

Instagram-Based Marketing Communication Strategy to Increase Customer Participation in the ISSEI 2025 Event

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Abstract:

This study examines the role of an Instagram-based marketing communication strategy in increasing customer participation in the Iron-Steel Summit & Exhibition Indonesia 2025 (ISSEI 2025). The research focuses on how PT Debindo Mega Promo utilizes Instagram as a primary digital communication platform to promote the event and engage potential participants. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through non-participant observation of Instagram content, in-depth interviews with the marketing communication team and event participants, and documentation analysis. The findings are analyzed using the 4P marketing mix framework, consisting of product, price, place, and promotion. The results indicate that the product, place, and promotion elements were effectively implemented through value-based content, strategic use of Instagram features, paid advertisements, and collaborations with relevant Key Opinion Leaders and media partners. These strategies successfully enhanced event credibility, increased audience awareness, and encouraged customer participation. Instagram functioned not only as a promotional channel but also as an information hub that enabled continuous interaction and message reinforcement. However, the price element was not fully implemented, as explicit pricing information was not communicated through Instagram, creating an information gap for some potential participants. This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating the continued relevance of the 4P marketing mix in digital and event-based marketing communication contexts. Practically, the findings provide insights for event organizers in designing effective Instagram-based strategies to optimize customer participation.

Keywords- Customer Participation, Event Marketing, Instagram, Marketing Communication, Marketing Mix

I. Introduction

Over the past five years, marketing communication has undergone a substantial transformation driven by the rapid expansion of digital platforms and changes in consumer media consumption patterns. Marketing communication is no longer dominated by one-way promotional messages but has evolved into an interactive and participatory process that emphasizes engagement, dialogue, and relationship-building between organizations and audiences (Belanche et al., 2021). This shift is particularly evident in social media environments, where users actively consume, interpret, and respond to marketing messages, thereby influencing brand perception and behavioral outcomes such as purchase intention and participation decisions (Zhou et al., 2021). Among various social media platforms, Instagram has emerged as a highly influential visual-based communication channel. Instagram enables organizations to deliver marketing messages through images, videos, reels, stories, and interactive features that facilitate emotional connection and narrative persuasion (Rahman et al., 2022). Previous studies indicate that Instagram's visual orientation and

algorithmic distribution significantly enhance message visibility and audience engagement compared to text-based platforms (Chan et al., 2023). As a result, Instagram has become a strategic medium for organizations seeking to strengthen brand awareness, credibility, and customer involvement (Park & Namkung, 2022).

Recent literature highlights that customer participation is a critical outcome of effective marketing communication in digital environments. Customer participation refers not only to transactional behavior but also to behavioral engagement, such as attending events, sharing information, providing feedback, and advocating brands or activities within their social networks (Naeem et al., 2025). In the context of event marketing, customer participation represents a key indicator of communication effectiveness, as participation reflects successful conversion from awareness and interest to actual involvement (Altschwager, 2022). Consequently, event organizers increasingly rely on social media marketing strategies to stimulate engagement and encourage participation prior to, during, and after events (Jepsen et al., 2024). Instagram-based marketing communication strategies have been widely examined in relation to consumer engagement, influencer marketing, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Studies demonstrate that visually appealing content, informative captions, and consistent messaging significantly influence audience attitudes and behavioral intentions (Atiq et al., 2022). Moreover, collaborations with influencers and Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) enhance message credibility and social proof, thereby increasing trust and participation likelihood among target audiences (Hsiao & Lin, 2025). These mechanisms are particularly relevant for large-scale events, where trust, perceived value, and professional image strongly affect participation decisions (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021).

Despite extensive research on Instagram marketing, scholars argue that the effectiveness of social media strategies depends on how marketing elements are integrated into a coherent communication framework (Laradi et al., 2024). The marketing mix perspective, particularly the 4P framework product, price, place, and promotion remains relevant for analyzing digital marketing communication, including social media-based strategies. In digital contexts, “product” is often represented through information and experience narratives, “place” refers to platform selection and accessibility, “promotion” includes content strategy and paid advertising, while “price” reflects perceived value rather than explicit monetary disclosure (van der Harst & Angelopoulos, 2024). Several recent studies note that not all elements of the marketing mix are consistently implemented in Instagram-based communication strategies, especially in service-oriented industries such as event organizing (Blanco-Moreno et al., 2024). In some cases, price-related information is intentionally omitted, relying instead on value signaling and professional branding to influence participation (Sardar et al., 2024). This selective implementation of the marketing mix creates a strategic gap that warrants further empirical investigation, particularly regarding its implications for customer participation outcomes.

