



## Analysis of Local Traders' Marketing Communications In Increasing Revenue In Bukit Lawang Natural Tourism

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis komunikasi pemasaran yang dilakukan oleh pedagang lokal dalam meningkatkan pendapatan di kawasan Wisata Alam Bukit Lawang, Kabupaten Langkat, Sumatera Utara. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif, serta teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi dan wawancara. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari pedagang lokal yang beraktivitas di kawasan wisata serta wisatawan sebagai informan pendukung. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi pemasaran yang dilakukan pedagang bersifat langsung melalui interaksi tatap muka dengan wisatawan. Proses komunikasi dimulai dari menarik perhatian, membangun minat, memberikan informasi, hingga mendorong keputusan pembelian. Komunikasi yang efektif ditandai dengan penggunaan bahasa sederhana, sikap ramah, serta pendekatan persuasif yang tidak memaksa. Selain itu, komunikasi yang baik mampu menciptakan pengalaman positif bagi wisatawan yang kemudian mendorong promosi dari mulut ke mulut. Hal ini berdampak pada peningkatan jumlah pembelian serta pendapatan pedagang lokal. Dengan demikian, komunikasi pemasaran memiliki peran penting dalam mendukung keberhasilan usaha pedagang di kawasan wisata.

**Kata kunci:** Komunikasi pemasaran, Pedagang Lokal, Pendapatan, Pariwisata, Bukit Lawang.

### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the marketing communication carried out by local traders in increasing income in the Bukit Lawang Nature Tourism area, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra. This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, and data collection techniques through observation and interviews. The research subjects consist of local traders operating in the tourist area, as well as tourists as supporting informants. The results of the study indicate that the marketing communication carried out by traders is direct, through face-to-face interactions with tourists. The communication process begins with attracting attention, building interest, providing information, and ultimately encouraging purchasing decisions. Effective communication is characterized by the use of simple language, a friendly attitude, and a persuasive yet non-coercive approach. In addition, good communication can create positive experiences for tourists, which in turn encourages word-of-mouth promotion. This has an impact on increasing the number of purchases as well as the income of local traders. Thus, marketing communication plays an important role in supporting the success of traders' businesses in tourist areas.*

**Key words:** Marketing communication, Local traders, Income, Tourism, Bukit Lawang.

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays a crucial role in economic development because it is interconnected with nearly all aspects of the economy. Therefore, tourism contributes significantly to the overall



economy in Indonesia. This sector can have a positive impact by increasing state revenue, creating job opportunities, and increasing income for both the central and regional governments, as well as the community (Adil et al., 2019). In addition to serving as a place for recreation and relaxation, the tourism sector also offers significant economic contributions. The tourism industry has the potential to create jobs, stimulate business activity, and increase local incomes, thanks to tourist spending on accommodation, food, transportation, and souvenir purchases (Sipahutar, 2024).

North Sumatra is a popular tourist destination for both local and international visitors. This is due to the diverse historical sites that are fascinating to explore, as well as providing opportunities for visitors to learn about or simply enjoy their beauty (Nst, 2023). According to Statistics Indonesia (BPS), the number of foreign tourists arriving in North Sumatra through three entry points in 2025 reached 292,481, while in 2026, there were 47,434 foreign tourists visiting the region. This is certainly inseparable from the diversity of its tourist attractions, which are rich in culture, tradition, and natural beauty. Some of the most attractive locations for tourists are Lake Toba, Samosir Island, Nias, Langkat, and Deli Serdang (Nst, 2023).

The Bukit Lawang tourist area in Langkat Regency, North Sumatra, offers the charm of nature and fauna. The beauty of the mountains, the pristine environment, and the clear and beautiful rivers are alluring attractions, as are protected wildlife such as orangutans. Furthermore, Bukit Lawang is part of the Gunung Leuser National Park (TNGL), which serves as an orangutan conservation area. To protect the declining orangutan population due to hunting, trade, and deforestation, the Bukit Lawang Orangutan Rehabilitation Center was established in 1973. Bukit Lawang is a renowned natural tourist destination in North Sumatra, Indonesia. Its natural beauty and biodiversity make Bukit Lawang a perfect destination for tourism (Putri & Nasution, 2025). Bukit Lawang is located within the Gunung Leuser National Park use area, in Bukit Lawang Plantation Village, Bahorok District, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra Province (Ami Natuz Zahara, Ari Prabowo, 2023).

