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Instagram Content Strategies for Promoting Regional Sports Events: A Case Study of MC Run Tegal 2026

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ABSTRACT: Regional sporting events increasingly rely on Instagram to attract prospective participants. However, limited research has examined how local event organizers with limited resources integrate promotional, relational, and protective communication strategies within a single social media account. This study investigated the Instagram content strategies employed by the official account @mcruntegal to promote MC Run Tegal 2026, a community running event in the Bregaslang region (Brebes, Tegal, Slawi, and Pemalang), Central Java, Indonesia. A qualitative single-case study design was adopted. The primary dataset comprised 26 Instagram feed posts published between 1 April and 31 May 2026, supplemented by Instagram Highlights, the official registration page on Gelar.in, and semi-structured interviews with three members of the organizing committee's marketing communication team. Data were analysed using qualitative content analysis with a hybrid deductive–inductive coding framework informed by Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), the 3E social media marketing model (Educate, Entertain, and Engage), and risk communication theory. Six principal content strategies were identified: consistent visual branding, educational and entertaining content, distance-based audience segmentation, phased ticket sales emphasizing scarcity, personalized administrator interactions in comment sections, and anti-fraud communication supported by account verification and sponsorship visibility. According to the organizers, all 2,000 tickets were sold well before the event. However, because ticket sales and audience engagement were not statistically examined in relation to content exposure, these outcomes were interpreted as contextual indicators rather than direct evidence of marketing effectiveness. The study contributes an integrated analytical framework that positions IMC, the 3E model, and risk communication as complementary dimensions of strategic coordination, content engagement, and trust protection in regional event promotion. The findings suggest that local event organizers should adopt a balanced Instagram content strategy that simultaneously informs, engages, and protects prospective participants.

KEYWORDS: Instagram; content strategy; regional sports event; 3E model; integrated marketing communication; risk communication

1. Introduction

Social media has transformed event promotion from traditional one-way announcements into participatory communication, enabling audiences to comment, share information, and co-create meaning around brands and events [1–3]. Among social media platforms, Instagram has emerged as an important promotional channel for festivals, exhibitions, and sporting events in Indonesia because of its visually oriented features and interactive communication capabilities [4–6]. In the sports industry, social media functions not only as an information dissemination platform but also as a relationship marketing tool through which event organizers establish and maintain continuous interactions with participants, supporters, and wider communities [7, 8]. Nevertheless, the increasing reliance on social media presents challenges for event organizers, particularly in maintaining consistent promotional messages, encouraging audience engagement, and protecting prospective participants from misleading information and fraudulent activities.

Running events provide a relevant context for examining these developments. Since the 2010s, major running events in Indonesia, including the Jakarta Marathon, Bali Marathon, and Borobudur Marathon, have evolved beyond athletic competitions into recreational and lifestyle-oriented activities. Fadhloli and Wahyudi [9] reported that effective digital marketing strategies for running events combine emotionally engaging content, interactive communication, and credible endorsers to strengthen participants' intrinsic motivation and trust. Similarly, the credibility of the Borobudur Marathon has been associated with its media strategy, stakeholder support, and professional event management [10]. Previous studies have also demonstrated Instagram's contribution to public relations activities for the Victoria Run [11] and brand image development for the Pocari Sweat Run through promotional teasers, participant testimonials, and user-generated content [12]. Collectively, these findings demonstrate the importance of social media in supporting event visibility, audience relationships, and brand credibility.

Despite these contributions, three important research gaps remain. First, existing studies have predominantly examined national-scale or corporate-supported sporting events with relatively substantial promotional resources, whereas regional events organized by local businesses have received comparatively limited scholarly attention. Second, previous investigations have generally focused on individual communication functions, such as event promotion, public relations, audience engagement, or brand image development, without sufficiently examining how these functions are strategically integrated within a single Instagram account. Third, limited attention has been given to protective communication strategies addressing risks associated with event promotion, particularly fraudulent ticket sales, impersonation accounts, and misleading payment information during periods of high ticket demand. The broader social media marketing literature has similarly emphasized the need to understand how organizations coordinate different content strategies within an integrated communication system rather than treating social media posts as isolated promotional activities [13–15]. Consequently, insufficient understanding exists of how resource-constrained regional event organizers simultaneously coordinate branding, audience engagement, ticketing communication, and fraud prevention through a single social media platform.

MC Run Tegal 2026 provides a relevant case for investigating these research gaps. The event serves the Bregaslang region, comprising Brebes Regency, Tegal City, Tegal Regency, whose administrative capital is Slawi, and Pemalang Regency in Central Java, Indonesia. The

regional running community has experienced considerable growth since 2025, creating opportunities for locally organized sporting events. The inaugural MC Run, organized by Mutiara Cahaya Group, a regional retail company, was held on 31 August 2025 and attracted 1,500 participants, with all available tickets sold. The second edition, MC Run Tegal 2026, was scheduled for 30 August 2026 in Tegal Regency and featured three running categories: 3 km (Fun & Family), 5 km (Fun Run), and 10 km (Competitive Run). As of 14 May 2026, the event's official Instagram account, @mcruntegal, had published 174 posts and accumulated 4,278 followers. Rather than representing a typical regional sporting event, this case was purposively selected because it combines local event organization, high ticket demand, and a concentrated promotional campaign incorporating informational, interactive, promotional, and protective communication strategies.

To examine these communication practices, this study integrates three complementary theoretical perspectives: Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), the 3E model of social media marketing, and risk communication. IMC emphasizes the strategic coordination of marketing messages and communication channels to establish a consistent brand identity and deliver coherent information across audience touchpoints [16–19]. Within the contemporary digital environment, IMC extends beyond conventional promotional coordination to incorporate two-way communication, audience participation, and consumer-to-consumer interactions [2, 20]. Accordingly, IMC provides a strategic perspective for understanding how event organizers maintain consistency across promotional activities and communication channels. However, although IMC explains the coordination of marketing communication, it provides a less specific explanation of the communicative functions performed by individual social media posts.

