



Volume 9 Issue 1, June 2026, pages: 63-80

# THE PROMOTION STRATEGY FOR WEDDING PACKAGES: A CASE STUDY OF JW MARRIOTT HOTEL SURABAYA

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Received: 25/03/2026

Revised: 23/04/2026

Accepted: 27/05/2026

## Abstract

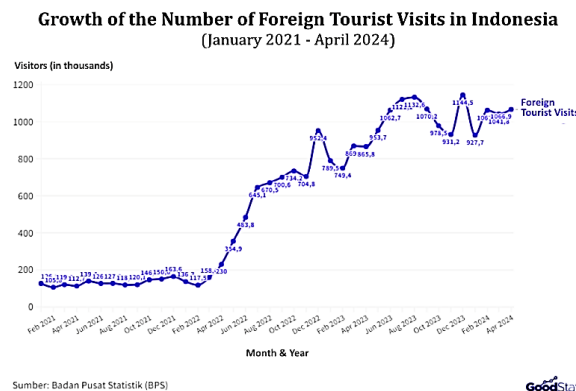
The MICE industry in Indonesia is projected to grow significantly, with Surabaya emerging as a key hub for meetings and events. This study examines the promotion mix strategies employed by JW Marriott Hotel Surabaya to market its wedding packages within a competitive hospitality landscape. Using a qualitative descriptive approach with thematic analysis, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with two Wedding Sales Managers and three clients, complemented by observation and document analysis. The findings reveal that the hotel's promotional strategy centers on three primary elements: digital advertising reinforced by organic word-of-mouth, consultative personal selling that prioritizes client needs over transactional approaches, and value-added sales promotions that preserve premium brand positioning. Public relations and direct marketing were excluded from the active promotion mix, as contemporary wedding clients demonstrate greater reliance on peer recommendations and social media evidence than on corporate-led communication. A distinctive characteristic of the strategy is its cultural attunement, reflected in the timing of wedding exhibitions during Ramadan and the Suro month, and accommodation of local preferences such as individual set menu dining. The study concludes that authentic service delivery functions as the hotel's most powerful self-sustaining promotional tool, offering a replicable framework for luxury hospitality venues seeking differentiation beyond price competition.

**Keywords:** Cultural Adaptation, MICE Hospitality, Promotion Mix Strategy, Relationship-Based Selling, Wedding Package

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry in Indonesia has experienced growth over the past decade, due to the support of the industrial sector, education, trade and growth of the many tourist vehicles developed by the local community (Triatmanto et al., 2021). The MICE industry in Indonesia shows an increasing demand for personalization and customization in event experience. During the new normal after the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of foreign tourists visiting Indonesia increased. As a result, Indonesia became one of the countries that host international events, such as Indonesia Masters 2024, Asia Pacific Media Forum (APMF), World Water Forum (WWF), Motocross Grand Prix (MXGP), Indonesia Open

2024, and MotoGP. The impact of events held in Indonesia increases the number of foreign tourist visits in Indonesia, the data shown below.



**Figure 1.** Growth of the Number of Foreign Tourist Visits in Indonesia  
Source: GoodStats (2024)

According to Astute Analytica, the Indonesian MICE market is expected to rise from its 2023 valuation of US\$2,319.7 million to US\$7,413.6 million by 2032, driven by government support, infrastructure development, and economic growth. With a revenue share of over 85.4% in 2023, the offline channel is prioritizing physical interactions and offering immersive experience by offline or personal (Astute Analytica, 2024). As Indonesia’s second-largest city, Surabaya plays a pivotal role in the growth and success of the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) sector. The role of hotels improves MICE activities by providing comprehensive services, from modern conference facilities, catering, room service, and event management (Yuniawati Ekaningrum, 2018).

Recognizing the product and quality service excellence of JW Marriott Hotel Surabaya, increases the demand of customers (Sofianti, 2022). JW Marriott Surabaya is an ideal choice to plan for a business trip or family staycation in Surabaya. It is a 5-star hotel located in the downtown, strategically located near Tunjungan Plaza, the largest shopping center in the city, creating an opportunity to combine quality time with self-balance. The hotel provides varieties of cuisine from local to fusion. Recognizing the high demand especially on social events such as weddings, birthdays and gatherings, JW Marriott Surabaya offers flexible MICE packages. Weddings and corporate gatherings representing particularly common occurrences within its facilities (Utomo et al., 2022). In this regard, attracting potential customers and providing them with services that meet their requirements and expectations is the main responsibility of any hotel (Mysova et al., 2021).

