

The Influence of Digital Marketing Communication on Automotive Event Visitor Loyalty with Visiting Intention as a Mediator: An Empirical Study on IIMS and GIIAS

Hashifa Inara Qatrunnada, Agustin Rusiana Sari

Gunadarma University

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of digital marketing communication on visitor loyalty at the automotive events Indonesia International Motor Show (IIMS) and Gaikindo Indonesia International Auto Show (GIIAS) through visiting intention. The study employed a positivist paradigm and a quantitative approach. The population consisted of visitors to the GIIAS and IIMS automotive events who had accessed the events' digital marketing media. The sampling technique used was nonprobability sampling, specifically convenience sampling. Data were collected through online questionnaires, resulting in 182 respondents. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) with the assistance of SmartPLS 4.0 software. The results indicate that digital marketing communication has a positive effect on visiting intention and visitor loyalty. Furthermore, visiting intention was found to positively affect visitor loyalty and to mediate the relationship between digital marketing communication and visitor loyalty. These findings confirm that effective digital marketing communication is not only capable of attracting initial visitor interest but also plays an important role in building long-term relationships through visitor loyalty.

Keywords: Digital Marketing Communication, Visiting Intention, Visitor Loyalty, Automotive Events

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has transformed marketing methods, including within the automotive industry. According to Kotler, Keller, & Chernev (2021), digital marketing communication allows companies to reach consumers faster, interactively, and personally compared to conventional methods. In the context of the automotive industry, the utilization of social media, websites, and email marketing has become an important strategy to create engagement with potential visitors (Tuten & Solomon, 2018). This is clearly visible in international-scale events such as the Indonesia International Motor Show (IIMS) and Gaikindo Indonesia International Auto Show (GIIAS), which annually attract hundreds of thousands of visitors and serve as the main arena for product launches and vehicle technology innovations.

Data shows that the number of IIMS visitors increased significantly from 100,074 people in 2021 to 579,337 people in 2025, while GIIAS also experienced an increase from 293,252 visitors in 2021 to 485,569 visitors in 2025 (Tempo.co; Seven Event, 2025). This surge reflects public enthusiasm as well as a strategic opportunity for event organizers to utilize digital marketing communication more effectively. However, amid this growth, challenges arise regarding the extent to which digital strategies truly contribute to increasing visiting intention and forming visitor loyalty. Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt (2017) emphasize that the right digital communication strategy can shape sustainable consumer behavior, but its effectiveness needs to be tested in specific contexts

Several studies indicate that digital marketing communication strategies, especially those focusing on content personalization and two-way interaction, can increase visitor interest and involvement in automotive exhibitions and similar events. This strategy can help brand-owning companies target user profiles accurately, enhance brand image, and increase the likelihood of attendance at the event (Zhong, 2023), (Nesterenko, Miśkiewicz, & Abazov, 2023), and (Huh, 2018). According to Maore and Wamwara (2025), social media platforms have

become the center of interactive marketing strategies, providing a direct channel for automotive brands to interact with customers. Statistical reports show that 91% of car buyers use social media to research vehicles before making a purchase decision. For instance, Audi's virtual showroom initiative in 2018 allowed potential buyers to explore every aspect of their vehicle remotely, contributing to a 70% increase in engagement on their online platform. This interactive experience gives consumers more control over the purchasing process, resulting in higher satisfaction levels and increased brand loyalty.

Previous research shows that digital marketing activities through social media and other digital platforms have a positive impact on customer trust and loyalty across various sectors. Nonetheless, research specifically examining digital marketing communication in the context of automotive events in Indonesia is still relatively limited, so this study will empirically examine the influence of digital marketing communication on visiting intention and its impact on visitor loyalty at the two largest automotive events in Indonesia, IIMS and GIIAS. Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the influence of digital marketing communication on visiting intention and visitor loyalty at the IIMS and GIIAS automotive events, as well as to test the role of visiting intention as a mediating variable. The urgency of this research lies in the need for event organizers and automotive industry players to understand how digital marketing communication can be optimally utilized to attract audiences and maintain loyalty. The focus of empirical analysis on the two largest automotive events in Indonesia using a quantitative approach based on SEM-PLS is expected to provide a new contribution to digital marketing literature as well as managerial practices in the field of event marketing.

LITEATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratification (U&G) Theory is a communication science theory first introduced by Blumler & Katz in 1974. In his view, Katz emphasized that audiences are not passive, but actively choose media to fulfill their needs and desires. This theory explains that people use media for specific purposes, such as obtaining information, entertainment, personal identity, and strengthening social relationships.