In the Indonesian context, Instagram has become a dominant marketing communication channel due to its extensive user base and high engagement rate. Organizational studies show that Instagram is widely used to disseminate program information, build institutional credibility, and foster public engagement when managed strategically and consistently (Keyjia et al., 2023). However, empirical research focusing on Instagram-based marketing communication strategies in the event industry especially large-scale industrial exhibitions remains limited. The Iron-Steel Summit & Exhibition Indonesia 2025 (ISSEI 2025) represents a significant national-level industrial event that relies heavily on digital communication to attract exhibitors and participants. The event’s promotion through a dedicated Instagram account provides a relevant case for examining how Instagram-based marketing communication strategies are designed and implemented to increase customer participation. Understanding this process is essential, as previous research suggests that effective pre-event communication significantly influences attendance decisions and post-event advocacy.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the Instagram-based marketing communication strategy used to increase customer participation in the ISSEI 2025 event. By applying the 4P marketing mix framework, this research seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on digital marketing communication and event promotion, while offering practical insights for event organizers in designing effective Instagram-based strategies.

II. Research Method

A. Research Design and Approach

This study adopts a qualitative research approach with a descriptive interpretive design to examine Instagram-based marketing communication strategies implemented to increase customer participation in the ISSEI 2025 event. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the study aims to understand meanings, strategies, and processes underlying marketing communication practices rather than to test hypotheses or measure causal relationships quantitatively. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore how communication strategies are designed, interpreted, and experienced by organizational actors and customers within a specific social and digital context. The descriptive design is employed to provide a systematic and in-depth portrayal of how marketing communication strategies are implemented through Instagram, particularly in relation to the elements of the marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion). This approach enables the researcher to capture empirical realities as they occur and to interpret patterns of communication practices that contribute to customer participation in an event-based setting.

B. Research Object and Unit of Analysis

The object of this research is the marketing communication strategy implemented through Instagram social media. Specifically, the study focuses on the Instagram account @ironsteelsummitexhibindo, which is used as the primary digital marketing channel for promoting the Iron-Steel Summit & Exhibition Indonesia 2025 (ISSEI 2025). The unit of analysis consists of marketing communication activities carried out by PT Debindo Mega Promo through Instagram, including content creation, message delivery, platform utilization, and promotional collaboration. These activities are analyzed using the 4P marketing mix framework, where:

1. Product refers to how the ISSEI 2025 event is presented and communicated as a value proposition.
2. Price relates to how value and cost considerations are communicated or implied.
3. Place concerns the selection and use of Instagram as a distribution and communication channel.
4. Promotion includes content strategies, paid advertisements, influencer collaborations, and media partnerships.

C. Research Setting and Period

The research was conducted within two primary settings:

1. The digital environment of the Instagram account @ironsteelsummitexhibindo, and
2. The organizational context of PT Debindo Mega Promo as the event organizer responsible for ISSEI 2025.

The research period took place from April 2025 to June 2025, corresponding with the active promotional phase of the ISSEI 2025 event. This period was selected to ensure that the data reflected real-time marketing communication practices rather than retrospective accounts.

D. Data Sources

This study utilizes primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained directly from the field through:

1. Observations of Instagram content and interactions on the @ironsteelsummitexhibindo account.
2. In-depth interviews with key informants, including members of the marketing communication team of PT Debindo Mega Promo and selected customers or exhibitors of ISSEI 2025.

Secondary data were collected from:

1. Academic journals, books, and prior studies related to marketing communication, social media marketing, and event promotion.
2. Organizational documents such as company profiles, promotional materials, and event documentation.
3. Archived Instagram content relevant to the ISSEI 2025 promotional campaign.

E. Data Collection Techniques

Three data collection techniques were employed to ensure data richness and triangulation.