The Indonesian hospitality sector faces challenges that are impacting its growth and stability. Political instability may result in a decrease in tourism demand, affecting economic growth in destination countries (Lesfandra, 2024, p. 211). In early 2025, budget cuts by the Indonesian government led to widespread cancellation of meetings and official business trips, which caused hotels across the country, especially outside Java island, to struggle with significant revenue losses. Based on Association of Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant (PHRI) calculations in 2024, the total profit of hotels from the government market is IDR 24.8 trillion, consisting of IDR 16.5 trillion from room occupancy, and IDR 8.2 trillion from meetings (Estherina, 2025). As budget cuts occur, causes loss from the government market. Ministries and institutions cut official travel budgets up to 50%.

It has the potential to have a major impact on the tourism, hospitality, and restaurant sectors, especially in holding an event or MICE. Most of hotel revenue comes from government agendas and activities, such as official travel and meetings at hotels. With the budget cuts, this source of income causes lost as the government eliminates the budget for meetings and official travel. Furthermore, the hospitality industry fights with the rise of competitive pressures, driven by diverse accommodation options. A research by Handoko et al. (2025) reveals that inefficient budget allocation, insufficient infrastructure funding, and poor-departmental coordination have obstructed the growth capacity of the tourism industry especially in the field of hospitality. Although tourism plays a crucial role in Indonesia's economy, the absence of specific financial strategies limits the industry's capacity to leverage global trends. The JW Marriott Surabaya distinguished itself by being awarded the ASEAN MICE Venue Standard (AMVS) 2022-2024 (ANTARA, 2024). Also in 2022, ranking first among five-star hotels in Surabaya, as recognized by CNBC's "Best Hotels for Business Travelers" list (Pitrelli, 2022). Based on the background above, the author is interested in taking the title "The Promotion Strategy for Wedding Packages: A Case Study of JW Marriott Hotel Surabaya".

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The promotion mix represents a fundamental component of marketing strategy in the hospitality industry, encompassing advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing as integrated tools for communicating value propositions to potential clients (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 47). In the context of luxury hotels and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions) services, the effective implementation of promotion mix strategies becomes increasingly critical as hotels face intensified competitive pressures and evolving consumer preferences. Boella and Goss-Turner (2019, p. 112) emphasize that promotional strategies in hospitality require comprehensive analysis of marketing mix elements adapted to specific market contexts, particularly in differentiating service offerings within competitive environments. The integration of multiple promotional tools enables hotels to create synergistic effects that amplify marketing impact beyond what individual tactics could achieve independently. Bowie et al. (2017, p. 203) demonstrate that promotional mix strategies play a crucial role in enhancing hotel competitiveness by strategically aligning communication channels with target audience preferences and behavioral patterns. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of the hospitality market necessitates continuous adaptation of promotional approaches in response to technological advancements, cultural shifts, and economic fluctuations. Rogers and Davidson (2016, p. 178) found through empirical investigation of MICE industry practices that event marketing and promotion strategies must be grounded in deep understanding of client decision-making processes, value perceptions, and relationship expectations rather than relying solely on transactional promotional tactics.

The digital transformation of hotel marketing has fundamentally altered how hospitality properties communicate with potential clients, with social media platforms emerging as primary channels for brand awareness, customer engagement, and booking conversion. Thompson and Martin (2020) argue that strategic use of social media in hotel marketing is essential for building brand awareness and fostering customer engagement, particularly among younger demographics who increasingly rely on digital platforms for travel and event planning research. The shift from traditional advertising channels to visual-centric platforms such as Instagram reflects broader consumer behavior changes

where authentic visual content and user-generated reviews significantly influence purchase decisions. Chen and Wu (2020) demonstrate that enhancing hotel competitiveness through integrated marketing communication requires sophisticated orchestration of social media strategies within luxury hotel contexts, balancing organic content creation with targeted paid advertising to maximize reach and conversion potential. Huang and Chen (2020) provide empirical evidence that digital marketing significantly impacts hotel performance, particularly through social media engagement metrics that correlate with booking behavior and revenue generation. However, the effectiveness of digital marketing depends critically on omnichannel integration that seamlessly bridges online and offline customer experiences. Rahman et al. (2022) establish that omnichannel marketing strategies in hospitality must create cohesive customer journeys across digital touchpoints (websites, social media, online advertisements) and physical interactions (wedding fairs, venue tours, face-to-face consultations), ensuring consistency in messaging and service delivery throughout the decision-making process. Liu and Zhang (2022) further emphasize that digital transformation in hotel marketing requires strategic integration of online and offline channels rather than treating them as separate domains, as customers increasingly expect fluid transitions between digital research and physical experiences.