In buying and selling, the sales process always involves strategies implemented by each trader. To achieve sales targets, traders also need effective communication. This forms the communication strategy process in product marketing. Marketing communication is an activity aimed at conveying information, influencing, and persuading potential buyers to become interested and loyal to the products offered (Taufik, 2025). This aligns with research conducted by Fadhlani and M. Yoserizal Saragih (2024), which showed that messages delivered clearly, systematically, and engagingly can strengthen audience understanding and confidence in the information presented. Furthermore, research by Nasution and Saragih (2025) demonstrated that marketing communication strategies employed by businesses play a crucial role in attracting consumer interest and increasing sales through direct customer interaction.

In terms of consumer behavior, marketing communications plays a significant role in the purchasing decision process. Generally, consumers go through several steps, starting with identifying their needs, searching for relevant information, considering various options, and finally deciding to make a purchase (Nur Aisyah et al., 2024).

In the Bukit Lawang natural tourism area, marketing communications strategies are crucial for increasing vendor revenue, particularly given the diverse range of tourists visiting and increasingly fierce competition. A vendor's success depends not only on the quality of the products they sell, but also on their ability to convey information clearly, attractively, and convincingly, creating a sense of trust among tourists. This is achieved through various forms of direct interaction, such as providing excellent service, tailored offers to consumers' needs, using easy-to-understand language, and a non-pressure approach to create a pleasant shopping experience. By effectively communicating product benefits and leveraging recommendations from other consumers, vendors can stand out from their competitors, increase purchase intention, and encourage repeat purchases. Implementing the right communication strategy not only provides immediate sales increases but also builds the foundation for the sustainability of local vendors in this tourist area (Sudirman & Sitepu, 2019).



The Bukit Lawang nature tourism area is known as an ecotourism destination and orangutan rehabilitation center, attracting numerous visitors, both domestic and international. This situation makes Bukit Lawang a highly promising destination for local vendors, such as souvenir sellers, food vendors, guide providers, and small inns. The income of local vendors in the Bukit Lawang nature tourism area is significantly influenced by the number of tourists. Research (Sinaga et al., 2025) found a decline in visitor numbers from 75,530 in 2022 to 63,697 in 2023, clearly impacting vendor income. Despite the significant potential, these benefits have not been shared equally by vendors, partly due to a lack of effective marketing strategies and the ability to adapt to changing tourist behavior.

Several previous studies have discussed marketing communications in various contexts. These studies generally emphasize the use of digital media as a promotional tool, such as social media and online platforms, to attract consumer interest. Furthermore, some studies discuss marketing communication strategies to increase the attractiveness of tourist destinations. The results of these studies indicate that marketing communication plays a significant role in influencing consumer decisions. However, most studies still focus on media-based marketing communication and have not examined the direct marketing communication conducted by small businesses, particularly local vendors in tourist areas.

Based on this, there is a research gap, indicating that studies on direct marketing communication by local vendors in tourist areas are still limited. Yet, face-to-face interaction between vendors and tourists is a crucial form of communication in the field marketing process. Therefore, this research is crucial to understand how direct marketing communication is implemented by local vendors and its role in increasing their income. This research is expected to contribute to the development of marketing communication studies, particularly in the context of community-based tourism.

## METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods, aiming to deeply understand the marketing communication phenomenon carried out by local traders in the Bukit Lawang Nature Tourism area. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to describe social reality comprehensively based on direct experiences and interactions that occur in the field. This research is also a type of field research, because it was conducted directly at the research location to obtain accurate and contextual data. The research location is in the Bukit Lawang Nature Tourism area, located in Bahorok District, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra. This location was chosen based on the high tourism activity and the large number of local traders who conduct direct marketing activities to tourists. The subjects in this study were local traders active in the tourism area, such as food sellers, souvenir sellers, and other tourism service providers. Data collection techniques used in this study included observation and interviews. Observations were conducted by directly observing marketing communication activities that occur in the field, including how traders offer products and tourist responses. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner so that researchers still have a guide for questions, but still give informants the freedom to explain their experiences in more depth. The data analysis technique in this study uses the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researcher sorts and simplifies the obtained data to align with the research focus. Next, the data is presented in descriptive narrative form for easier understanding. The final stage is drawing conclusions, which is carried out continuously throughout the research process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Bukit Lawang tourist area in Langkat Regency, North Sumatra, boasts natural and wildlife attractions. It boasts beautiful hills, lush greenery, clear and beautiful rivers, and is home to protected wildlife such as the orangutan. Furthermore, Bukit Lawang is part of the Gunung Leuser

National Park (TNGL), a conservation area that protects orangutans. To protect the dwindling orangutan population due to poaching, trafficking, and habitat destruction, the Bukit Lawang Orangutan Rehabilitation Center was established in 1973. Bukit Lawang is a renowned natural tourist destination in North Sumatra, Indonesia. Bukit Lawang's natural beauty and biodiversity make it an ideal location for tourism (Putri & Nasution, 2025).

Extensive research has been conducted on marketing communications in the context of tourism and small businesses. Several studies have demonstrated that marketing communications play a crucial role in attracting consumers and increasing sales. Research by Putu Agus Swetamayasa and Luh Asli (2025) demonstrates that appropriate marketing communications strategies can increase the attractiveness of tourist destinations and increase the number of tourist visits. This demonstrates that communication serves not only as a means of conveying information but also as a means of building a positive perception of a destination.

The high level of tourism activity in this region has encouraged the growth of local economic enterprises, particularly in trade. Local vendors in this area sell a variety of goods, such as food, drinks, clothing, paintings, and souvenirs, which are in demand by tourists. This trading activity takes place directly in the tourist area, fostering active interaction between vendors and tourists. This interaction makes communication a key factor in marketing success. Vendors must interact directly with tourists from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, making communication skills a crucial factor in attracting tourists to purchase their products.

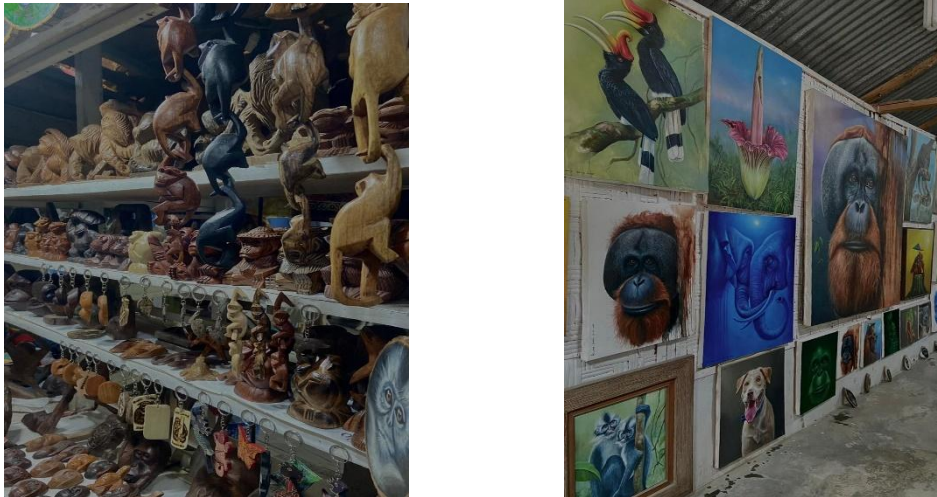


Figure.1 Examples of Souvenirs and Paintings at Bukit Lawang Nature Tourism

Research shows that local vendors in Bukit Lawang use a direct approach to communicate with tourists, namely by meeting and speaking with them face-to-face. Vendors actively initiate communication by greeting tourists as the first step to attract their attention. After gaining their attention, they clearly and concisely explain the products they sell, including the type of product, price, and benefits. Messages are delivered in simple language so that tourists can understand. When dealing with international tourists, vendors employ a simple communication approach to explain the products they offer. "For foreign tourists, we use simple English so they understand," said Mrs. Eni, the owner of Saung Ukir.