The S-O-R theory explains how environmental stimuli influence an individual's internal psychological state (organism), which subsequently affects behavioral responses. The framework has been widely adopted in consumer behavior, marketing, tourism, and event management studies to explain how external factors shape consumers' intentions and behaviors (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

In the context of this study, Digital Marketing Communication serves as the stimulus (S) because it provides information, promotional messages, and interactive experiences through digital platforms. Visiting Intention represents the organism (O), reflecting visitors' cognitive and affective evaluations after exposure to digital marketing communication. Visitor Loyalty functions as the response (R), manifested through repeat visitation intentions and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

Therefore, the S-O-R framework provides a strong theoretical basis for explaining how digital marketing communication influences visitor loyalty directly and indirectly through visiting intention.

The integration of Uses & Gratification and S-O-R Theory Theory provides a comprehensive explanation of how digital marketing communication affects visitors' psychological responses and behavioral outcomes.

Digital Marketing Communication

Digital marketing communication is a strategy that utilizes digital technology-based media to deliver marketing messages. Kotler and Keller (2020) emphasize that digitalization has expanded marketing reach and enabled more personal relationships with consumers. In line with this, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) mention that digital media provides a space for two-way interaction between the brand and the audience, thereby increasing consumer engagement. Tuten and Solomon (2018) also add that social media is a dominant channel in building engagement and strengthening consumer emotional bonds with a brand or event.

Visiting Intention

Visiting intention is understood as an individual's initial tendency to attend an event or destination based on the promotions received. Setiawan and Sugiharto (2020) state that an appropriate destination image and promotion can encourage tourists to visit. In the context of events, Ayu (2020) found that visitor attachment to an exhibition plays a role in fostering the intention to attend similar events in the future. Research by Zhao, Hu, Wang, Shu & Xu (2023) adds that digital communication stimuli can create perceptions that drive actual visiting intention.

Visitor Loyalty

Loyalty is a form of consumer commitment to continue visiting or participating in a specific event. Oliver (2020) defines loyalty as a deep commitment to make repeat purchases despite temptations from competitors. Han and Hyun (2019) emphasize that loyalty is formed from a combination of continuous satisfaction and a positive image. In the context of events, Yoon and Uysal (2021) highlight that festival quality can enhance satisfaction and create visitor loyalty through positive experiences

Hypothesis Development

Digital Marketing Communication and Visiting Intention

According to the S-O-R framework proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), external stimuli can influence individuals' internal psychological states. Digital marketing communication acts as a marketing stimulus capable of increasing awareness, perceived value, and attractiveness of an event. Previous studies have shown that effective digital marketing communication positively influences consumers' intention to participate in events and exhibitions.

H1: Digital Marketing Communication positively influences Visiting Intention.

Digital Marketing Communication and Visitor Loyalty

Relationship Marketing Theory introduced by Berry (1983) emphasizes the importance of building and maintaining long-term relationships with customers. Through continuous communication and engagement, organizations can strengthen trust and emotional attachment, which ultimately foster loyalty. In the context of automotive exhibitions, effective digital marketing communication helps maintain interactions between event organizers and visitors, thereby increasing visitor loyalty.

H2: Digital Marketing Communication positively influences Visitor Loyalty.

Visiting Intention and Visitor Loyalty

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1991) suggests that behavioral intentions are the most immediate predictors of actual behavior. Individuals who possess stronger intentions to perform a behavior are more likely to carry out that behavior and develop future commitment toward it.

In this study, visitors who demonstrate strong intentions to attend automotive exhibitions are expected to exhibit higher loyalty through repeat attendance and positive recommendations.

H3: Visiting Intention positively influences Visitor Loyalty.

The Mediating Role of Visiting Intention

Based on the S-O-R framework, behavioral responses often emerge through internal psychological processes. Visiting intention acts as the organism that translates digital marketing communication stimuli into loyal behavioral responses. Therefore, visiting intention is expected to mediate the relationship between digital marketing communication and visitor loyalty.

H4: Visiting Intention mediates the relationship between Digital Marketing Communication and Visitor Loyalty.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative approach with a positivist paradigm oriented toward hypothesis testing through measurable data. The research respondents are individuals who have attended the Indonesia International Motor Show (IIMS) or Gaikindo Indonesia International Auto Show (GIIAS) automotive events and engaged in digital marketing communication activities from the organizer. The population in this study consisted of visitors to the GIIAS and IIMS automotive events who had accessed the digital marketing media of those automotive events.