The 3E model of social media marketing complements IMC by categorizing content according to three primary functions: Educate, Entertain, and Engage [21]. Educational content provides relevant information, entertaining content generates interest and positive emotional responses, and engaging content encourages audience interaction and participation. Previous empirical studies have demonstrated that informational, entertaining, and interactive content can stimulate different forms of social media engagement, including likes, comments, and shares [22–25]. Audience engagement has also been recognized as a central component of social media strategy (Luttrell, as cited in [26]) and a multidimensional construct reflecting consumer–brand relationships [27]. Nevertheless, the 3E model primarily emphasizes content value and audience interaction, while providing limited consideration of communication strategies designed to address potential risks, misinformation, and threats to consumer trust.

Risk communication provides an additional perspective by emphasizing the timely, accurate, and credible dissemination of information concerning potential threats and uncertainties [28–30]. Effective risk communication seeks to reduce uncertainty, encourage protective behaviour, and maintain public confidence in organizations and their communication channels. Previous research has also highlighted the importance of proactive communication in preventing reputational damage and strengthening organizational preparedness before crises occur [31]. Within the context of digitally promoted sporting events, relevant communication risks include fraudulent ticket offers, unauthorized payment channels, and social media accounts impersonating official organizers. These risks become particularly relevant when high demand creates opportunities for misleading promotional activities. Integrating risk communication with IMC and the 3E model therefore provides a more comprehensive

analytical perspective on event promotion by incorporating trust protection alongside strategic consistency and audience engagement.

The novelty of this study lies in integrating IMC, the 3E model, and risk communication into a unified analytical framework for examining Instagram-based promotion of regional sporting events. Unlike previous studies that primarily examine promotional effectiveness, brand image, or audience engagement separately, the proposed framework conceptualizes event communication through three complementary dimensions: strategic communication consistency, content functions, and trust protection. Specifically, IMC explains the coordination and consistency of promotional messages, the 3E model identifies the educational, entertaining, and engaging functions of social media content, and risk communication explains how protective messages address potential threats to participant trust. This integration extends the conventional 3E perspective by recognizing protective communication as an additional function relevant to event promotion, particularly when ticket demand creates opportunities for fraud and misinformation. Figure 1 illustrates the integrated analytical framework developed for this study.

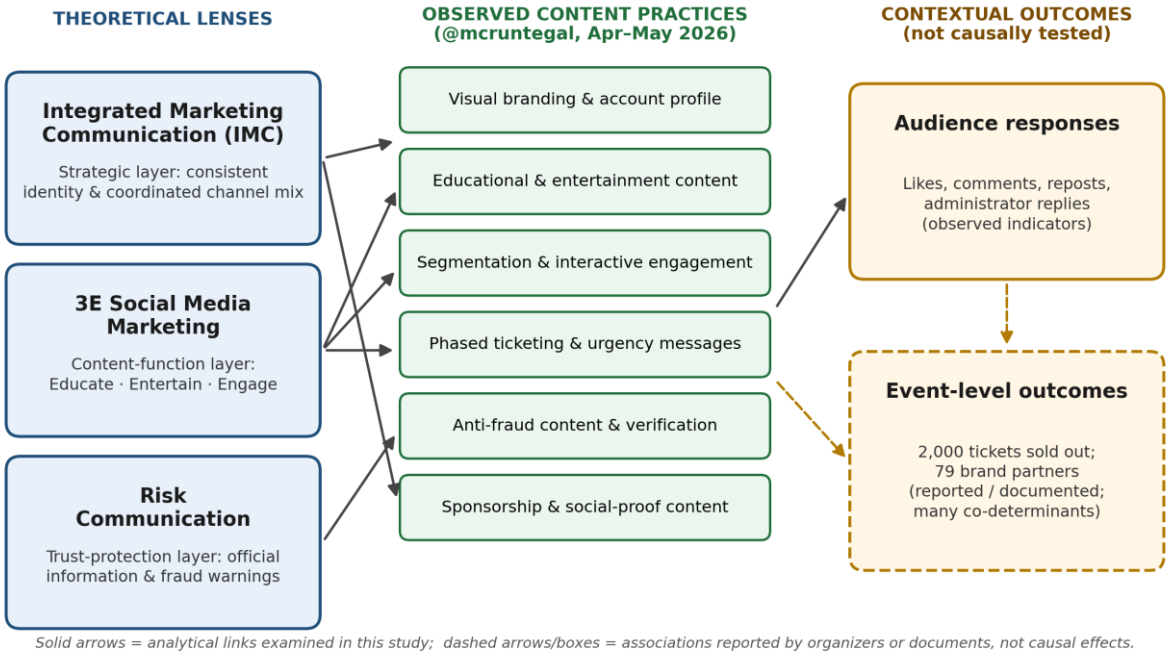


Figure 1. Integrated analytical framework combining Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), the 3E model, and risk communication in Instagram-based promotion of regional sporting events.

Based on the identified research gaps and proposed analytical framework, this study aims to examine how the organizer of MC Run Tegal 2026 integrates promotional, educational, interactive, and protective communication strategies through its official Instagram account during the pre-event campaign, using IMC, the 3E model, and risk communication as complementary analytical perspectives. Through a qualitative single-case study, the research seeks to provide a contextual understanding of Instagram content strategies and audience interactions without attributing observed ticket sales or engagement outcomes directly to specific communication activities. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on integrated social media marketing and offer practical insights for regional event organizers seeking to develop coherent, engaging, and trustworthy digital communication strategies.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design and Case Selection.

