

**TRANSFORMATION OF DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY AND
SENSORY COMMUNICATION IN RIVER CULINARY TOURISM (CASE
STUDY OF KOPI 16 PRO PALEMBANG)**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the marketing communication strategy of Café Terapung Kopi 16 Pro on the Musi River, Palembang, in responding to digital consumer behavior and the demands of the experience economy. It uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a single case study method. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and social media content analysis. Data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke) with the AISAS (Attention, Interest, Search, Action, Share) theoretical framework and The 4 Realms of Experience. The results show that the linear AIDA model is no longer adequate to explain this phenomenon. Kopi 16 Pro successfully applied the AISAS model, where the elements of Search (digital review search) and Share (visual content sharing) became the main drivers of visits. The uniqueness of the floating location was utilized not only as a visual asset (Aesthetic) but also as an immersive escapist experience. The integration of local culture through the “Pro Culture” event strengthens the destination’s authenticity. This study suggests that river tourism managers shift from one-way promotion to creating “shareable moments” and actively managing digital footprints. This study fills a research gap by applying the AISAS model and Experience Economy to the context of floating cafes in developing countries, an area that has been rarely explored compared to river tourism in Thailand or Vietnam.

Keywords: AISAS Model, Experience Economy, River Tourism, Digital Marketing Communication, Culinary Tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

River tourism has grown into a vital sector in the global tourism industry, offering a unique blend of cultural heritage, natural landscapes, and recreational activities. 1 In Southeast Asia, destinations such as the Damnoen Saduak Floating Market in Thailand or Mekong Delta tourism

in Vietnam have proven that integrating river life with the modern economy can attract global tourists.² In Indonesia, the city of Palembang, with the Musi River as its main icon, has similar potential, but its main challenge lies in modernizing attractions without losing its local identity.

The modern café industry no longer merely sells food and beverage products (commodities), but rather sells “experiences” and “lifestyles.” This paradigm shift is known as the Experience Economy, where economic value is created from how memorable the experience is for consumers.³ In this context, Café Terapung Kopi 16 Pro is an innovation that combines the concept of a floating restaurant with the urban lifestyle of Palembang. Its floating location with the Ampera Bridge as a backdrop offers a unique value proposition compared to conventional land-based cafes.

However, managing marketing communications for unique destinations such as this presents complex challenges in the digital age. Traditional marketing models such as AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) are increasingly considered outdated because they assume that the consumer decision process is linear and ends with a purchase.⁴ The reality of Generation Z consumers today shows non-linear behavior: they actively search for reviews (Search) and share post-consumption content (Share), which is often more influential than conventional advertising.⁶

Previous research on cafes and culinary tourism has often focused on standard marketing mix analysis or the AIDA model, without delving into the interactive and sensory dimensions of the consumer experience at waterfront locations. ¹ Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing Kopi 16 Pro's marketing communication strategy using the AISAS (Attention, Interest, Search, Action, Share) model framework and Experience Economy theory. This study is expected to provide strategic insights for the development of sustainable river tourism that is adaptive to digital trends.

a. The Evolution of Marketing Models: From AIDA to AISAS

The AIDA model (Lewis, 1898) has long been the foundation of promotional strategies. However, in the era of internet connectivity, this model has fatal limitations because it ignores the active role of consumers

in seeking information and spreading influence.⁴ Modern consumers do not immediately take action after becoming interested.

As an alternative, Dentsu developed the AISAS model (Attention, Interest, Search, Action, Share) to capture digital consumer behavior:

1. Attention & Interest: Consumers are exposed to attractive visual content on social media.
2. Search: Consumers verify through search engines, geo-tag locations, or influencer reviews. This is a critical phase that is often overlooked by older models.⁵
3. Action: The decision to visit or purchase.
4. Share: Consumers share their experiences (UGC), which then become a source of Attention for other consumers, creating a sustainable marketing cycle.

b. The Experience Economy

Pine and Gilmore (1999) argue that businesses must create memorable experiences. They divide experiences into four realms (4Es):

1. Entertainment: Visitors absorb experiences passively (e.g., listening to live music).
2. Educational: Visitors actively absorb the experience (e.g., learning about river culture).
3. Aesthetic: Visitors are immersed in the physical environment but remain passive (e.g., enjoying the view of the Ampera Bridge).
4. Escapist: Visitors actively participate in an environment that is different from their daily lives (e.g., the sensation of being on the water).