The Digital Marketing Communication construct was adapted from previous studies on digital marketing and social media communication (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Tuten & Solomon, 2018), covering aspects such as informativeness, interactivity, attractiveness, and promotional effectiveness of digital content. Visiting Intention was adapted from tourism and event marketing studies (Setiawan & Sugiharto, 2020; Zhao et al., 2023), focusing on respondents' willingness, interest, and intention to attend automotive exhibitions. Visitor Loyalty was adapted from loyalty literature (Oliver, 2020; Han & Hyun, 2019), measuring revisit intention, recommendation intention, and commitment toward future participation in the event.

All measurement items were assessed using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree. The use of an even-numbered scale was intended to reduce respondents' tendency to select neutral responses and encourage clearer attitudes toward each statement. Sampling used a nonprobability sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling. Primary data were collected through online questionnaire distribution from July 28 to August 8, 2025. From the data collection process, 182 respondents who filled out the questionnaire were obtained.

The collected data were then processed using the Structural Equation Modeling method based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with the help of SmartPLS 4.0 software. Hair et al. (2017) state that this method is effective for research with complex models and medium sample sizes, and is capable of analyzing direct and indirect effects between latent variables. Analysis was conducted in two stages: testing the outer model to assess validity and reliability, and the inner model to test the relationships between variables, including direct, indirect, and mediating roles. The bootstrapping procedure was used to test the significance of relationship pathways with a 95% confidence level. Thus, this methodological design is expected to provide valid and reliable analysis results to answer the research objectives.

The measurement model was evaluated using convergent validity and reliability assessments. Convergent validity was examined through outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All indicators exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, while AVE values were greater than 0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). All constructs achieved values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, demonstrating acceptable internal consistency and reliability.

Since the data were collected using a single self-administered questionnaire, the potential for common method bias was considered. Harman's Single-Factor Test was employed to assess common method variance. The result indicated that no single factor accounted for the majority of the total variance, suggesting that common method bias was not a serious concern in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The test results show that all research constructs have an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value above the threshold of 0.50, which proves convergent validity. This indicates that each indicator used is capable of representing the measured construct. For the reliability test, the Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs are above 0.70. These findings indicate that the questionnaire instrument has good internal consistency and is reliable for measuring research variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Data analysis results in this study indicate a significant relationship between digital marketing communication, visiting intention, and automotive event visitor loyalty. The analysis was performed using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique based on Partial Least Squares (PLS), which allows researchers to assess both direct and indirect effects between variables. Below is the extended explanation of the research results and their discussion based on empirical findings, the theory used, and relevance to previous research.

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was evaluated using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS. A summary of the research results is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	T-Statistic	P-Value	Result
H1	Digital Marketing Communication $\rightarrow$ Visiting Intention	0.819	25.157	0.000	Positive Influence
H2	Digital Marketing Communication $\rightarrow$ Visitor Loyalty	0.527	8.523	0.000	Positive Influence
H3	Visiting Intention $\rightarrow$ Visitor Loyalty	0.426	6.610	0.000	Positive Influence

Source: Researcher's data processing results, 2025

Data processing results show that digital marketing communication has a positive and significant influence on visitor loyalty (path coefficient = 0.527; T-statistic = 8.523; P-value = 0.000). This finding indicates that effective digital marketing communication can increase visitor loyalty, in line with research by Tuten and Solomon (2018) stating that digital marketing communication can increase customer satisfaction and build long-term relationships. Digital marketing communication is also proven to have a positive and significant influence on visiting intention (path coefficient = 0.819; T-statistic = 25.157; P-value = 0.000). This result is consistent with research by Sari and Utami (2021), who found that active social media use and engaging content significantly increase visiting intention to automotive events. Furthermore, visiting intention has a positive and significant influence on visitor loyalty (path coefficient = 0.426; T-statistic = 6.610; P-value = 0.000). This finding is supported by research from Putra and Jannah (2023), showing that personalized experiences and strong interactions through digital marketing significantly increase visitor loyalty. In other words, the greater a person's initial interest in an event, the higher the likelihood they will become a loyal visitor.