This demonstrates that marketing communications can change according to the situation and conditions. Vendors' ability to adapt language is a crucial factor in attracting tourists. Theoretically, this demonstrates that communication plays a dominant role in direct marketing activities, as it allows for two-way interaction between vendors and tourists.

The communication process occurs in stages, from attracting customers' attention, providing clear information, to guiding them to make a purchase decision. Vendors deliver messages in a gentle, inviting, and non-pushy manner, making tourists feel comfortable during the interaction. As stated by Mrs. Nurcahaya, the owner of the Souvenir Tones shop, "I always greet tourists first, then I explain the items. If they are interested, then I continue to offer them." This is

also in line with what was said by the owner of the Art Gallery Painting Shop, "Usually they ask questions first before buying."

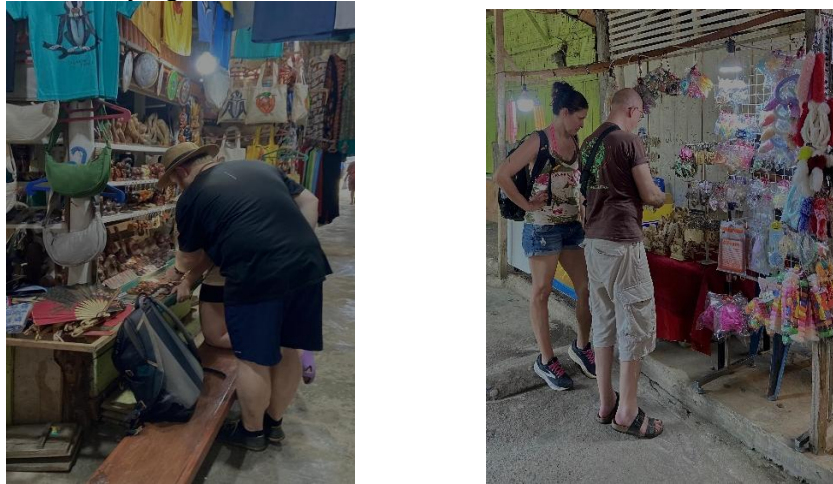


Figure 2 Souvenir purchasing activity in Bukit Lawang

These activities demonstrate that the communication process in marketing occurs not only through verbal information delivery but also through direct interaction where individuals select, view, and consider products. Tourists who choose products demonstrate initial interest, which is then strengthened by communication at the point of purchase. This process demonstrates that marketing communication is ongoing and active. Vendors not only sell goods but also assist tourists in making decisions through direct interaction. Therefore, this communication can shape tourists' assessments and interest in the products offered. Furthermore, the way tourists choose products also demonstrates consumer involvement in marketing activities. Tourists do not merely passively receive information but actively engage in the decision-making process by observing, comparing, and selecting the most appropriate products. This demonstrates that marketing communication is a two-way, interactive process.

The marketing communication conducted by local vendors in Bukit Lawang is direct and has an impact on increasing their income. Clear, friendly, and focused communication can generate tourist interest in the products offered, thus encouraging purchases. A vendor's ability to provide accurate product information is crucial in building tourist trust. This trust is crucial in shaping purchasing decisions, as tourists feel confident and confident in the products offered. Therefore, effective communication directly contributes to increased sales. Olan Ginting, the owner of a Bukit Lawang souvenir shop, stated, "If we communicate well and in a friendly manner with tourists, they usually feel comfortable and interested in buying. From there, they often tell others, so more people come, and that impacts our income."

This statement demonstrates that good and friendly communication not only helps tourists buy goods directly but also provides a pleasant experience for them. This experience then encourages tourists to recommend the place to others, thus indirectly expanding the marketing reach. Therefore, marketing communication is a crucial strategy that helps increase the income of local vendors through effective and sustainable interactions.