Personal selling in luxury hospitality services operates fundamentally differently from transactional sales approaches, requiring consultative methodologies that prioritize relationship building, needs assessment, and customized solution development. Williams and Jones (2022) demonstrate that personal selling effectiveness in luxury hospitality services depends significantly on the salesperson's ability to function as a trusted advisor rather than a product vendor, establishing rapport through genuine understanding of client aspirations and constraints. This relationship-centric approach proves particularly crucial in wedding services where emotional significance, family involvement, and cultural traditions create complex decision-making dynamics that transcend purely rational cost-benefit analyses. The cultivation of strategic partnerships with industry intermediaries, such as wedding organizers and event planners, represents an efficient channel strategy for reaching end consumers who have difficulty to identify directly. Lee and Kim (2021) found that strategic marketing approaches for MICE venues require comprehensive understanding of promotional effectiveness across multiple touchpoints, including both direct client engagement and indirect influence through professional networks. Word-of-mouth marketing emerges as a particularly powerful promotional tool in hospitality contexts where service quality cannot be fully evaluated prior to purchase, making authentic testimonials from previous clients invaluable in reducing perceived risk. Wong and Kim (2020) establish that word-of-mouth marketing in the hotel industry generates significant impact through social media influencers and authentic client testimonials that extend marketing reach beyond paid advertising channels while enhancing credibility through third-party endorsement. The emphasis on service quality as the foundation of word-of-mouth generation aligns with Mysova et al. (2021), who demonstrate through systematic review that customer expectations and satisfaction in hotel services depend primarily on service excellence, responsiveness, and personalization rather than price considerations alone.

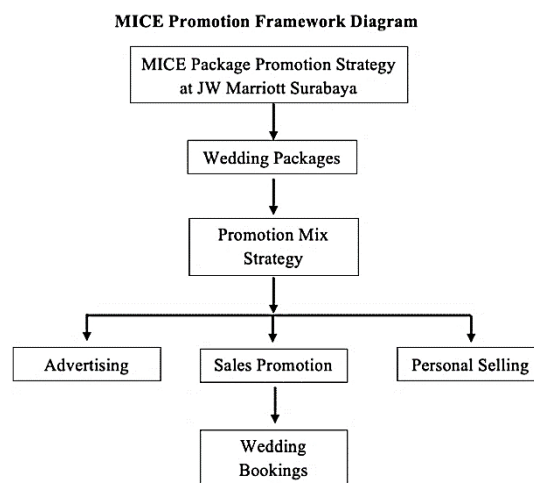
The Indonesian hospitality context presents unique characteristics that necessitate culturally-adapted promotional strategies, including diverse ethnic traditions, religious observances, and local preferences that significantly influence event planning decisions. Triatmanto et al. (2021) analyze the development of Indonesia's hospitality industry,

identifying both challenges and opportunities specific to the Indonesian market, including the importance of cultural sensitivity in service delivery and marketing communications. The timing of promotional activities around culturally significant periods, such as Ramadan and traditional Javanese observances, demonstrates strategic alignment with moments when wedding planning activities intensify and client receptivity to marketing messages increases. The post-pandemic recovery period has further complicated the hospitality landscape, as Zhang et al. (2021) document in their analysis of tourism recovery and economic development from hotel industry perspectives, noting that consumer preferences have shifted toward greater emphasis on hygiene, safety, and service configurations that minimize shared contact points. Zhou and Wang (2020) explore the relationship between sales promotion strategies and customer purchase behavior in hotels, finding that value-added benefits often generate stronger purchase motivation than direct price discounting, particularly in premium market segments where perceived value derives from service quality and exclusive experiences. However, Indonesian hotels currently face significant challenges from government budget cuts affecting official travel and meetings, as documented by Estherina (2025), potentially reducing revenue from government market segments and intensifying competition for private events such as weddings. Handoko et al. (2025) identify strategic planning and budget allocation challenges in Indonesia's tourism and hospitality sector, noting that inefficient resource allocation and insufficient infrastructure funding constrain industry growth capacity. In this challenging environment, hotels must differentiate through promotional strategies that emphasize service excellence, cultural alignment, and relationship-based value creation rather than competing primarily on price, as Sofianti (2022) demonstrates in examining service quality and customer satisfaction in five-star hotels.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

