part) are commonly used to structure this evaluation supported by VRIO analysis. VRIO analysis is a strategic framework used to evaluate a company's internal resources and capabilities to determine if they can provide a sustainable competitive advantage. Businesses that have a competitive edge give their clients better value than their rivals do. By creatively combining and leveraging their resources and competencies, businesses generate value. Hitt et al. (2011) defines that capabilities that are valuable, rare, costly to imitate, and organized are considered as an organization's core competencies.

External analysis focuses on factors outside the organization that can impact its success. It identifies opportunities and threats in the broader market and industry environment. Tools such as PESTLE analysis (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental factors). A PESTLE analysis is a strategic management framework used to assess the external macroenvironmental factors that can influence an organization or project. Kotler (2018) defines the macroenvironment consists of the larger societal forces that affect the microenvironment, demographic, economic, natural, technological, political, and cultural forces. A PESTEL analysis is used to identify threats and weaknesses which are used in a SWOT analysis.

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

Marketing communications are how firms attempt to inform, persuade, and remind consumers, directly or indirectly, about the products and brands they sell. The American Marketing Association defines integrated marketing communications (IMC) as a planning process designed to assure that all brand contacts received by a customer or prospect for a product, service, or organization are relevant to that person and consistent over time. When done well, this planning process evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communications disciplines and combines them seamlessly to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum impact of messages. In a sense, they represent the voice of the company and its brands, they are a means by which the firm can establish a dialogue and build relationships with consumers. According to Kotler (2016), there are several steps to create an effective IMC strategy: identifying target audiences, setting communication objectives, designing communication, selecting communication channel, and deciding on media mix.

3. Research Method

The research methodology explains how this research will conduct data collection, which consists of primary and secondary data to the method of analysis of the said data. The primary data is going to be collected utilizing qualitative in-depth interviews while the secondary data is obtained through relevant journals, news articles, and company data. Moreover, the internal management has provided the tourist' feedback survey results taken in December 2024 –

January 2025 with the total of 155 respondents. The result will be used for data triangulation to further understand qualitative findings. The data gained then analyzed in accordance to answer research questions. Internal (VRIO) and external (PESTLE) analysis conducted to answer the first research question. The result of the analysis is then synthesized through SWOT and TOWS analysis to determine the suitable business strategy using IMC framework as the answer of the second research question. After determining the business strategy to solve the business problems, the marketing strategy and implementation plan are going to be formulated to increase Pura Mangkunegaran's brand awareness to answer the last research question.

Data Collection Method

This research uses two data collection methods, which are primary data and secondary data. The primary data will be supported by secondary data as has already shown on the preliminary business issues supporting data. The data obtained from various sources such as official documents, books, publications, and other online resources mentioning the related issues with Pura Mangkunegaran. Primary data is obtained through qualitative method through in-depth interviews are to gather information, especially to comprehensively learn and justify the Pura Mangkunegaran's condition. Lim (2024) explains that qualitative research delves into the rich textures of human experience and perspective, capturing contexts and nuances often lost in numerical translation which is suitable for this research. The qualitative research method is used in this study to gain deeper insight into the current challenges of Pura Mangkunegaran in terms of marketing based on the opinion of various related stakeholders. By creating an open and interactive setting, semi-structured in-depth interviews enable participants to share rich information, making it possible to capture the complexity of phenomena such as cultural tourism management, stakeholder expectations, or communication strategies. Semi-structured interviews are based on semi-structured interview guide, which is a schematic presentation of questions or topics and needs to be explored by the interviewer. The data collection ensuring ethical research standard by collecting data in respondents' free time, assuring their voluntarily consent on being interviewed and how the data collected would be used for research purposes only. The targeted respondents in this research are the internal management, representative of decision makers from the royal family, and tourists. Due to the nature of the research which focuses on exploring a phenomenon through in-depth understanding, there are eight respondents as sample reaching data saturation with details as follows:

Table 1. Interviews Details

Respondent	Occupation	Respondent Type
Raden Roro (Rr.) Driadelta	Staff to the Kawedanan Manggala Pranaya	Internal Management
Kanjeng Bendara Raden Ayu (K.B.R.Ay.) Ratna Rosilawati Kadarisman	Employee	Mangkunegaran Family
Satrio WP	Javanese Literature Student	Youth Cultural Activist
Junita N	PR Consultant	Tourist
Fauzan M. Daffa	Banker	Tourist
Adristi	Content Creator	Tourist
Rika	Office Worker	International Tourist (Japan)
Yuru	Office Worker	International Tourist (Malaysia)

(Source: Author, 2025)

The data was collected via online meetings through direct interview with the details mentioned. The utilization of online meeting method was necessitated due to the geographical distance between the researcher and the selected respondents' availability. Almost all the interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia with a mix with English and the respondents' consented to their interviews being recorded and some were transcribed into English for analysis purposes. To further amplify the interview, data triangulation is also conducted from secondary sources to ensure validity.

Data Analysis Method

Qualitative interviews will be analyzed through thematic analysis to capture structured patterns and deeper meanings with the help of Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) software, Nvivo 12. NVivo is one of the well-known software for qualitative data analysis for analyzing and visualizing qualitative data. Nvivo has the core features of handling text from documents via coding, writing, linking, and searching for patterns. It can import and analyze, even transcribe, from various forms of data, including interviews, surveys,

journal articles, images, audio, and video files. The result of the coding can then be queried to see the trend, patterns, and meaningful relationships of the data. The supporting features include a hierarchy chart, word frequency, and text search. Which afterwards can be reviewed and grouped into themes.

Naeem et al. (2023) discussed that thematic analysis is a research method used to identify and interpret patterns or themes in a data set as it often leads to new insights and understanding. The analysis procedure is often referred to as "systematic" since it interprets research data in a methodical, structured manner. Braun & Clarke (2006) developed the methodology with the purpose of drawing insights from real events and experiences and further elaborating on the social context related to the interpretation of those experiences. Every step builds on the one before it, leading to a thorough comprehension of the material. Clear links between the data, interpretation, and conclusions are made possible by this systematic approach, which also improves the findings' consistency and reproducibility. This analysis can be useful for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences and generating unexpected insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4. Results and Discussion

After the data collection is conducted, the following section will explain how Pura Mangkunegaran's internal and external condition is and the IMC formulation. This analysis will be supported by thematic analysis to provide the business solution for Pura Mangkunegaran with the help of using Nvivo 12.

Table 2. Internal Analysis

Resource or Capability	V	R	I	O	Competitive Implication
Cultural Heritage	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sustainable competitive advantage
Historical Assets (Built Area)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sustainable competitive advantage
Restaurant Area	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sustained competitive advantage
Museum and Library Collection	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Potential sustained competitive advantage
Authentic Tourism Experience	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Temporary competitive advantage
Brand Identity & Cultural Positioning	Yes	Yes	Moderate	Moderate	Temporary competitive advantage
Cultural Workshops	Yes	No	No	No	Competitive parity advantage
External Relationship	Yes	No	No	Yes	Competitive parity advantage
Venue Rental	Yes	No	No	Yes	Competitive parity advantage
Human Resources	Yes	No	Moderate	Yes	Temporary competitive advantage
Sustainable Initiatives	Yes	No	Moderate	Yes	Competitive Parity advantage
Leadership Style and Leader Persona	Yes	Moderate	Yes	Yes	Temporary competitive advantage
Merchandise Products	No	No	No	Moderate	Competitive disadvantage
Supporting Infrastructure (signage, public facilities, etc.)	No	No	No	Moderate	Competitive disadvantage
Transportation integration	No	No	No	No	Competitive disadvantage

(Source: Author, 2025)

a. Cultural Heritage

A sustained competitive advantage from its cultural values supported by a long heritage history uniquely managed. Pura Mangkunegaran has strong cultural value of Javanese traditions and information, yet the palace requires better storytelling and visitor engagement to fully realize this potential.

b. Historical Assets (Built Area)

Another sustained advantage is due to the physical structures are valuable and rare. There are always rooms for improvements remembering the building is 300 years old or more, so the competitive strength depends on the restoration, renovation, maintenance, and integration into a compelling visitor experience. Qualitative data also shows that the main reason they enjoyed the visit was to see the distinct architecture style of the palace which not many have now.