The presence of the Bukit Lawang tourist area has a positive impact on increasing economic activity in the community, including local vendors. The study explained that the high number of tourist visits has resulted in increased business opportunities for the community surrounding the tourist area. (Sudirman & Sitepu, 2019) Based on these studies, it can be seen that marketing communication plays a crucial role in increasing tourist appeal and sales. However, most research still focuses on digital-based marketing communications or on tourism destination development in general. Research specifically examining direct marketing communications conducted by local vendors in tourist areas is still limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing direct marketing communications practices and their role in increasing the income of



local vendors at Bukit Lawang Nature Tourism.

The marketing communications process conducted by local vendors at Bukit Lawang Nature Tourism can be systematically understood using the AISAS (Attention, Interest, Search, Action, Share) model. This model demonstrates that marketing communications extend beyond the delivery of information to tourists, including the development of experiences and the dissemination of information.

In the Attention stage, local vendors actively attract tourists' attention through direct greetings, friendly approaches, and initiatives to initiate interactions. This is evident in the vendors' habit of greeting tourists first as the initial step in establishing communication. Next, in the Interest stage, vendors strive to build tourist interest by clearly explaining products, from the type of product, price, to product advantages. Information is conveyed in simple, easy-to-understand language, so tourists feel comfortable and interested in learning more. In the Search stage, tourists begin to show deeper interest by asking questions or seeking additional information about the product. This process occurs directly on-site, where tourists actively engage in two-way communication with vendors. This demonstrates that marketing communication is not one-way, but rather interactive.

The next stage is Action, when tourists decide to make a purchase. This decision is influenced by the vendor's ability to convey a persuasive message, build trust, and create a comfortable atmosphere during the interaction. Finally, in the Share stage, satisfied tourists tend to share their experiences with others, either directly or through recommendations. This aligns with field findings that good communication not only impacts direct purchases but also encourages word-of-mouth promotion, expanding marketing reach.

The results of this study align with Lasswell's theory, where vendors act as communicators, delivering messages directly to tourists with the aim of influencing purchasing decisions. Based on the marketing mix (4Ps) concept, the strategies employed by local vendors in Bukit Lawang encompass product, price, location, and promotion. The products offered include food, beverages, and souvenirs tailored to tourist needs. Prices are flexible, depending on the conditions and characteristics of the tourists. The location of the businesses in tourist areas provides easy access for visitors. However, the most noticeable aspect is the promotion carried out through direct communication between vendors and tourists, which plays a crucial role in attracting interest and encouraging purchasing decisions.

Direct communication is a key force in attracting tourists. The interactions that occur help build close emotional connections and increase trust in the products offered, directly impacting a person's decision to purchase. Therefore, marketing communication is crucial in determining sales success and increasing the income of local vendors. Overall, the results of this study indicate that marketing communication plays a crucial role in helping stimulate economic activity in tourist areas. Vendors play a role not only as sellers but also as stakeholders in shaping the tourist experience through interactions. Good communication can create a positive impression, helping tourists understand the destination better overall. Overall, the findings of this study indicate that direct marketing communications serve not only as a promotional tool but also as a means of building relationships with tourists, which can lead to increased revenue for local vendors.

## CONCLUSION

Based on research conducted in Bukit Lawang, it can be concluded that marketing communications conducted by local vendors occur directly through face-to-face interactions with tourists. The communication process begins with the delivery of product information, followed by a friendly approach, and ultimately encourages purchasing decisions. Communication is not only informative but also contains elements of persuasion that can attract tourists. Direct marketing communications have proven effective because they allow for two-way interaction between vendors and tourists. This interaction allows vendors to adjust their messaging according to tourist responses, making the communication more appropriate and easily understood. Furthermore, good and friendly communication creates a positive experience for tourists. This experience not



only impacts direct purchases but also encourages tourists to share their experiences with others. This expands the marketing reach indirectly through word-of-mouth promotion, thus increasing the number of buyers. Thus, marketing communications play a crucial role in increasing the income of local vendors. Sales success is determined not only by the products offered, but also by the vendor's ability to communicate effectively, friendly, and convincingly with tourists.

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