1. Observation
2. Non-participant observation was conducted by systematically reviewing Instagram posts, reels, stories, highlights, and advertisements published on the @ironsteelsummitexhibindo account. The observation focused on content themes, message framing, visual presentation, frequency of posting, and audience interaction (likes, comments, shares, and views).
3. In-depth Interviews
4. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with purposively selected informants. This technique allowed flexibility to explore informants' perspectives while maintaining focus on research objectives. Interview questions addressed strategy formulation, content planning, platform selection, perceived effectiveness, and customer responses to Instagram-based communication.
5. Documentation
6. Documentation involved collecting screenshots of Instagram posts, promotional visuals, captions, hashtags, and engagement metrics, as well as internal documents related to marketing planning and event promotion. These materials supported observational and interview data.

F. Sampling Technique and Informants

The study employed purposive sampling, selecting informants based on their relevance to the research objectives. Informants were chosen because they possessed direct knowledge or experience related to the Instagram-based marketing communication strategy for ISSEI 2025. The informants included:

1. Marketing communication personnel of PT Debindo Mega Promo involved in managing the @ironsteelsummitexhibindo account.
2. Customers or exhibitors who had engaged with the Instagram content and participated in the ISSEI 2025 event.
3. This sampling strategy ensured that the data reflected both organizational and customer perspectives.

G. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of four interrelated stages:

1. Data Collection: Gathering data from observations, interviews, and documentation.
2. Data Reduction: Selecting, focusing, simplifying, and coding data relevant to Instagram-based marketing communication strategies and customer participation.
3. Data Display: Organizing reduced data into matrices and thematic categories based on the 4P marketing mix framework.
4. Conclusion Drawing and Verification: Interpreting patterns, identifying relationships, and verifying findings through continuous comparison across data sources.

The 4P marketing mix framework served as the analytical lens for categorizing and interpreting data, allowing systematic examination of how each element contributed to customer participation.

III. Results And Discussion

This section presents and discusses the research findings derived from field observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis. The findings are systematically organized using the 4P marketing mix framework Product, Price, Place, and Promotion to explain how Instagram-based marketing communication strategies were implemented by PT Debindo Mega Promo to increase customer participation in the ISSEI 2025 event. The discussion integrates empirical evidence with theoretical insights to strengthen interpretive validity. The findings reveal that ISSEI 2025 was consistently positioned as the core "product" within the Instagram-based marketing communication strategy. PT Debindo Mega Promo did not merely

promote the event as an exhibition schedule but framed it as a strategic industrial forum combining exhibitions, summits, policy dialogue, and business networking within the iron and steel sector. Instagram posts predominantly communicated the event’s theme, objectives, strategic relevance, keynote speakers, and participating exhibitors. Visual documentation shows that posts highlighting confirmed partners and reputable exhibitors generated higher engagement compared to generic announcements. Interview data confirm that customers perceived such content as a signal of credibility and seriousness. From a marketing mix perspective, the product element was effectively translated into value based communication, where the event was presented as a professional and strategic investment. This aligns with digital marketing literature emphasizing experiential value rather than tangible attributes in service-based offerings. The use of social validation showcasing participating companies and institutions functioned as a persuasive mechanism that reduced uncertainty and encouraged participation.

Table 1. Product Communication Strategy on Instagram

Dimension	Implementation	Observed Effect
Event positioning	National-level industrial event	Increased credibility
Content focus	Speakers, exhibitors, objectives	Higher engagement
Message tone	Professional and informative	Trust formation

The study finds that explicit pricing information was not communicated on the @ironsteelsummitexhibindo Instagram account. According to marketing team informants, this approach was adopted due to the flexible pricing structure applied to exhibitors, which varies depending on booth size, package selection, and customization. Instead of price transparency, the Instagram content emphasized value justification, such as exposure opportunities, networking access, and institutional backing. Customer interviews indicate mixed perceptions: while some interpreted the absence of price information as a marker of exclusivity, others expressed the need for indicative pricing or promotional offers to support early decision-making. The findings indicate that the price element was partially implemented within the Instagram-based strategy. While value signaling supported brand positioning, the lack of price-related cues limited information completeness for potential participants. This supports previous research suggesting that selective omission of price information may reduce initial engagement among cost-sensitive audiences, even when perceived value is high.