c. Restaurant Area

Pracima Tuin gives a sustained competitive advantage at present. The beautiful dining area with fine dining experience and plenty of food options located in the heritage setting creates a rare and difficult to imitate position. The palace seems to be organized to operate it effectively and promote it widely to be known. The selling point is the concept of fine dining as royals. Visitors are equipped with the ambience and authentic menu of how the royals used to dine. Many of visitors are intrigued by the concept and the foods offered. However, some may say they can improve the taste to better suit the price point, especially since there is an increase of minimum charge in RSVP fee from Rp100,000 to Rp150,000.

d. Museum and Library Collection

This attraction remains underutilized, giving a potential sustained advantage. Not many know about the museum and library attraction while visiting, mainly due to the fact the museum is currently undergoing several renovations and restorations. It may also be affected by the old buildings and archives that need to be restored so the public cannot explore more of it. The curation, digitization, and management are still planned to be developed.

e. Authentic Tourism Experience

A temporary competitive advantage because the authenticity of Five Senses Experience differentiates Pura Mangkunegaran. The Five Senses being sight of scenery, smell of the distinct incense, hear the gamelan melody on speaker, taste the welcome drink and snack, and touch the surrounding area. These senses were planned to provide a rich perception allowing tourists to understand deeper meaning on visiting eventually creating memorable muscle memory. Moreover, based on the survey conducted, 31% said that they would love to revisit with a more complete cultural experience. However, it raises concerns about moderate imitability if promoted widely and organizational constraints such as limited program experience in response to privatization of the area, reducing long-term sustainability. The philosophy on enacting Five Senses Tourism is to make visitors feel "at-home", as the internal part wished that the takeaway is to visit a relative's house rather than traveling. However, from the visitor's side, they tend to be hesitant and perceive that Pura Mangkunegaran is exclusive making the visit experience feel a bit intruding the home of the royals.

f. Brand Identity & Cultural Positioning

The rich, royal, and exclusive branding has cultural depth and distinctiveness giving a temporary advantage due to it can be easily imitated by similar destinations. However, as an emerging modernized cultural destination, Pura Mangkunegaran must work on storytelling across platforms to convey the intended messages for its audience and for it to become a sustained differentiator. Some visitors perceived the Pura Mangkunegaran as unapproachable and exclusive since they cannot find the information regarding tourism across their official accounts while in fact the internal management are trying to communicate to the public that they are opening their door widely to welcome visitors.

g. Cultural Workshops

Workshops in the Pendopo add value but are easily imitated and lack strong institutionalization due to the occasional occurrence (not regular) which led to unexposed information for tourists. Especially since 60% of the tourists visiting would like to have more cultural workshops scheduled when they are visiting Pura Mangkunegaran. Without structured programming and promotion, these workshops may be undiscovered by potential tourists and do not generate lasting differences.

h. Venue Rental

The commercialization of the palace contributes to revenue and diversification more, which acts as a competitive parity resource. Other heritage or cultural venues may easily offer similar services. The organization is structured well enough to run it effectively as they establish its business entity legalization and support rules and regulations so that events held in Pamedan are not disruptive towards the building and operations.

i. Human Resources (staff, tour guides, and *abdi dalem*)

Cultural legitimacy, knowledge, and capabilities of staff are valuable, especially knowing the fact there are community development opportunities for increasing staff's skills to fully deliver the hospitality standards. On top of that, every staff member and *abdi dalem* tend to have a devotion towards the cultural value of the palace. Moreover, they were equipped with cultural knowledge and tradition about Pura Mangkunegaran, making them able to be the agent of promotion too. However, it may not be as rare as it may seem as it can be imitated easily by others. The tour guide explanation may also need to be standardized as tourists explained differently regarding the experience.