This study employed a qualitative, interpretive single-case study design [32] using qualitative content analysis [33–35]. This analytical approach was selected because it enables a systematic and contextual examination of visual elements, communication strategies, and audience interactions within social media content. The official Instagram account @mcruntegal was selected as the primary unit of analysis because it served as the central communication channel through which the organizers disseminated registration announcements, ticket quotas, event regulations, and fraud warnings. Meanwhile, Gelar.in functioned as the sole official ticketing platform. Affiliated corporate and community accounts primarily redistributed content originally published by @mcruntegal. Therefore, the account represented the principal communication platform for the promotional campaign. Consistent with the principles of information-rich case selection [36], the study sought analytical rather than statistical generalization [32].

2.2. Observation Period, Corpus, and Inclusion Criteria.

The observation period extended from 1 April to 31 May 2026. This period was selected because it encompassed the pre-event ticket sales cycle, including promotional teasers published in April, an early-bird reminder posted on 2 May, the sale of 250 early-bird tickets, the release of 1,500 regular tickets on 6 May at 19:30 Western Indonesian Time (WIB), the subsequent release of 250 additional tickets, and the announcement on 8 May 2026 that all 2,000 tickets had sold out. Following the sell-out announcement, the account shifted its communication focus toward logistical information for registered participants, which was beyond the primary promotional focus of this study. Instagram feed posts were included if they met three criteria: (1) publication by @mcruntegal within the observation period; (2) direct relevance to MC Run Tegal 2026; and (3) continued public accessibility at the time of data collection. Posts published outside the observation period, Instagram Stories not preserved in Highlights, and content published exclusively by affiliated accounts were excluded. Applying these criteria resulted in a primary corpus of 26 feed posts, comprising 17 single-image posts and nine carousel posts. Four persistent Instagram Highlights (INGFO, PENTING, PENIPUAN, and QnA) were examined as supplementary materials because they provided continuously accessible information on the account profile. Two posts published outside the observation period, namely "Mana yang lebih cocok buat kamu?" (30 March 2026) and "Bib boleh dipinjam ke orang lain?" (3 July 2026), were excluded from the coded corpus and considered only as contextual evidence. Their contextual status is explicitly identified in the Results section. Screenshots and engagement metrics were collected on 14 and 31 May 2026.

2.3. Informants and Interview Procedure.

Three informants from the Marketing Communication (Marcomm) Division of Mutiara Cahaya Group were purposively selected based on four criteria: (1) direct involvement in managing the official MC Run social media accounts; (2) responsibility for planning, producing, or publishing digital content; (3) knowledge of audience interactions and ticketing activities during the campaign; and (4) willingness to participate in the study. Their professional roles and responsibilities are summarized in Table 1. Semi-structured interviews were conducted

face-to-face in Indonesian in July 2026, following the observation period. This timing enabled the researchers to obtain detailed explanations of specific Instagram posts and communication activities identified during the content analysis. Each interview lasted approximately 40–60 minutes, was audio-recorded with informed consent, and was subsequently transcribed verbatim. Relevant interview quotations were translated into English by the authors. The interviews explored campaign objectives and planning, visual identity, content categories and scheduling, ticket quotas and release schedules, audience interactions, fraud reports, sponsorship communication, and differences between the 2025 and 2026 promotional campaigns.

Table 1. Profile of informants.

Code	Position	Main responsibility in the campaign	Interview
MM	Marcomm coordinator	Campaign planning, channel strategy, ticket-release scheduling, comparison with the 2025 edition	July 2026; 60 min
IFJ	Graphic designer	Event logo, visual identity, and content design templates	July 2026; 40 min
NM	Social media administrator	Publishing, comment replies, account verification, and handling of fraud reports	July 2026;40 min

Note: Informants consented to be acknowledged by name; initials are used in the text. Positions to be confirmed by the authors.

2.4. Coding and Data Analysis.

Data analysis followed a hybrid deductive–inductive approach [37], consistent with the principles of directed qualitative content analysis [33]. The analytical procedure consisted of five sequential stages. First, each Instagram feed post was treated as an individual unit of analysis encompassing its visual design, caption, hashtags, and associated comment thread. Second, an initial coding framework was developed deductively from three theoretical perspectives: Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), which emphasized brand identity consistency and communication coordination; the 3E model, which classified content according to educational, entertaining, and engaging functions; and risk communication, which focused on fraud warnings, official information sources, and verification mechanisms.

Third, open coding was conducted across the 26 posts to identify emerging themes not fully captured by the predefined theoretical categories. These inductive codes included local-language expressions of urgency, distance-based audience segmentation, and sponsorship displays functioning as social proof. Fourth, two authors independently coded the dataset. Coding disagreements were resolved through discussion, and the coding framework was refined accordingly. Each post was assigned one primary category based on its dominant communicative function, while secondary codes captured additional communication functions. Visual branding was treated as a cross-cutting analytical dimension applicable to all posts.

Fifth, the resulting codes were consolidated into the thematic categories. Interview transcripts were analysed using the same coding framework, allowing comparisons between the organizers' stated communication intentions and the observed Instagram content. All coding procedures and data organization were managed using a spreadsheet. Engagement indicators, including likes, comments, reposts, and administrator replies, were recorded for each post. The engagement rate (ER) was calculated using the following equation: ER = (likes + comments) / followers at capture × 100, a common popularity metric in brand-post research [22, 23]. These

indicators were used descriptively to characterise audience responses, not to test the effects of content strategies.