The researcher employed qualitative data analysis approaches with descriptive methods in this study. Qualitative research focuses on an in-depth understanding of social phenomena or human behavior. This research is often used to explore the experiences, perceptions, or meanings that individuals give to a particular event or context (Hasan et al., 2025, p. 3). This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the promotion mix strategies (advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relation, and direct marketing) (Muro, 2021) for its MICE packages at JW Marriott Surabaya. The research specifically utilizes thematic analysis to comprehensively investigate the potential of JW Marriott Surabaya as a meetings and events venue. Thematic analysis is a fundamentally question-driven exercise that depends on clearly articulated lines of inquiry to frame the scholar's interpretation of the data (Lochmiller, 2021, p. 2030). The thematic analysis in this study was conducted following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), ensuring a systematic and transparent analytical process. In the first phase, the researcher familiarized herself with the data by repeatedly reading interview transcripts, observation notes, and promotional documents to develop an initial sense of recurring ideas and patterns relevant to each promotion mix element. In the second phase, initial codes were generated systematically by labeling meaningful units of data corresponding to the research questions. Coding was conducted manually using color-coded annotations across transcripts, enabling traceability of evidence for each emergent concept. In the third phase, codes were sorted and grouped into potential themes by identifying broader patterns that cut across multiple data sources and

informants. The fourth phase involved reviewing and refining these themes to ensure internal coherence within each theme and clear distinction between themes, cross-checked against the full dataset to confirm sufficient evidential support. In the fifth phase, themes were clearly defined and named to accurately reflect the substance of the data rather than researcher assumptions. Finally, in the sixth phase, the analysis was written up by integrating representative excerpts from the data to substantiate each theme within the broader context of MICE promotion strategies at JW Marriott Surabaya. To strengthen analytical rigor, a peer-debriefing process was applied as a form of inter-rater reliability check, in which a second researcher independently reviewed a portion of the coded transcripts and compared emerging codes and themes with those identified by the primary researcher. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus, and the level of agreement was recorded to ensure consistency and credibility of the interpretive process (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 260).



**Figure 2.** MICE Promotion Frame Work Diagram on Wedding Event  
Source: Researchers (2025)

The promotion mix framework was refined by excluding public relation and direct marketing supported by contemporary hospitality research. Pratama and Prasandy (2023) found that MICE products, both public relation and direct marketing were ineffective in driving final purchase decisions, suggesting that modern consumers are less responsive to traditional mass-communication tools. According to Chatzigeorgiou and Christou (2020), influencer marketing and social media interaction are replacing traditional public relation duties in the modern hospitality and tourism industry. Traditional public relation is seen to be less effective for its particular service since wedding couples now rely more on peer-to-peer visual content and organic social evidence than on official corporate narratives. Additionally, based on Dwidienawati et al. (2020), modern consumers in the hospitality industry prioritize use-generated reviews and authentic digital interaction over direct promotional messages. Their study suggests that electronic word-of-mouth is considered a reliable source of information.

This study is a replication research that aligns with the topic chosen by Sumirda and Susanti (2024) in their study of Promotion mix strategy for meeting packages at Hotel Syamsiah Padang Lawas by Sumirda and Susanti, as it adopts a similar research approach on analyzing the implementation of the promotion mix strategy, previously conducted in another hotel setting. Promotion mix itself is a key component of the marketing mix strategy, it is applied to a different sample, variable, and time period. In qualitative

research, replication is defined as repeating a study among different subjects or situations, and is commonly conducted to see if the fundamental conclusions of the original study can be generalized to other circumstances (Tuval-Mashiach, 2021). Replication studies are applicable for improving and verifying findings across diverse contexts, and evaluating the theoretical frameworks. This study ensures comparability by contributing new perspectives to the case of JW Marriott Hotel Surabaya and its MICE package promotion mix strategy.

The data needed includes primary and secondary data. Primary is collected through observation and interviews using the purposive sampling method from the Sales and Marketing Department employees and customers. Purposive sampling serves a fundamental aspect of business and management research, as it allows the researcher to gather information that closely corresponds with defined criteria, situations, and studies goals. This non-probability sampling method involves a careful procedure for choosing participants according to most relevant predefined criteria or characteristics (Memon et al., 2025, p. 2). Targeting two employees from Sales and Marketing Department as wedding sales with more than three years experience, this ensures a broad understanding of the department's operations, challenges, and successes over a significant period. The informants have deeper understanding of long-term client relationships and market trends to provide detailed insight including the event planning, challenges, along with specific clients needs. Additionally, three customers with firsthand experience hosting a wedding reception were interviewed to represent different segments they are a first-time wedding host, a Marriott Bonvoy loyalty member, and a repeat hotel customer. Furthermore, secondary data was obtained from documentation techniques and promotional materials related to the hotel's MICE services.