j. Sustainable Initiatives

The emerging focus and effort shown by the management on sustainable programs add value and support modern tourism preferences, but if not communicated more it may prevent sustained competitive impact as tourist may not be aware of it. Pura Mangkunegaran has demonstrated a commitment to sustainability initiatives to respect their heritage. The palace has implemented a waste sorting system and waste bank in their restaurant, particularly food scraps to process it into fertilizer. Moreover, they are also minimizing plastic use in terms of packaging and providing refillable water gallon as an added facility for the visitors. Additionally, the Mangkunegaran parking area now has an Electric Vehicle (EV) charging station for cars and motorcycles as a collaboration effort with PLN, making them one of the EV charging points in Surakarta. Other than that, Mangkunegaran has also transitioned to electric golf carts and electric motorcycles for staffs or *abdi dalem* mobility inside the palace. Despite the initiatives, some of the tourists and the survey stated that most of the visitors tend to experience scorching hot or humid weather due to the noon visiting hour and the open space area which can be improved by the management to enhance the comfort of visiting regarding the environment condition.

k. Leadership Style and Leader Persona

The presence of KGPAA Mangkunegara X gives a temporary competitive advantage. The modern leadership persona of the royal figure is valuable and somewhat rare. This was mainly caused by his educated background and the public's perception of his good looks, charisma and eligibility as a young bachelor. However, this may be uncertain in terms of sustainability because it heavily relies on his image as a public figure and leader of Pura Mangkunegaran.

l. Merchandise Products

The new development of the products offers an emerging advantage. The merchandise system in Pura Mangkunegaran is divided into two categories, internal Mangkunegaran merchandise and external gift shop souvenirs of Javanese products (oleh-oleh). Cultural souvenirs have potential, but current offerings remain easy to imitate and lack strong brand integration and retail execution. The Mangkunegaran merchandise design also holds promise to promote the palace, but some may argue that it is under-promoted and the price range is still high. This finding is also supported by the feedback received from the internal survey. Based on the survey results, 60% of the respondents prefer merchandise in the form of small accessories such as pins, key chains, and bracelets followed by a preference of fragrance merchandise (53%) with the majority voted for the suitable price range for the merchandise is around Rp 50,000 – Rp 100,000.

m. Supporting Infrastructure (signage, public facilities, accessibility)

Tourists argue that Pura Mangkunegaran has a weak supporting infrastructure which reduces the overall experience quality. For example, the main gate wayfinding, signage for the museum and assets information around the palace are also limited. Moreover, there are also almost to no explanation signage about the historical or cultural story around the area. This resulted in visitors must really pay attention to the tour guide otherwise they may not capture the value of the history, which sometimes is hard to do due to the speed of the explanation or even to language barriers for international tourists. On top of that, the survey conducted also shows that majority of the feedback was around the supporting facilities as the visitors still think there is room for improvement in the toilet, ventilation, cooling amenities, and tour flow of Pura Mangkunegaran.

External analysis

Political

In the olden times, historically, Pura Mangkunegaran was established due to political turmoil of the Islamic Mataram Era. This section will be specified to the impact happening from the current era of KGPAA Mangkunegara X. One of the examples is the cultivated collaboration that whenever the local government has a cultural program, Pura Mangkunegaran is always involved as the mandatory destination. Moreover, sometimes the local government would hold an event utilizing the Pamedan of Pura Mangkunegaran. Also, Pura Mangkunegaran often welcomes international organization guests to the palace for diplomatic events. Other than that, both the internal management and the family side explained there are no other direct political influences supporting Pura Mangkunegaran.

These initiatives are being implemented to support the focus of national government to push tourism as the key driver of national economic growth. Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy suggested that there is an increase in tourist interest in immersive cultural experiences reflecting travelers' desire for a more in-depth and authentic experience with local culture while traveling. Although Pura Mangkunegaran is not the priority tourism destinations of this current government RPJMN 2025-2029, the palace still indirectly beneficial by the program to boost cultural tourism in Indonesia.

Economic

The tourism industry as mentioned is expected to have a continuous steady growth post pandemic. During the pandemic when there are travel restrictions, the Mangkunegaran family must adjust their assets to fund the palace operationality, especially for the *abdi dalem*. Up until now, the palace must deal with the high maintenance expenses for parts of the area and even the archival assets which place consistent financial pressure. Moreover, Pura Mangkunegaran must keep innovating to stay ahead with other cultural attractions, one of which is the neighborhood palace, Keraton Surakarta. Despite all, Pura Mangkunegaran still offers a flat rate of Rp 30,000 tour ticket for both national and international tourists. Therefore, the main challenge of Pura Mangkunegaran is to sustain the tourism business to create revenue for operations and workers.