2.5. Data Trustworthiness.

The trustworthiness of the findings was strengthened through methodological and source triangulation [36, 38]. Information obtained from interviews was systematically compared with Instagram posts, account features, and the official Gelar.in registration page. For example, NM's explanation regarding account verification as a preventive measure against impersonation was compared with the verified badge displayed on the official Instagram profile. Similarly, MM's description of the ticket-release sequence was cross-checked against four sequential promotional posts and information available on the registration platform. Reports concerning fraudulent accounts were also compared with warnings published in the PENIPUAN Highlight. Information that could not be independently verified through documentary evidence, including participant-distribution figures, was explicitly identified as organizer-reported information. An audit trail comprising dated screenshots, coding records, and analytical decisions was maintained to support transparency and traceability. Furthermore, summaries of the preliminary interpretations were shared with the informants for member checking to assess the accuracy and credibility of the researchers' interpretations.

2.6. Ethical Considerations.

The Instagram content analysed in this study was publicly accessible during the observation period. Nevertheless, ethical precautions were implemented to protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals appearing in the collected materials. Usernames of individuals commenting on posts were excluded from the manuscript, while personal names visible in screenshots, including those of followers and accounts suspected of fraudulent activities, were blurred to prevent identification. All interview informants received information regarding the study's objectives, procedures, and intended use of the collected data. Informed consent was obtained before the interviews, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study. Permission to use the interview data for academic research and publication was obtained from Mutiara Cahaya Group.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Overview of the Content Corpus.

The 26 Instagram feed posts published during the observation period were classified into six primary content categories: educational content, entertainment, engagement and segmentation, promotional urgency, risk communication, and sponsorship. Visual branding was identified as a cross-cutting dimension appearing consistently across all posts. Table 2 presents the operational definitions, distribution, representative examples, and theoretical foundations of these categories. The entertainment content represented the largest proportion of the primary corpus (30.8%), followed by sponsorship announcements (26.9%) and promotional urgency messages (15.4%). Educational content accounted for 11.5%, while engagement and segmentation and risk communication each represented 7.7%. This distribution indicates that the account emphasized entertainment and sponsorship visibility while allocating a smaller proportion of feed posts to direct audience interaction and fraud prevention. Nevertheless, the relatively limited frequency of risk communication posts should not necessarily be interpreted

as reduced strategic importance, because protective information was also maintained through persistent Instagram Highlights.

Table 2. Content Categories, Operational Definitions, Distribution, Examples, and Theoretical Anchors.

Category	Operational definition	Posts n (%)	Representative examples	Framework
Visual branding (cross-cutting)	Recurrent identity elements: MC Run logo, green–black palette, #MCRun2026, MC and TCR co-branding	26 (100)	Uniform template across all posts (Figure 4); key visual (Figure 3)	IMC (consistency)
Educational	Information that helps audiences decide, prepare, or comply with event rules	3	"Runners Wajib Tahu"; "Cut Off Time"; "Manfaat Lari untuk Kesehatan" (24 May)	3E – Educate
Entertainment	Content designed to arouse curiosity or enjoyment rather than immediate purchase	8	"Mystery Travel Bag" teaser; National Education Day greeting (2 May); festival attractions	3E – Entertain
Engagement and segmentation	Content inviting responses, self-identification, or story sharing	2	"Gimana cerita perjuangan war tiket kamu?"; "Berapa jarak lari favoritmu?"	3E – Engage; IMC (targeting)
Promotional urgency	Ticket-release announcements emphasising limited quotas and deadlines	4	"Aja Kelalen Ngesuk Daftar Early Bird"; "Siap War Tiket Early Bird"; "Dibuka 1500 Kuota"; "Sold Out 2000 Tiket"	IMC (sales promotion); scarcity
Risk communication	Warnings about fraud and instructions to use official channels only	2	"Awas Penipuan" post; PENIPUAN and PENTING Highlights	Risk communication
Sponsorship	Announcements of official partners and sponsors	7	Official Partner and Main Sponsor posts	IMC; social proof

Note: The primary categories sum to 26 posts. Highlights are analysed separately and not counted. Source: compiled from the content analysis (2026).

3.2. IMC Configuration across Two Editions.

The interview findings revealed a shift in the organizer's marketing communication configuration between the 2025 and 2026 editions of MC Run Tegal. In 2025, the promotional campaign combined digital and interactive marketing through Instagram and Gelar.in with direct marketing activities conducted by cashiers at Mutiara Cahaya retail outlets. The campaign also incorporated purchase-linked sales promotions, enabling customers to obtain event tickets through selected retail transactions. In contrast, the 2026 campaign adopted a predominantly digital ticketing approach, with all ticket purchases conducted through the official online registration platform. Public relations activities and digital word-of-mouth communication generated by the inaugural event also supported the promotional campaign. This transition was explained by MM, the Marcomm coordinator:

"In MC Run 2025 we did use [our stores], and cashiers also offered MC Run tickets. There were also certain purchases to get tickets. But for this year's MC Run (2026), our cashiers are not assigned. It is fully online." (MM, interview, July 2026)

This statement indicates a transition from a hybrid promotional and ticketing system toward a more centralized digital transaction model. From an IMC perspective, the change reflects an adjustment in communication channel coordination, with Instagram functioning as the primary promotional interface and Gelar.in serving as the official transaction platform.

Such an arrangement may simplify the registration process and improve the consistency of ticketing information, although the present study did not directly evaluate its operational efficiency or financial outcomes. MM further reported that the inaugural event exceeded the organizer's expectations. According to the interview, tickets sold out, additional race packs were prepared to accommodate demand, and the event concluded earlier than originally scheduled following instructions from security officers because of a concurrent mass demonstration in Tegal. Despite these operational challenges, the organizer perceived the first edition as having received a positive public response. The experience of the 2025 edition provided a reputational foundation for the subsequent campaign. Previous participant experiences, event visibility, and community recognition may have contributed to the credibility of MC Run Tegal 2026. However, because the study did not measure the relationship between previous event experiences and subsequent ticket purchases, this interpretation should be understood as an organizer-reported explanation rather than evidence of a causal relationship.