The application of this theory is crucial for analyzing how Kopi 16 Pro not only sells coffee but also “sells” the view of the Musi River.

c. Sensory Marketing and River Tourism

River tourism has unique characteristics that involve multiple senses: the sound of water, the swaying of waves, and visual scenery. Sensory marketing focuses on engaging the senses to influence consumer perceptions and behavior.¹¹ In the context of floating restaurants, the physical element of water is not just a backdrop, but a core element of the tourism product itself that must be effectively communicated to potential visitors.¹³

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a single case study design. This approach was chosen to explore the “how” and “why” of certain communication strategies being implemented in complex real-world contexts. The research subjects were key informants, including the owner/marketing manager of Kopi 16 Pro (for the strategic perspective), operational employees, and visitors/consumers (for the experiential perspective). The data collection technique used in this study was in-depth observation conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore the motivation behind the strategy in terms of experiential perception. Participant observation involved directly observing the atmosphere, service interactions, and sensory elements at the cafe location. Additionally, digital documentation was used to analyze content on the official social media account (@kopi16pro) and user-generated content (UGC) on TikTok and Instagram to identify sharing patterns. Data was analyzed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process involved data coding, theme searching, and theme review to ensure findings aligned with the AISAS and Experience Economy theoretical frameworks.¹⁵ Data validity was ensured through source triangulation (comparing manager interview data with customer reviews) and thick description to ensure the transferability of findings.¹⁶

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. Implementation of the AISAS Model: From Virality to Advocacy

Data analysis shows that the communication flow of Kopi 16 Pro is more accurately mapped using the AISAS model than AIDA.

Attention & Interest: Aesthetic Visualization of the River

Kopi 16 Pro utilizes the visual power of the Musi River and Ampera Bridge as the main “hook” on social media. Short video content on TikTok featuring the golden hour atmosphere above the river has proven effective in attracting the attention of Generation Z. This is in line with the findings of Wei et al. (2025), who state that social media attributes enhance the image of a destination.¹⁷ The marketing manager revealed: "Our main target is Generation Z... They love visual content, so we're active on

TikTok and Instagram." This strategy successfully generates interest through strong visual stimuli.

Search: Digital Validation

An important finding in this study is Search behavior. Before visiting, consumers conduct social validation. They don't just look at official accounts, but seek honest reviews from food vloggers or local micro-influencers. Kopi 16 Pro responds to this with a unique endorsement strategy: asking influencers to give honest reviews, not just paid praise. This transparency increases trust, which is crucial at the Search stage.¹⁷

Action & Share: The UGC Cycle

The Action stage (visit) is not the end. The "Instagramable" café design encourages the Share stage. Visitors voluntarily upload their photos/videos, which then become free promotional tools (Digital Word of Mouth) for the café. This phenomenon confirms that consumers act as co-marketers.⁶ Positive customer testimonials on social media serve as validation for new potential customers, closing the continuous AISAS cycle.

b. Economic Analysis of Experience (4Es) in Floating Tourism

Kopi 16 Pro competes not only in coffee flavor, but also in providing an experience on the water.

1. **Esthetic:** This is the strongest dimension. The café's location facing the Ampera Bridge provides high aesthetic value that is difficult for land-based competitors to replicate. Visitors enjoy the view passively, but its impact on satisfaction is significant.³
2. **Escapist:** The floating concept provides a sensation of "escaping" from the hustle and bustle of the city. The swaying waves and river breeze create an immersive escapist experience. This is relevant to studies that mention that water elements have a restorative effect on visitors.¹⁸
4. **Entertainment:** The presence of live music and movie screenings fulfills this dimension. This entertainment extends the duration of visits (staying time).
5. **Educational:** This dimension is evident through the "Pro Culture" event, which involves the local arts community. This provides

educational value about Palembang culture, distinguishing Kopi 16 Pro from just an ordinary dining place to a cultural space.¹⁹

c. Analysis SWOT Strategy

Tabel 1. Analysis SWOT

Dimensions	Key Findings	Strategic Implications
Strengths	Iconic location (Musi River), Unique floating concept, Strong presence on visual social media (TikTok/IG).	Maintain visual quality; Focus on place branding.
Weaknesses	High dependence on viral trends (short cycles), Accessibility for non-youth segments may be limited.	Diversify marketing channels; Improve accessibility facilities.
Opportunities	Collaborate with travel agents for river tour packages, Develop menus based on local wisdom.	Integrate with the broader Palembang tourism ecosystem.
Threats	Emergence of similar competitors, Weather/natural factors (river tides), Changes in social media algorithms.	Continuous innovation in events (Pro Culture) to prevent boredom.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the success of Café Terapung Kopi 16 Pro is inseparable from the adaptation of marketing communication strategies that are relevant to the digital era and the experience economy. The use of the AISAS model proved to be more accurate in mapping the consumer journey than the AIDA model, especially in highlighting the importance of

the Search and Share phases. Kopi 16 Pro successfully converted physical assets (river views) into digital assets (viral content) that drove visits.

Theoretically, this study enriches the culinary tourism literature by showing that ambiance and sensory experience at waterfront locations play a role equal to that of food product quality itself. The “Pro Culture” event also proves that integrating local cultural elements can enhance the value proposition of a modern café.

Managerial Recommendations:

1. **SEO and Google Maps Optimization:** Since the Search phase is crucial, managers must ensure that information on Google Maps and search engines is always accurate and filled with positive reviews.
2. **Facilitate UGC:** Provide special photo spots or incentives for customers who share their content on social media to strengthen the Share stage.
3. **Storytelling:** Strengthen the narrative about the history of the Musi River or the origins of local menus in promotional materials to deepen the Educational dimension of the visitor experience.

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