To overcome the economic challenges, Pura Mangkunegaran is opening its area to be commercialized more. They actively sought other organizations to rent their venue for events or sometimes partnering together to organize. They are also opening new section of the dining area called Pracimaloka which is a complementary to the Pracima Tuin restaurant but specialized in tea and snacks. The diversification strategy is an effort to raise more awareness of the Pura Mangkunegaran and create revenue stream to the whole concept of fine dining as royal experience.

Socio-Cultural

From the social side, the main finding is how there is a growing interest towards Pura Mangkunegaran in terms of visitors. In the past the usual visitors' demographics tend to be families or local families with familiarity of the history, but nowadays there's a growing trend of Gen Z visitors, especially women and the majority may even come from outside of Surakarta City. The shifting visitor demographic reflects how the palace media portrayal to be more modern nowadays. Most of the respondents say they even aware and know of Pura Mangkunegaran due to the representation of KGPAA Mangkunegara X and his cousin, Rania Yamin (an influencer) and their social media presence which made it intriguing to visit. There is also a finding that some visitors would prefer Pura Mangkunegaran to stay niche so whenever they want to revisit, the palace will not have an overtourism and too much crowd.

One of the most well-known cultural ceremonies held in Pura Mangkunegaran annually is Malam 1 Suro. The sacred ceremony is gaining more attention throughout the years due to the many international guests, business partners, government officials, and public figures invited for the procession. Without reducing the sacredness of the ceremony, these guests are indirectly becoming a tool of promotion for the Pura Mangkunegaran existence as the Javanese cultural hub. Some may even argue that being invited to take part on the whole tradition is a privilege in a way to get to know more about the Javanese tradition resulting to the exclusivity image of the palace, since it raises the "who do you know to be invited" rather than "how to also participate".

Technological

Technology has made a great contribution to the enhancement of tourism experience. Bank of Indonesia's effort to digitize payments system is also happening in Pura Mangkunegaran through QRIS integration. The management received educative training to shift the conventional payment system and integrating digital payments for their ticket price

and restaurant payment. This initiative enhances the modernization of Pura Mangkunegaran as a business entity.

Other than the integration of QRIS digital payment system, Pura Mangkunegaran also adapted other technologies. In this context, digital marketing has emerged as one of the focuses of Pura Mangkunegaran to communicate with broader market. As a result of reading the young and tech-savvy demographic market, Pura Mangkunegaran established online marketing accounts in Instagram, TikTok, Youtube, even publishing a website to be accessed. Other than that, they also put their official Mangkunegaran merchandise on an e-commerce platform, Tokopedia. Pura Mangkunegaran plan for future technology adaptation is to integrate tour ticketing through an Online Travel Agent (OTA) platform, Traveloka, to enhance discoverability and convenience. For the restaurant, they have already used an online reservation and booking system through their restaurant's official website. However, from the result of visitor satisfaction survey, the respondents stated that Pura Mangkunegaran is still lacking technological innovation and digital integration. Moreover, the dominating demographic, Gen Z, argues that digital promotions still do not reach the youth segment thoroughly in social media.

Environmental

Pura Mangkunegaran management admits that they aren't affected directly on environmental aspect externally other than they received partnership to incorporate EV charging station with PLN.

Legal

Legal aspects act as the foundation of the development of cultural heritage tourism. The regulation applied in Indonesia are not an obstacle in tourism development as the government tend to be supportive. For example, Law Number 10 of 2009 on tourism which serves as the primary legal basis for tourism in Indonesia including cultural tourism, Minister of Tourism Regulation (Permenpar) Number 4 and 9 of 2021 on the technicalities of tourism business, and Minister of Culture and Tourism Regulation (Permenbudpar) Number PM.49/UM.001/MKP/2009 on the guidelines for the preservation of cultural heritage objects and sites.