3.3. The Account Profile as Credibility Infrastructure.

he official Instagram profile @mcruntegal performed several communication functions extending beyond visual presentation. As illustrated in Figure 2, the account incorporated four principal elements supporting information accessibility, brand legitimacy, and participant protection.



Figure 2. Profile of @mcruntegal (captured 14 May 2026). Numbered elements: (1) verified badge and account name; (2) structured event information; (3) single official registration link; (4) Highlights functioning as an information and anti-fraud archive. Follower usernames were blurred.

Source: Instagram @mcruntegal / documentation study (2026).

First, the profile displayed a verified badge and the "Event" account category, providing visible indicators of account authenticity and helping users distinguish the official account from potential impersonators. Second, its structured biography presented essential event information, including the event name, date, location, and organizer. Third, the profile provided a single official registration link directing prospective participants to Gelar.in, thereby establishing a clearly identifiable transaction channel. Fourth, four Instagram Highlights—INGFO, PENTING, PENIPUAN, and QnA—preserved important information beyond the temporary visibility of Instagram Stories.

The account was embedded in a wider ecosystem of affiliated accounts: the organizer's corporate account @mutiaracahaya.official (≈38,800 followers), its recruitment and branch accounts (@mutiaracahaya.recruitment, ≈17,200; @mutiaracahaya.brebes, ≈1,700; @mutiaracahaya.online, ≈1,300), and the local running community @tegalcityrun (≈12,000), whose TCR logo appeared alongside the MC logo on every post template. These accounts provided a combined, though overlapping, audience of approximately 71,000 followers—about seventeen times that of @mcruntegal—Data collection period: April 1 to May 31, 2026. The relevance of this ecosystem lies in the borrowed reach of the corporate brand and the community legitimacy conferred by the running club.

3.4. Visual Branding and Local Identity.

Every post incorporated a green-and-black colour palette, the MC Run logo, and the #MCRun2026 hashtag, complemented by dynamic athlete photography, leaf motifs, and bold typography (Figure 4). The designer explained that the logo and colour choices were derived from the corporate brand:

"The MC Run logo is simple: a running figure, with a line behind the runner as a symbol of dynamism, the MC lettering as the main brand, and RUN 2026 as the event year. The green is consistent with the MC brand colour." (IFJ, interview, July 2026)



Figure 3. Key Visual of MC Run Tegal 2026 with Annotated Promotional Elements: (A) Organizer–Community Co-Branding; (B) Distance-Based Segmentation; (C) Date and Location; (D) Bundled Participant Benefits Framing the Event as A Festival; (E) Cross-Promotion Of Official Accounts.

Visual branding was also localised through language. Captions and graphics frequently incorporated Tegal Javanese expressions, such as “Geser ya Lur” (“swipe, mate”) and “Aja Kelalen Ngesuk Daftar Early Bird” (“don’t forget to register for the early bird tomorrow”). As illustrated in Figure 3, the event's key visual consolidated the campaign's main promotional elements into a single image: co-branding with the running community (A), three distance categories (B), the event date and location (C), twelve participant benefits, including a timing-chip bib, finisher medal, health insurance, Zumba party, and door prizes (D), and cross-promotion of three official accounts (E).

3.5. Educational and Entertainment Content.

Educational posts provided practical information to reduce uncertainty among prospective and registered participants. “Runners Wajib Tahu” (“What runners must know”) featured a carousel explaining race-day preparation, while “Cut Off Time” specified the maximum completion times of 1.5 hours for the 3 km and 5 km categories and 2 hours for the 10 km category (Figure 4a). “Manfaat Lari untuk Kesehatan” (24 May 2026) highlighted the health benefits of running. As contextual evidence outside the coded period, an earlier carousel (30 March 2026) helped audiences select a suitable running distance, while a later post (3 July 2026) used humour (“Pastinya No-No Yah”) to explain that race bibs were non-transferable, combining education with rule enforcement.