Table 2: Indirect Effect Result

Hypothesis	Indirect Relationship	β (Original Sample)	STDEV	T-Statistic	P-Value	Result
H4	Digital Marketing Communication $\rightarrow$ Visiting Intention $\rightarrow$ Visitor Loyalty	0.349	0.819	6.584	0.000	Positive Influence

Source: Researcher's data processing results, 2025

One of the most important findings of this study is the significant mediating role of Visiting Intention in the relationship between Digital Marketing Communication and Visitor Loyalty. The indirect effect analysis revealed that Digital Marketing Communication positively influences Visitor Loyalty through Visiting Intention ($\beta = 0.349$, $t = 6.584$, $p < 0.001$).

This finding provides strong empirical support for the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). According to the S-O-R framework, external stimuli affect

individuals' internal psychological states, which subsequently influence behavioral responses. In this study, Digital Marketing Communication functions as the stimulus (S), Visiting Intention represents the organism (O), and Visitor Loyalty serves as the response (R).

The findings indicate that visitors do not become loyal solely because they are exposed to digital marketing communication. Instead, digital marketing communication first creates psychological interest, curiosity, and motivation to attend automotive exhibitions. These internal responses are reflected in visitors' intention to participate in IIMS and GIAS events. Once visitors develop a strong intention to attend, they are more likely to exhibit loyal behaviors, including revisiting future events and recommending the exhibitions to others.

The significant mediation effect suggests that Visiting Intention acts as an important psychological mechanism through which digital marketing communication translates into long-term visitor loyalty. Therefore, the effectiveness of digital marketing communication should not only be evaluated based on its ability to disseminate information but also on its capacity to generate visitors' intention to attend events.

This result is consistent with previous studies suggesting that consumers' behavioral responses are often shaped through cognitive and affective processes triggered by marketing stimuli. Consequently, event organizers should continuously develop engaging, informative, and interactive digital marketing strategies to strengthen visitors' intention to attend, thereby enhancing visitor loyalty in the long term.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Construct	R^2
Visiting Intention	0.669
Visitor Loyalty	0.826

Source: Researcher's data processing results, 2025

The R^2 value of 0.669 indicates that Digital Marketing Communication explains 66.9% of the variance in Visiting Intention. Meanwhile, the R^2 value of 0.826 demonstrates that Digital Marketing Communication and Visiting Intention jointly explain 82.6% of the variance in Visitor Loyalty. These results indicate substantial explanatory power of the proposed model.

Model Fit Assessment

Model fit evaluation produced a Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value of 0.056. Since the value is below the recommended threshold of 0.08, the model can be considered to have a good fit and adequately represents the observed data.

Discussion on the Influence of Digital Marketing Communication on Visiting Intention

Digital marketing communication is proven to be capable of generating audience interest in automotive events. Social media, official websites, and email marketing serve as the main channels influencing respondents in deciding to attend. Respondents mentioned that informative content, attractive visuals, and exclusive promotions through digital channels increase curiosity while providing a strong reason to attend. This result is consistent with the findings of Zhong (2023), who emphasizes the importance of interactivity and personalization in digital content to trigger initial consumer engagement.

This result can also be explained through the Uses and Gratification (U&G) Theory proposed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973), which argues that audiences actively select media channels to satisfy their specific needs, including information seeking, entertainment, personal identity, and social interaction. In the context of automotive exhibitions such as IIMS and GIAS, visitors intentionally access digital platforms, including social media, websites, and online promotional content, to obtain information about new vehicle launches, event schedules, technological innovations, promotional offers, and automotive trends. When these informational and entertainment needs are effectively fulfilled through digital marketing communication, visitors develop a

stronger interest and motivation to participate in the event. Therefore, digital marketing communication not only serves as a promotional tool but also functions as a medium that satisfies audience needs, ultimately encouraging higher visiting intention.

Discussion on the influence of Digital Marketing Communication on Visitor Loyalty

Although the direct effect of digital marketing communication on loyalty is lower than the indirect path through visiting intention, the relationship remains significant. This means that an effective digital communication strategy can create a positive perception of event quality even before the audience attends. For example, consistent and creative digital campaigns can foster trust that the event will provide a satisfying experience. However, the results of this study also indicate that solid loyalty is more heavily formed through real experiences triggered by visiting intention.

Discussion on the Influence of Visiting Intention on Visitor Loyalty

Research results show that visiting intention significantly influences loyalty. This means that audiences who already have high interest in attending an event are more likely to become loyal visitors in the future. The loyalty formed is not only in the form of repeat visits but also positive recommendations to others, both verbally and through social media. Thus, visiting intention functions as a psychological bridge connecting digital experiences with loyal behavior. This supports the Uses and Gratification theory, which explains that when information and entertainment needs are met through digital media, the audience will develop a stronger bond with that information source.