Other than the national regulations, the Surakarta City Government established a decree number 430/373 of 2024 which regulates the cultural heritage status of Pura Mangkunegaran. It highlights the protection of the structures such as Pendapa Ageng, Pringgitan, and Dalem Ageng area to be conserved and protected. It implies that these areas of Pura Mangkunegaran add a value to the destination but also needed extra care to maintain. Based on that, Pura Mangkunegaran established a rule for events held to be in a certain decibel of sound so that the vibration is not disruptive towards the cultural assets.

In addition to the internal regulation, there are also written and unwritten rules to visit Pura Mangkunegaran. The rules being wearing modest clothing, to not use parang motif batik and velvet fabric, and removing shoes in certain areas. Visitors are also not allowed to bring tripods and take pictures in certain protected areas to respect the historical value of the objects. KGPAA Mangkunegara X is also transitioning the structure of the Pura Mangkunegaran to have a formal licensed business entity (*badan usaha*). He registered each of the commercialized areas under a business entity naming the restaurant area (Pracimabogasana and Pamedan Area). Other than that, the current initiative is also including formalizing the workers by integrating employment status with BPJS Kesehatan (insurance covered).

After conducting internal and external analysis, SWOT analysis is presented to map the current strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities of Pura Mangkunegaran.

Table 3. SWOT Analysis

Strength	Weakness
1) Strong cultural and historical assets including heritage, architecture, and archives which are rare and difficult to imitate.	1) Underutilized cultural assets due to capacity constraints.
2) Increasing digital presence across social media and online platforms.	2) Limited supporting facilities.
3) Authentic tourism concept of Five Senses experience and royal dining.	3) Underdeveloped OTA and e-commerce utilization.
4) Respected leadership personas as representation of young generation in power.	4) Merchandise and workshop offerings remain underdeveloped and may be easily imitated.
5) Emerging sustainability initiatives that can be valuable to relay.	5) Inconsistent storytelling leads to mismatch perceptions and inconsistent brand identity.

Opportunity	Threat
1) Government support and collaborative efforts for cultural tourism development.	1) Attraction competition from nearby heritage destinations.
2) Gen Z growing interest in heritage and aesthetically pleasing destination.	2) Public perception risks are tied to sacredness and exclusivity which require message control.
3) Expansion of digital technology in tourism (QRIS, OTA ticketing, online marketing, and demand for immersive experience).	3) Economic fluctuations affect tourism spending and palace maintenance costs.
	4) Stern heritage preservation regulations limiting upgrades or commercialization.

(Source: Author, 2025)

Pura Mangkunegaran's internal strengths primarily identified in its rich cultural and historical attributes. To create business solution for Pura Mangkunegaran, the SWOT analysis next is arranged into TOWS matrix. The TOWS matrix aims to formulate actionable strategies that utilize the link between strength, weakness, opportunity, and threats.

SO Strategies:

SO-1. Maximize digital presence (Instagram, TikTok, and website) to target Gen Z and international visitors through storytelling to promote authentic experiences.

SO-2. Package immersive cultural assets (tour, events, fine dining) to be promoted across all channels.

SO-3. Position sustainability initiatives as a unique brand value to tapped in eco-conscious market.

WO Strategies:

WO-1. Communicate improvements in visitor facilities through updates and informational storytelling.

WO-2. Expand OTA ticketing across platforms (Traveloka, Tiket, Klook) and utilize e-commerce (Tokopedia, official website, Shopee) to broaden accessibility.

WO-3. Revitalize merchandise strategy and promote collections through social media.

ST Strategies:

ST-1. Usage of internal team and family as personas to communicate focusing Pura Mangkunegaran's role as cultural destination.

ST-2. Utilize digital storytelling to clarify cultural norms, tourism rules, and sacred boundaries to address misconceptions and misinformation.

WT Strategies:

WT-1. Improve engagement brand storytelling across all channels.

WT-2. Integrate visitor protocols and information through well-designed signage and digital content.

WT-3. Strengthen the brand experience of Pracima Tuin by communicating value-for-money and story behind the experience.

Thematic analysis is conducted to unravel the repeated patterns which align closely with the strategic priorities identified in the SWOT-TOWS process. The analysis serves as a crucial bridge between strategic direction in TOWS matrix and the actionable execution through the IMC formulation.