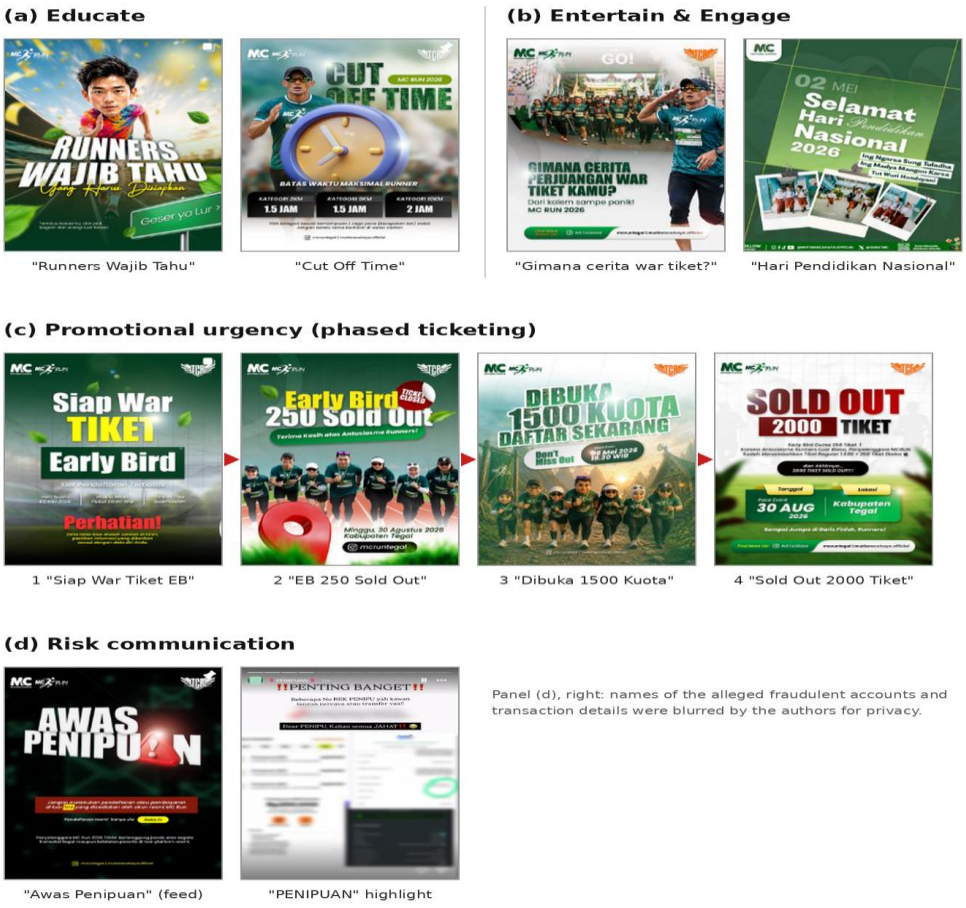


Figure 4. Comparative examples of @Mcruntegal Content Strategies: (A) Educational, (B) Entertainment and Engagement, (C) Promotional Urgency Through Phased Ticketing (Numbered In Release Order), and (D) Risk Communication. Identifying Details of Alleged Fraudsters Were Blurred.

Entertainment posts maintained audience engagement between registration milestones. The “Mystery Travel Bag” teaser introduced an undisclosed prize to generate curiosity, while promotions for the Cheer Competition, Zumba Party, Best Costume Competition, and door prizes presented the event as a festival appealing to non-competitive participants. Seasonal content, including the National Education Day greeting on 2 May 2026, maintained the campaign's visibility without directly promoting registration (Figure 4b).

3.6. Audience Segmentation.

The event featured three distance categories targeting different participant groups: 3 km (Fun & Family), 5 km (Fun Run), and 10 km (Competitive Run). These categories were reinforced through interactive prompts such as “Berapa jarak lari favoritmu?” (“What is your favourite running distance?”), encouraging audiences to identify with their preferred segment. Family-oriented imagery, including children, was also featured in the regular-ticket announcement (Figure 4c). Table 3 presents the distribution of participants across the three distance categories in 2025 and 2026.

Table 3. Distribution of participants by distance category in 2025 and 2026.

Distance	Label	Intended segment	2025 n (%)	2026 n (%)	Change in n
3 km	Fun & Family	Families, children, first-time runners	300 (20)	800 (40)	+500 (+166.7%)
5 km	Fun Run	Recreational runners	1,050 (70)	1,000 (50)	−50 (−4.8%)
10 km	Competitive Run	Experienced runners	150 (10)	200 (10)	+50 (+33.3%)
Total			1,500 (100)	2,000 (100)	+500 (+33.3%)

Note: Percentages were reported by MM based on the organiser's registration records. Participant counts were calculated by applying these percentages to total registrations (1,500 in 2025 and 2,000 in 2026). The organiser established separate quotas for each category.

As shown in Table 3, the proportion of participants in the 3 km category doubled from 20% in 2025 to 40% in 2026, representing an increase of approximately 500 participants. In contrast, participation in the 5 km category declined slightly, while the 10 km category maintained a stable share of 10%. These findings indicate that participation growth was primarily concentrated in the family-oriented segment. This pattern is consistent with the campaign's inclusive and family-friendly messaging. However, the increase may also have been influenced by organiser-defined quotas, word-of-mouth recommendations from previous participants, and festival attractions. Therefore, the observed growth cannot be attributed solely to the campaign's content strategy.

3.7. Promotional Urgency through Phased Ticketing.

Ticket communication followed a phased sequence that repeatedly emphasised scarcity and encouraged timely registration (Figure 4c). An early-bird reminder published on 2 May 2026 used Tegal Javanese (“Aja Kelalen Ngesuk Daftar Early Bird”), while “Siap War Tiket Early Bird” framed registration as a competitive “ticket war”, highlighting limited availability and displaying a warning (“Perhatian!”). This was followed by “Early Bird 250 Sold Out”, which acknowledged participants' enthusiasm, and “Dibuka 1500 Kuota—Daftar Sekarang—Don't Miss Out”, which announced a specific registration opening time (6 May 2026, 19:30 WIB). The final announcement, “Sold Out 2000 Tiket”, explained that the organiser had released 1,500 regular tickets and 250 additional tickets following the initial 250 early-bird tickets in response to strong demand. All 2,000 tickets subsequently sold out. Announcing specific release times created coordinated registration opportunities, while successive sell-out

announcements reinforced perceived scarcity and provided social proof of the event's popularity.

3.8. Audience Engagement and Administrator Interaction.

Audience engagement varied across content categories, as summarised in Table 4. The "Sold Out 2000 Tiket" post received 905 likes, 313 comments, and 12 reposts, corresponding to an engagement rate of 28.5% based on 4,278 followers. Comments primarily expressed disappointment and requested additional ticket quotas, including "Didn't get a ticket—will you add more?" and "Still haven't got a ticket, admin." The administrator responded personally rather than using automated templates, frequently incorporating humour and local expressions such as "Sudah Takdir, Kak!" ("It's fate, sis!"). The twelve reposts also suggested organic sharing of the announcement. Subsequently, the post "Gimana cerita perjuangan war tiket kamu?" ("How was your ticket-war struggle?") encouraged participants to share their registration experiences, transforming frustration into audience interaction.