This qualitative research study is conducted over a period of 15 months, divided into three key phases to ensure systematic data collection, analysis, and reporting. The research proposal process was completed during the first four months. Data collection through interviews and observation was conducted over five months to ensure comprehensive, reliable data; follow-up interviews were conducted where necessary to clarify responses. Data analysis and research writing were carried out over the remaining nine months, during which the six-phase thematic analysis procedure described above was implemented iteratively alongside the writing process. The peer-debriefing process for inter-rater reliability verification was also completed within this analytical phase.

In this qualitative research, data validation is implemented through triangulation data techniques. to ensure the reliability of the findings. Before conducting an interview, member checking, also known as informant validation, refers to the practice of checking back with study informants to see if the research is in line with their views (Busetto et al., 2020). Implementing triangulation data techniques by cross-checking information from interview outcomes and document analysis of promotional materials. Triangulation refers to combining multiple data sources, in which multiple measurements are carried out from different angles to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Busetto et al., 2020). To increase reliability, research uses detailed records and transparent procedures, allowing the research to be replicated by other researchers in similar contexts. The researcher maintains objectivity in interpretation, despite working in a realm that is often rich in nuance and subjectivity. The study examines how the hotel leverages its core value of 'Pursue Excellence' to turn a single event into a perpetual marketing tool, where the high quality of service delivery serves as the primary driver for high-value word-of-mouth recommendations.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This case study examined the promotion strategy of wedding packages at JW Marriott Hotel Surabaya through a qualitative approach involving semi-structured interviews with two Wedding Sales Managers and one client, complemented by observational data and document analysis. The findings reveal a comprehensive promotional mix strategy encompassing advertising, personal selling, and sales promotion, which are systematically deployed to attract and retain wedding clients in the competitive hospitality market of Surabaya.

This finding is generated into five aspects of promotion mix strategies. Advertising has digital presence and word of mouth themes, sales promotion has added value and benefit themes, personal selling has consultative and personalized approach themes, public relation has reputation and event showing themes, B2B relations and proactive inquiries themes. More detailed explanations are provided in the triangulation table.

The exclusion of public relations and direct marketing from the promotion mix is justified by observation evidence showing a significant shift in customer behavior, where customers now value natural social proof above corporate-led communication. As stated by EV, “In my opinion, recommendations from friends are more convincing. Moreover, I have been invited to a friend's wedding here before, so I have seen the quality for myself, plus during the wedding expo I can see the packages and venues firsthand” (EV-8-14-1).

According, to interview data, customers rely more on social media, family and friend’s recommendation than on official news. This is aligning with Dwidienawati et al. (2020), emphasize that customer reviews have a greater influence on purchase intention than formal endorsements.

**Table 1.** Triangulation Data Result

Theory Aspects	Themes	Observation	Interview Result (1-Sales)	Interview Result (2-Sales)	Interview Result (3-Customer)	Interview Result (4-Customer)	Interview Result (5-Customer)	Results
Advertising	Digital Presence & Word of Mouth (WOM)	Advertisements on social media (Instagram) and brochures serve as visual catalogues. Testimony and review contents from direct customer and influencer. Client's decisions are more strongly influenced by family or friends recommendations.	“The advertising media we use... include social media, as well as Meta Ads and Google Ads, printed media flyers and brochures.” (YL-2-3-1)	“Social media is definitely... testimonials or storytelling from clients by word of mouth, which is also a very real form of advertising.” (DS-4-3-5)	“For me, recommendations from family are much more convincing.” (FD-7-15-1)	Initially from family, and some friends recommended JWM... recommendations from friends are more convincing. (EV-7-3-1) (EV-8-15-1)	“What I know about the wedding venue at this hotel is from Instagram.” (JT-1-3-1)	Advertising is effectively shifted from formal paid ads to organic content and word-of-mouth, which acts as a "real" advertisement for high-trust clients.
Sales Promotion	Added Value & Benefit	Giving discounts or additional benefit facilities to convince customers.	“We offer additional triple perks... six options, for	“We often offer attractive promotions. we give incentives. We also offer	“Get a complimentary bridal suite and deluxe room according to the wedding	“Special room rates are offered to invitees... there is a special price.” (EV-8-11-1)	“One of the bonuses I got was a junior suite room.”	Sales promotions focus on “added value” (it can be in a form of compliments