Table 4. Identified Themes

Theme	TOWS Link	IMC Implication
Promoting authentic cultural experience through digital narratives	SO-1, SO-2, ST-2, WO-1, WO-2, WT-1, WT-2 Maximizing strengths to capture digital audience and alleviate weaknesses by optimizing digital visibility.	Digital Marketing, Direct Marketing, Advertising
Diversifying commercial touchpoints and value propositions	SO-2, SO-3, WO-2, WO-3, WT-3 Improving weak commercial touchpoints through valuable initiatives while responding to threat of economic purchasing power.	Sales Promotions, Personal Selling, Word-of-Mouth, Events
Integrating internal communication and multistakeholder partnerships	ST-1, WT-3, WO-1, SO-2 Centering on leverage the destination's unique assets through the supporting resources to ensure informative experience.	Digital Marketing, Events, Public Relations

(Source: Author, 2025)

Collectively, these themes form the foundation for shaping an integrated marketing communication approach that responds to internal capabilities and external pressures. It illustrates

how communication is not only about promoting cultural value but also ensuring alignment and clarity throughout every visitor touchpoint. The solution developed will be designed with IMC framework due to the significant influence around the communicative effort of Pura Mangkunegaran. The process to develop effective IMC strategy in the context of Pura Mangkunegaran is as follows:

Table 5. Proposed IMC Strategy

IMC Process	Strategy
Identifying Target Audience	Gen Z & Young Millennials who are motivated by visual aesthetic, strong presence in weekend trips, cultural experiences, and dining experiences with the high reliance on social media (Instagram & TikTok).
Setting Communication Objectives	The objectives must align with the need to strengthen brand understanding and experience through increasing online visibility, improve visitor comprehension of Mangkunegaran's historical values, and increase on-site visit, including merchandise sales.
Designing Communication	The brand message should aim to communicate that Pura Mangkunegaran is open for everyone. The attraction value can be communicated more through User-Generated Contents (UGC) or collaborating with social media influencers reviewing the palace in each style, so it does not convey an "endorsement" content.
Setting Communication Channels	<p>Mass Communication Channel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offline: advertising (brochure, pamphlet, zine), signage and wayfinding boards, radio broadcast - Online: instagram for visual branding and storytelling, TikTok for short video format, YouTube for educational heritage content and podcast, and OTA and E-commerce promotion participation <p>Personal Communication Channel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offline: Tour guides, Pura Mangkunegaran persona, Word-of-mouth, Putra Putri Solo as tourism ambassadors, and travel agencies - Online: Influencer collaboration, Mangkunegaran official website, Mangkunegaran Business WhatsApp
Deciding on Media Mix	
A. Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meta Ads (Instagram) and TikTok Ads focusing on "Authentic Royal Experience". Pura Mangkunegaran can utilize a few of their published content to be advertised online to create awareness among social media users. - Google Ads to maximize the discoverability of websites, merchandise, and social media, especially for international tourists who tend to relay on Google search results. - Sponsored placements on OTA and e-commerce platforms, especially during annual traditional ceremonies or events. - Advertisements on radio to spread awareness and attract visitors to events held in Pura Mangkunegaran, especially local residents.
B. Direct Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business to business (B2B) approach to promote venue rental and actively partnering with trusted travel agencies. - WhatsApp Business text blast updates visitors who have visited. - Email newsletters for upcoming events, cultural workshops, and merchandise information. - Daily reply to comments and reviews to informatively address negative or underwhelming experiences.
C. Sales Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reservation is in advance for seasonal tours with special prices, for example tours from and for children during the holiday season. - Discounted bundle for merchandise in official website or e-commerce. - Workshop bundling session (bring a friend and get discount). - Travel agency special discounts with minimal pax reservation. - Incentive scheme of merchandise or a token of appreciation as giveaway to appreciate organic content review from visitors.
D. Public Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Press releases on sustainability initiatives, building maintenance, and renovation updates as an information channel to spread awareness. - Publish news on partnerships made with Pura Mangkunegaran and public appearances or cultural diplomacy of KGPAA Mangkunegaran X.