Table 4. Engagement Indicators by Content Category (N = 26 Posts).

Category	Posts	Mean likes	Mean comments	Mean ER (%)	Admin replies (%)
Educational "Runners Wajib Tahu"	1	251	58	7.23	58
Entertainment "Mystery Travel Bag"	1	1839	497	54.61	497
Engagement and segmentation "Gimana cerita perjuangan war tiket kamu?"	1	427	191	14.46	191
Promotional urgency "Aja Kelalen Ngesuk Daftar Early Bird"	1	669	78	17.48	78
Risk communication "Awas Penipuan"	1	282	11	6.85	11
Sponsorship "Sponsor posts"	1	162	17	4.19	17
Example: "Sold Out 2000 Tiket"	1	905	313	28.5	329

Note: ER = (likes + comments) / followers at capture × 100. Reposts are reported in the text. Metrics are snapshot values at capture and are descriptive only. Source: documentation study (2026).

As shown in Table 4, the "Mystery Travel Bag" post generated the highest engagement rate (54.61%) among the selected posts, followed by the "Sold Out 2000 Tiket" announcement (28.50%) and the early-bird reminder (17.48%). Educational, risk communication, and sponsorship posts recorded comparatively lower engagement rates. These differences suggest that entertainment, promotional urgency, and ticket availability announcements were particularly effective in stimulating audience interaction. However, the results are descriptive and do not establish causal relationships between content categories and engagement.

3.9. Risk Communication: Anti-Fraud Content.

The account published a post entitled "Awas Penipuan" ("Beware of fraud"), advising audiences to register and make payments exclusively through the official MC Run channel. The post also stated that the organiser would not be responsible for transactions conducted outside the authorised platform (Figure 4d). The PENIPUAN Highlight provided additional

warnings by identifying fraudulent accounts and bank transfer details, accompanied by masked transaction screenshots and instructions to avoid unauthorised payments. The PENTING and INGFO Highlights reinforced the account's role as an official information source. NM explained that account verification was introduced in response to impersonation attempts during ticket releases:

"We activated the blue tick on our account to differentiate it from other accounts. The reports we received were about fake accounts, which also posted comments during the ticket war." (NM, interview, July 2026)

These measures demonstrate how the campaign integrated fraud prevention and information verification into its promotional communication, particularly during periods of high ticket demand.

3.10. Sponsorship Communication.

Sponsorship communication presented two main partnership tiers. Official Partners included Aquviva, Isoplus, Sunpride, and PKU Muhammadiyah Islamic Hospital Tegal, while Main Sponsors comprised Glow & Lovely, Stella, Cleanface, Wardah, Kahf, and Medja Cerita. An additional 69 brands were listed, bringing the total to 79 brand partners. These partners represented various sectors, including food and beverages, personal care, banking (BRI, BNI, Bank Mandiri, BCA, and BSI), healthcare, pharmaceuticals, and insurance, alongside regional institutions such as Bank Jateng and Kospin Jasa. Sponsor logos were also incorporated into the event backdrop, as illustrated in Figure 3. Sponsors were recruited through the retail group's supplier network, demonstrating the integration of existing business relationships into event sponsorship activities.

3.11. Discussion

3.11.1. IMC: From a Mixed Channel Strategy to an Integrated Digital Ecosystem.

The discontinuation of in-store ticket sales in 2026 indicates that integration was achieved not by increasing the number of channels but by concentrating transactions through a single verifiable platform (Gelar.in) while maintaining a consistent brand identity across the Instagram account, key visual, registration page, and affiliated accounts. This approach reflects IMC's emphasis on coherent brand touchpoints and relationship-oriented communication [16–18], as well as the integration of social media into IMC decision-making [20]. The affiliated accounts and co-branding with the TCR running community illustrate the hybrid role of social media in the promotional mix, where audiences encounter messages through interconnected networks rather than a single source [2]. These practices also demonstrate how engagement with a sports community can enhance legitimacy [7]. Consistent visual identity facilitates immediate brand recognition [39], while profile completeness and verification are associated with perceived account credibility [40]. Since the effect of this channel shift on ticket sales was not directly measured, it is interpreted as a strategic reconfiguration rather than evidence of improved effectiveness.

3.11.2. The 3E Model as a Content Portfolio.

The combination of educational, entertaining, and engaging posts demonstrates that @mcruntegal maintained communication beyond ticket sales announcements, avoiding an

exclusively transactional approach. Educational content reduced participation barriers for novice runners, entertainment content sustained audience attention between registration milestones, and engagement-oriented posts encouraged interactive communication. This content portfolio aligns with the 3E model [21] and the four pillars of social media content—entertainment, collaboration, education, and information—described by Safko and Brake (as cited in [41]). It is also consistent with studies demonstrating that informational, entertaining, and interactive content generates different engagement responses [22, 23], fulfils different user gratifications [25], and that creative strategies emphasising interactivity and experience are associated with stronger engagement [24]. Distance-based segmentation further supported audience engagement and inclusivity, reflecting the importance of audience diversity in event branding [42]. Notably, one of the most commented-on posts was transactional: the announcement that all tickets had sold out. Rather than contradicting the 3E model, this finding suggests that scarcity-related milestones can become engagement triggers during high-demand events, particularly when framed as shared community experiences through expressions such as “ticket war” and followed by invitations to share personal experiences. This observation extends the potential application of the 3E model to event marketing and warrants further investigation through comparative studies.