			example, an upgrade to a presidential suite or a chairman suite.” (YL-3-15-9)	cashback.” (DS-5-15-4)	package we choose.” (FD-7-11-1)		(JT-9-11-2)	tary room upgrades, extra perks like free LED or tea pai room) rather than just price cuts to maintain a luxury brand image.
Personal Selling	Consultative & Personalized Approach	There is an in-depth personal approach where the wedding sales act as consultants. Accommodating customization like food menu.	“We don't offer wedding packages outright. Instead, we take a more personalized approach, finding out first what the client needs.” (YL-2-11-1)	“First we find out hat their needs are... If they have any requests or additional needs beyond what we provide, we can adjust accordingly.” (DS-5-11-2)	“The sales staff are attentive to our needs. The menu and rooms are also good.” (FD-6-9-1)	“They provide good input and are easy to negotiate with. They are flexible with our needs.” (EV-8-9-1)	“The sales staff were very friendly and professional... offering several helpful alternative solutions.” (JT-9-9-1)	Personal selling is is demonstrated through the physical presence of sales staff on the day of delivery and the ability to provide alternative solutions to technical problems or personnel changes.
Public Relations	Reputation & Event Showcasing	Peer testimonials and social media evidence are effectively replacing official company narratives as the primary source of trust for contemporary consumers	“Young couples today believe more in what they see in posts... our strategy is more focused on how we appear in their organic content.” (YL-3-17-1)	“My strategy focuses on providing service that encourages them to give honest testimonials.” (DS-5-17-1)	“For me, recommendations from family are much more convincing.” (FD-7-15-1)	“In my opinion, recommendations from friends are more convincing... I've seen the quality for myself.” (EV-8-15-1)	“I never thought about finding out the hotel's reputation through formal news... I found out about it on Instagram.” (JT-10-15-1)	Traditional public relation is largely ignored; modern couples prioritize "social proof" and direct evidence of service quality over official press releases.
Direct Marketing	B2B Relations & Proactive Inquiries	Direct promotional messaging is considered ineffective and risks being perceived as a nuisance or spam.	“Guests trust ratings and comments from other people more... focus more on maintaining guest satisfaction.” (YL-4-19-1)	“Honestly, direct promotions are often considered spam.” (DS-6-19-1)	“I never receive promotional offers via WhatsApp or personal email.” (FD-7-17-1)	“I've never received promotional offers via text or email.” (EV-8-17-1)	“So far, I've [never been offered promotions via private messages.]” (JT-17-1)	Direct marketing to end-users is no longer relevant in favor of B2B relationship building with Wedding Organizers (WO) and word-of-mouth.

Source: Researchers (2026)

#### 4.1 Synthesis of Findings

The research findings reveal a sophisticated, multi-faceted promotional strategy that integrates advertising, personal selling, and sales promotion in complementary ways. Several overarching themes emerge from the analysis:

- a. **Strategic Coherence:** the three primary elements of the promotion mix function cohesively rather than as isolated tactics. Advertising efforts create awareness and generate initial interest. Personal selling then converts interest into commitments through consultative, relationship-based approaches. Sales promotion provides tactical incentives that overcome final purchasing barriers and create urgency.
- b. **Relationship Centrality:** across all three promotional elements, relationships emerge as a central theme. The emphasis on wedding organizer partnerships, the reliance on word-of-mouth, and the flexibility in sales promotions all reflect a relationship-oriented approach that generates trust and advocacy.
- c. **Cultural Sensitivity:** the findings repeatedly demonstrate awareness of and adaptation to local cultural norms. The timing of wedding fairs around culturally significant periods, the recognition of Surabayan preferences for seated dining, and the understanding of Chinese wedding customs all illustrate cultural attunement.
- d. **Premium Positioning Through Service:** while the hotel explicitly positions itself in the mid-to-upper market segment, the promotional strategy consistently emphasizes service quality and flexibility rather than price competitiveness. This approach aligns with established luxury hospitality marketing principles.



**Figure 3.** Individual Set Menu Food Tasting  
Source: Researchers (2025)

Based on informant FD experience, shows that the hotel has given excellent service quality and flexibility.

“... During the food tasting, we made a few notes, such as that the fish pieces were not quite right and still had a fishy taste, and that they could be adjusted to suit our taste” (FD-6-9-2).

#### 4.2 Advertising Strategy

##### a. Media Utilization

The hotel employs a multi-channel advertising approach that integrates both digital and traditional media platforms. Interview data reveals a strategic emphasis on contemporary digital platforms aligned with current consumer behavior patterns.

- **Digital Media Dominance:** social media platforms constitute the primary advertising channel, with Instagram and Facebook emerging as the focal platforms for promotional activities. As stated by Wedding Sales Manager DS:

"Social media is our main platform, particularly Instagram and Facebook. We also maintain a website and participate in the Bridestory platform" (DS-4-3-1).