The Mediating Role of Visiting Intention

A key finding of this study is the role of visiting intention as a mediating variable. Visiting intention strengthens the influence of digital communication on loyalty, which means digital communication strategies are not enough to just deliver messages, but must also be designed to cultivate the audience's desire to attend physically. With the presence of visitors, they obtain actual experiences which then reinforce long-term loyalty. This extends previous research findings by adding empirical evidence to the context of Indonesian automotive events.

Practical Implications for Event Organizers

The results of this study provide strategic implications for event organizers such as Dyandra Promosindo (IIMS) and Seven Event (GIAS). First, digital strategies must focus on interactive content that drives audience curiosity, for instance, test drive simulation videos, live streaming sessions with brand ambassadors, or online quizzes with free ticket prizes. Second, message personalization needs to be enhanced by utilizing audience data, such as through event recommendations based on specific interests. Third, post-event communication via email or social media is vital to maintain audience engagement until the next event.

Comparative Discussion with Previous Research

When compared with the study by Tuten & Solomon (2018), which emphasizes the importance of social media engagement in building long-term relationships, the results of this study are consistent and reinforce the finding that social media is not just a promotional tool but also an arena to create a community of enthusiasts. This study also supports the findings of Bharadwaj, El Sawy, Pavlou & Venkatraman (2013) regarding the role of digitalization in creating personalized experiences, but adds a new context by showing how these experiences can be capitalized on in major automotive events in Indonesia.

Additional Findings Based on Respondent Characteristics

Analysis based on respondent demographics shows that the majority of visitors come from the young age group (18–35 years) who are highly active on social media. This explains why digital strategies based on visual and interactive content have a significant impact. In addition, respondents with higher education backgrounds tend to be more critical of the quality of information presented. They prefer educational digital content, such as

explanations of the latest technology features or automotive product reviews from industry experts. This finding underscores the need for more detailed audience segmentation in digital communication strategies

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study reinforces the foundation of the Uses and Gratification theory by showing that audiences use digital media to fulfill information, entertainment, and social interaction needs, which ultimately affect their actual behavior. Furthermore, this study also contributes to consumer loyalty literature by emphasizing that loyalty is not only determined by direct satisfaction but also by the intensity of initial interest triggered by digital communication

Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

This study has limitations in the scope of events, which only covers the two largest automotive exhibitions in Indonesia, namely IIMS and GIIAS. Future research is suggested to expand the object of study to regional-scale automotive events or even fully digital events, in order to observe the dynamics of digital communication across various contexts. In addition, other variables such as brand engagement, customer experience, or perceived value can also be explored as mediating or moderating variables to enrich the understanding of relationships between variables.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

After explaining the data analysis and conducting a more detailed discussion, this study produces several important findings. The following are the systematically presented research results to answer the research questions while providing a complete overview of the relationships between the studied variables.

The Influence of Digital Marketing Communication on Visiting Intention:

Digital marketing communication is proven to have a positive and significant influence on visiting intention. The more effective the digital strategy (social media, website, email, advertising), the higher the public interest in attending the IIMS and GIIAS events.

The Influence of Digital Marketing Communication on Visitor Loyalty:

Digital marketing communication also directly influences loyalty. This means that digital strategies do not only attract initial attention but can also build long-term relationships with visitors.

The Influence of Visiting Intention on Visitor Loyalty:

Visiting intention is proven to significantly influence loyalty. Initial interest drives loyal behavior such as the intention to attend again or recommend the event.

The Mediating Role of Visiting Intention:

Visiting intention mediates the influence of digital marketing communication on loyalty. Loyalty is formed through a gradual process, starting from digital stimuli that foster interest, then developing into a positive experience, and ultimately forming loyalty

Suggestions

Following the research analysis, several points can be suggested for future research as well as for various parties. Suggestions are intended to provide practical input for event organizers and the automotive industry, as well as academic contributions for future researchers.

For Automotive Event Organizers (IIMS and GIIAS):

There is a need to further improve digital marketing communication strategies with content that is more interactive, personal, and tailored to audience needs to strengthen visitor interest and loyalty.

For the Automotive Industry:

It is recommended to build integrated digital experiences, so as not only to attract initial interest but also to create long-term loyalty.

For Academics and Future Researchers:

Research can be developed by adding other variables, such as digital engagement or customer experience, as well as expanding the object to different events to compare results.

For Visitors:

Visitors are expected to be more active in utilizing digital information provided by the event organizer so that the experience when visiting the event feels maximized.

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