3.11.3. Scarcity, Urgency, and Ticket Sales: Observation versus Causality.

The phased ticket releases and “ticket war” framing are consistent with the scarcity principle, whereby limited availability can increase perceived value and accelerate purchasing decisions [43–45]. The incorporation of Tegal Javanese expressions further strengthened the cultural relevance of urgency-based messages. Nevertheless, the sale of all 2,000 tickets cannot be attributed solely to the content strategy. Several contributing factors were present, including the sold-out inaugural edition, the organiser's existing retail customer base, collaboration with the local running community, festival attractions, and deliberately limited ticket availability. Previous research also indicates that participation decisions in running events are influenced by intrinsic motivation and trust developed through multiple information sources [9]. Therefore, the content strategy is better understood as facilitating the timing and visibility of demand rather than independently generating it. Scarcity-based communication also presented challenges, including frustration among unsuccessful buyers and increased opportunities for fraudulent activities.

3.11.4. Risk Communication as Trust Infrastructure.

Anti-fraud communication addressed the risks associated with high ticket demand and limited availability. The campaign incorporated established principles of effective risk communication, including timeliness, credibility, specificity, and actionable guidance [28, 29], by identifying fraudulent accounts, presenting supporting evidence, and directing audiences to a single official registration link. Such transparency can strengthen organisational legitimacy [30], while proactive communication can help protect reputation before incidents escalate [31]. Account verification provided an additional visual credibility cue that complemented these messages. These findings suggest that the 3E model, which primarily emphasises audience attraction and engagement, does not fully capture the protective communication required when demand exceeds supply. Accordingly, this study proposes a fourth content function, protect, alongside educate, entertain, and engage. This additional function emphasises safeguarding

audience trust, preventing misinformation, and reducing fraud-related risks during high-demand regional events.

3.11.5. Sponsorship Communication and Social Proof.

The presentation of 79 brand partners served two primary audiences. For sponsors, the event provided access to a concentrated regional audience, consistent with sponsorship-linked marketing strategies that emphasise brand image transfer and audience compatibility [46]. Previous research has also associated appropriate sponsor placement with improved brand image, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions [47]. For prospective participants, the presence of numerous recognisable brands functioned as social proof, potentially strengthening perceptions of event credibility [44, 48]. However, because the organiser operates within the retail sector, some sponsors may have been existing suppliers or business partners. Consequently, the number of sponsors may reflect the organiser's established commercial network rather than the event's independent market appeal. Sponsorship visibility should therefore be interpreted as a potential credibility signal rather than direct evidence of event quality or marketing effectiveness.

3.11.6. Theoretical Contribution and Practical Implications.

Theoretically, this study makes three contributions. First, it provides empirical evidence from an under-researched context: a regional, company-organised community running event, complementing previous studies focusing on larger national-scale events [10–12]. Second, it integrates IMC, the 3E model, and risk communication into a layered conceptual framework (Figure 1), illustrating how strategic consistency, content functions, and trust protection operate together within a single social media account. Third, it proposes two directions for future research: scarcity-related milestones may function as engagement triggers in event marketing, and protective communication may represent a fourth content function alongside educating, entertaining, and engaging. The findings also highlight the potential role of personalised administrator responses and locally relevant language in sustaining community engagement and encouraging electronic word of mouth [49, 50].

From a practical perspective, regional event organisers should consider five strategies: (1) developing content calendars aligned with ticket-release milestones while maintaining educational and entertaining content between promotional periods; (2) announcing specific ticket-release times and presenting sell-out milestones as shared community experiences; (3) implementing anti-fraud communication protocols before ticket releases, including account verification, a single official registration link, and a pinned fraud-warning Highlight; (4) incorporating local language to strengthen cultural relevance and audience connection; and (5) systematically recording engagement metrics to support content performance evaluation and future campaign planning.

4. Conclusions

This study examined how the organiser of MC Run Tegal 2026 utilised Instagram to promote a regional sports event. A content analysis of 26 Instagram feed posts, supplemented by Highlights, registration-page documentation, and interviews, identified six interrelated strategies: consistent visual branding incorporating local identity, educational and entertainment content, distance-based audience segmentation, phased ticketing emphasising

scarcity, personalised administrator interactions, and anti-fraud risk communication supported by account verification and sponsorship visibility. Theoretically, the findings demonstrate how Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), the 3E model, and risk communication operate as complementary layers of strategic integration, content engagement, and trust protection. The study further proposes protection as an additional content function for high-demand events. Practically, it provides regional event organisers with a framework for developing a balanced Instagram content strategy that integrates promotional activities, audience engagement, and trust-building measures. Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study focused on a single Instagram account over a two-month period, limiting the findings to analytical rather than statistical generalisability. Interviews involved only members of the organising team, while participants' perceptions were not directly investigated. Furthermore, engagement metrics represented snapshots at the time of data collection, and the relationship between content exposure and ticket sales was not quantitatively examined. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as descriptive rather than causal. Future research should compare multiple regional sporting events, integrate content analysis with participant surveys, quantitatively examine relationships between content categories and audience engagement, extend the observation period to include post-event communication, and investigate cross-platform promotional strategies involving Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp.

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Author Contributions

Himawan Ardhi Ristanto: conceptualization, methodology, writing—original draft; Mohammad Kamal Bustami: data collection, formal analysis; Khairan Puji Lestari: data curation, visualization; Imam Budi Prasetyo: writing—review and editing. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Competing Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data Availability

The Data Availability Statement should explain where the research data can be accessed and whether they are publicly available.

Statement of AI Use

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used to assist with language editing, grammatical correction, and improving the clarity and presentation of the manuscript. The

authors reviewed and verified the AI-assisted content and take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the published work.

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