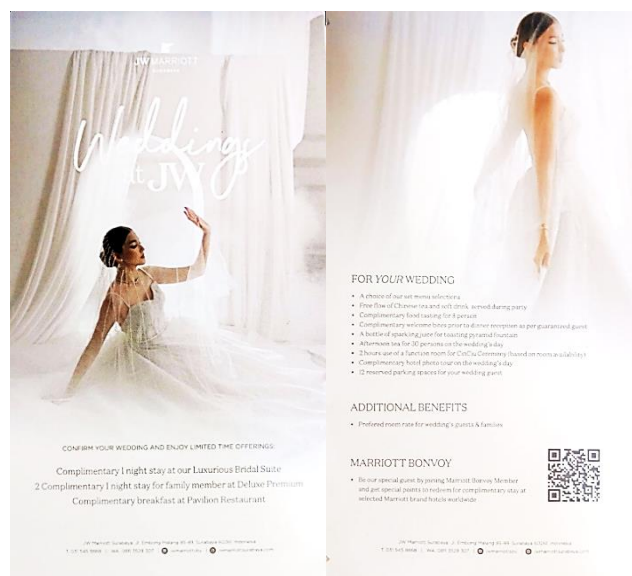
The strategic selection of platforms reflects an understanding of shifting consumer preferences, particularly among younger demographics who increasingly rely on visual-centric platforms for wedding planning inspiration and vendor research.

- **Integrated Digital Presence:** beyond social media, the hotel maintains a dedicated website and actively participates in Bridestory, a specialized wedding marketplace platform popular in Indonesia. This multi-platform presence ensures broad reach across different stages of the customer decision journey. Wedding Sales Manager YL elaborated on the digital advertising ecosystem:

"Our advertising media includes social media platforms, including Meta Ads and Google Ads, print media in the form of flyers and brochures, commercial media, and wedding exhibitions" (YL-2-3-1).

The inclusion of paid advertising through Meta Ads and Google Ads demonstrates a sophisticated approach to digital marketing, combining organic content strategies with targeted paid advertising to maximize reach and conversion potential.

- **Traditional Media Persistence:** despite the digital focus, traditional advertising media retain relevance in the promotional mix. Print materials, specifically brochures and flyers, continue to serve functional purposes during physical interactions with potential clients, particularly at wedding fairs and during venue showings. These tangible materials provide prospective clients with detailed package information that can be reviewed at their convenience.



**Figure 4.** Brochure Wedding Package Set Menu at Royal Ballroom JW Marriott Hotel Surabaya  
Source: JW Marriott Hotel Surabaya (2025)

#### b. Experiential Marketing

- **Wedding Fair and Showcases:** physical events represent a critical component of the advertising strategy. The hotel's marketing strategy utilizes wedding fair and showcases as key touchpoints, from international wedding to specialized heritage

wedding. By strategically scheduling these activities during culturally significant periods, International Wedding Fair during Ramadan and Heritage Wedding Fair on the month of Suro. The timing of these events demonstrates cultural sensitivity and strategic planning. The alignment with Ramadan and Suro month—culturally significant periods in Indonesian society—maximizes potential client engagement when wedding planning activities typically intensify.



**Figure 5.** Romance in the City Wedding Showcase 2025  
Source: Researchers (2025)

This systematic approach reflects a long-term plan to maintain brand presence across different market segments, ranging from traditional heritage ceremonies to intimate, venue-focused showcases. The shift in 2025 toward a dedicated wedding showcase in September focused on venue introduction with a more intimate scale, prioritizing high-intent client engagement and physical venue immersion over mass-market visibility.

c. **Word-of-Mouth Marketing**

A significant finding emerged regarding the effectiveness of organic word-of-mouth promotion. Both Wedding Sales Managers identified client testimonials and personal recommendations as highly influential in attracting new clients, potentially surpassing traditional advertising channels in effectiveness.

"Word-of-mouth promotion is actually the most efficient in attracting the attention of potential clients" (DS-4-5-1).

### **4.3 Personal Selling Strategy**

a. **Relationship-Based Selling Approach**

The personal selling strategy at JW Marriott Hotel Surabaya diverges from traditional direct sales approaches, instead emphasizing relationship building with industry intermediaries, particularly wedding organizers. This strategic focus addresses the unique characteristics of the wedding market.

b. **Client Interaction Process**

The personal selling process varies in approach between the two interviewed managers, revealing flexibility in methodology while maintaining consistent quality standards. Wedding Sales Manager DS described a venue-first approach, while Wedding Sales Manager YL emphasized a needs-assessment approach that prioritizes understanding client needs before presenting solutions.

“When we first meet, we don’t immediately offer a wedding package. Instead we take a more personalized approach. We need to know what the client needs, the scale of the event, the concept, and the menu. Only then we offer a package” (YL- 2-11-1).