Table 2. Price Communication Findings

Aspect	Organizer Strategy	Customer Response
Price visibility	Not displayed	Considered unclear
Value emphasis	Strong	Positively received
Discounts/promotions	Not communicated	Expected by customers

Instagram was strategically selected as the primary “place” or distribution channel for marketing communication. Observational data show that PT Debindo Mega Promo utilized Instagram feeds, reels, stories, and advertisements to disseminate information in different formats and intensities. Customers reported that Instagram facilitated easy and repeated access to event information, enabling them to stay updated without actively searching for details. Instagram thus functioned not only as a promotional medium but also as an information hub for ISSEI 2025. The findings confirm that Instagram effectively fulfilled the “place” function by enabling accessibility, continuity, and visual consistency. The platform’s affordances supported message repetition and audience recall, reinforcing participation intentions over time. This supports the argument that platform suitability plays a crucial role in digital marketing communication effectiveness.

Table 3. Instagram Feature Utilization

Feature	Primary Function	Strategic Contribution
Feed	Formal announcements	Credibility
Reels	Dynamic highlights	Attention

Stories	Reminders and updates	Reinforcement
Ads	Audience expansion	Reach

Promotion emerged as the most intensively implemented element of the marketing mix. PT Debindo Mega Promo combined organic Instagram content with paid advertisements, collaborations with Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs), and partnerships with industry-related media. KOL selection prioritized professional relevance over popularity. Informants stated that this strategy enhanced message trustworthiness. Customers confirmed that promotional content shared by credible industry figures significantly influenced their confidence to participate in the event.



Figure 2. Promotional Content and Influencer Collaboration for ISSEI 2025

Promotion on Instagram served dual purposes: increasing awareness and constructing a professional event image. The integration of paid media, influencer endorsement, and institutional partnerships strengthened legitimacy and reinforced participation intentions, particularly within a B2B event context where credibility is paramount.

Table 4. Promotional Strategy Outcomes

Tool	Objective	Observed Outcome
Instagram Ads	Visibility	Expanded reach
KOL collaboration	Trust building	Increased confidence
Media partnerships	Legitimacy	Positive image

The overall findings demonstrate that customer participation in ISSEI 2025 was shaped by the **cumulative integration** of product, place, and promotion strategies on Instagram. Repeated exposure to informative and credible content gradually transformed awareness into participation intent. However, the partial implementation of the price element indicates a strategic gap. While it did not significantly hinder participation, the absence of price cues limited engagement among some potential customers. From a theoretical perspective, this finding reinforces the continued relevance of the 4P framework in analyzing social media-based marketing communication, particularly for service-oriented and event-based industries.

Conclusions

This study concludes that Instagram-based marketing communication strategies play a significant role in increasing customer participation in the ISSEI 2025 event when implemented in a structured and integrated manner. The findings demonstrate that PT Debindo Mega Promo successfully utilized Instagram to communicate event value, build credibility, and encourage participation through consistent content delivery and strategic use of platform features. The integration of the product, place, and promotion elements of the marketing mix was particularly effective in shaping audience awareness, trust, and participation intent. Informative and professionally framed content, supported by visual storytelling and social validation,

enabled potential participants to perceive ISSEI 2025 as a credible and high-value industrial event rather than merely an exhibition. From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the continued relevance of the 4P marketing mix framework in analyzing digital and social media-based marketing communication strategies, especially within service-oriented and event-based contexts. The findings highlight that while digital platforms introduce new modes of interaction and engagement, classical marketing concepts remain applicable when adapted to contemporary communication environments. However, the partial implementation of the price element reveals an important theoretical insight: value signaling through social media may substitute for explicit price communication to some extent, but incomplete integration of the marketing mix can create informational gaps that affect customer decision-making. This contributes to the literature by illustrating how selective application of the 4P elements operates in practice within Instagram-based event marketing.

In terms of practical implications, the results suggest that event organizers should strategically design Instagram content to balance informational clarity, credibility building, and engagement stimulation. Clear articulation of event value, consistent use of platform features, and collaboration with relevant Key Opinion Leaders can strengthen customer confidence and participation. At the same time, organizers are encouraged to consider limited forms of price communication such as indicative ranges or promotional cues to address customer information needs without undermining professional positioning. For future research, scholars are advised to explore comparative or mixed-method approaches to examine how different social media platforms or pricing communication strategies influence participation outcomes across various types of events and industries.

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