IMC Process		Strategy
E.	Personal Selling	- Cultivate partnership with travel and leisure media since the existing partnership was mainly between conventional news media.
		- Collaborate more intensely with Putra Putri Solo as the Solo Tourism Ambassador to spread awareness on Pura Mangkunegaran, especially with the younger generation.
		- Tour guides trained with standardized scripts ensuring equal quality of understanding and equipped the tour guides also with a soft selling ability towards Pura Mangkunegaran other revenue streams such as the restaurant of merchandise.
F.	Events	- Cultivate staff interactions with visitors at Pracima Tuin promoting “secret menu”, to create a sense of specialty and enhancing customer relations and worth for money.
		- Curate a nighttime experience of evening tours combined with historical storytelling performances.
		- Partnering with local hotels or resorts to fill the attraction or learning session for leisure, for example: batik, gamelan live music, traditional archery, etc.
		- Create culinary events at Pracima Tuin, for example: omakase-styled dining, cooking workshop or afternoon soiree with live music.
G.	Digital Market- ing	- Collaborate to host cultural diplomacy events with embassies, international organizations, or tourism board to strengthen cultural positioning.
		- Venturing attractive short video content series of behind-the-scenes, a day in the staff life, rituals meaning, sustainable initiatives, cultural fun facts to artifact stories.
		- Giving each Kewedhanan (division) content color coding or differentiation to raise awareness on the evolving internal structure and its related initiatives on top of keeping the aesthetic feed posts.
		- Invite influencers for special access tours or ceremonial events.
		- Utilizing YouTube for uploading media archives of Pura Mangkunegaran and venturing to create new media such as podcasts.
H.	Word-of-mouth	- Content optimization for social media and websites, highlight the practical information to visit on Instagram for easy access including ticketing, hours, direction, accessibility, pricing, map, and etiquette guidelines.
		- Encourage user generated content (UGC) across social media through hashtag campaigns #WisataMangkunegaran.
		- Host academic or student tours involving surrounding schools and universities and encourage sharing the experiences.
		- Encourage visitors to leave reviews on Google Maps or TripAdvisor.

(Source: Author, 2025)

5. Conclusion

This research is conducted to examine the internal and external conditions of Pura Mangkunegaran and formulate a suitable marketing strategy through an Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategy. The strategies are carried out to strengthen Pura Mangkunegaran position as a cultural tourism destination in Indonesia. The data shows that Pura Mangkunegaran still has room for improvement in public familiarity and depth of cultural understanding despite the fact it has distinct cultural and historical assets. Visitors and followers may continue to increase, yet the growth has not been followed by clear and meaningful messages.

The internal analysis using VRIO framework shows that the palace's strongest competitive advantages rooted in its cultural heritage, historical buildings, restaurant experience, and unique visitor experience. However, these strengths tend to be constrained by organizational readiness, limited supporting facilities, and a lack of clear public storytelling. Despite that, the external analysis reveals that the rise of cultural tourism trend, improved efforts of combining technology, and increasing demand of tourism attractions show opportunities while competition with nearby cultural destinations, inconsistent digital communications, and public perception tend to pose challenges.

Thematic analysis was conducted to reveal that targeted messaging, stronger digital presence and integrated communication are essential to bridge the gap between the palace's intended values with public misperception. Based on the TOWS matrix, it highlights the need

for a long-term strategic approach that strengthens brand identity and improves communication coherence across platforms, specifically on digital marketing. This research formulated an IMC strategy that integrates all media mix that Pura Mangkunegaran can utilize to improve visitor experience ensuring consistent, clear, and compelling communication of the brand. The IMC strategies are proposed based on empirical data and analysis results ensuring that the communication tool also directly responds to the market challenges and in-depth behavioral insights.

In conclusion, this research provides a series of actionable strategies for a cultural heritage tourism destination, emphasizing the importance of utilizing the strengths of Pura Mangkunegaran to alleviate the weakness and threats. The strategy through multichannel communication is to ensure Pura Mangkunegaran is recognized not only as a culturally rich heritage site but also as an accessible and attractive tourism destination.

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