This strategic aligns with the idea of William and Jones (2022), which shows that the efficiency of personal selling in luxury hotel services is largely dependent on the salesperson’s capacity to serve as a trusted advisor rather than a product vendor. By understanding the clients’ aspirations and constraints in creating a wedding event.

#### **4.4 Sales Promotion Strategy**

##### **a. Package Offerings and Client Preferences**

The hotel offers four primary wedding package configurations: Individual Set Menu, Buffet Service, Family Style (Chinese Set), and Standing Party. Individual set menu packages dominate client preferences in Surabaya, a pattern strongly influenced by local cultural norms.

"In Surabaya, the majority of clients still choose individual set menu, which is closely related to local culture. Surabayan society generally views that a proper party is one that provides seating for guests" (DS-5-13-2).

##### **b. Promotional Programs**

JW Marriott Hotel Surabaya positions itself in the mid-to-upper market segment, acknowledging premium pricing relative to competitors. However, competitive positioning is maintained through value-added services rather than price competition alone. The hotel emphasizes "added value benefits" rather than simple price discounting, offering room upgrades, LED screen additions, additional ceremony spaces, and other customizable benefits.

#### **4.5 Client Perspective**

To triangulate the effectiveness of the promotional strategies, the research included interviews with three customers, clients who held their wedding reception at JW Marriott Hotel Surabaya in 2025. Their responses provide valuable validation of the promotion strategy's effectiveness.

##### **a. Decision Factors**

The client’s venue selection process involved multiple considerations including capacity adequacy, timing constraints, and price competitiveness. Informant FD emphasizes on how important personal selling and family connects are, explaining that trust was first built through relative’s suggestions and by talking directly with the sales team. For informant EV, the promotion mix successfully integrated word-of-mouth from peer’s recommendations with the impact sales promotion of a wedding expo. informant JT highlights the significance of physical evidence choosing the venue specifically for its aesthetic appeal and ability to accommodate number of pax based on needs.

##### **b. Satisfaction and Recommendation Likelihood**

Even though there are operational challenges such as staff transitions, the hotel maintains its “Pursue Excellence” core value through attentive services, ease of negotiation, personalized, and the strategic bundling of value-added perks like Marriott Bonvoy points and upgrading luxury suites. All informants recommended JW Marriott Hotel Surabaya as wedding reception venue choice to others. This

willingness to recommend the venue validates the effectiveness of the integrated promotional approach and provides evidence that the strategy successfully converts prospects into clients and clients into promoters.

Practical Implications for Industry Practitioners, the findings from JW Marriott Hotel Surabaya offer transferable insights for hospitality practitioners operating across different market scales. Among the three active promotion mix elements examined, personal selling emerged as the most consistently effective strategy, as its consultative and relationship-based approach directly shaped client trust and final purchase decisions a dynamic that mid-scale hotels can replicate without requiring luxury-level budgets by investing in sales staff training focused on needs assessment and flexible negotiation rather than package hard-selling. Word-of-mouth, functioning as an organic extension of advertising, proved equally impactful and cost-efficient; hotels at any tier can cultivate this by prioritizing service quality that compels guests to generate authentic testimonials and user-generated content, which contemporary wedding couples value significantly above corporate-led advertising. Sales promotion, when structured around value-added benefits such as room upgrades or complimentary facilities rather than price discounts, was found to maintain brand positioning while overcoming final purchasing barriers a model that mid-range hotels can adapt by offering scaled perks proportionate to their service tier, such as food tasting sessions, complimentary decorations, or loyalty points.

For these strategies to succeed in alternative hotel contexts, three enabling conditions must be present: a sales team with sufficient product knowledge and interpersonal flexibility to serve as client consultants, a service delivery standard capable of generating genuine post-event advocacy, and a culturally attuned promotional calendar that aligns event showcases with locally significant periods to maximize client engagement at moments when wedding planning intent is highest.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This case study demonstrates that JW Marriott Hotel Surabaya's competitive advantage in the wedding package market rests on three strategically integrated promotional elements: digital advertising anchored in organic word-of-mouth, consultative personal selling prioritizing client needs over transactional approaches, and value-added sales promotions that preserve premium brand positioning without resorting to price discounting. A defining characteristic of this strategy is its cultural attunement reflected in the timing of wedding exhibitions during Ramadan and Suro month, and in the dominance of individual set menu preferences rooted in Surabayan social norms which amplifies the effectiveness of each promotional element within the local market context. The consistency between promotional strategies and actual client experiences, validated through client testimonials emphasizing service quality and flexibility, confirms that authentic service delivery functions as the hotel's most powerful and self-sustaining promotional tool, offering a replicable framework for luxury hospitality contexts seeking differentiation beyond price competition.

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