

ENTERTAINMENT-BASED CONTENT PRODUCTION STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT ON INSTAGRAM REELS AND TIKTOK: A CASE STUDY OF WULING MOTORS INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how an automotive company develops and implements entertainment-based content strategies on Instagram Reels and TikTok to build audience engagement. A qualitative case study approach was employed, with data collected through semi-structured interviews, content observation, and document analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify strategic communication practices across the stages of pre-production, production, and post-production. The findings reveal that audience engagement is generated through an integrated communication process involving audience insight, trend analysis, storytelling, creative execution, platform adaptation, and continuous performance evaluation. Rather than functioning as isolated production activities, these stages form a continuous strategic communication cycle in which audience feedback informs subsequent content development. The study proposes the Strategic Entertainment Content Production Framework (SECPF), highlighting audience engagement as both the outcome and feedback mechanism of strategic digital communication. These findings contribute to the literature on strategic digital communication and provide practical insights for organizations seeking to optimize entertainment-based communication on short-form video platforms.

Keywords: strategic digital communication; entertainment-based content; content production; audience engagement; Instagram Reels; TikTok.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has fundamentally reshaped the way organizations communicate with their stakeholders, transforming communication from a one-way dissemination of information into an interactive and relationship-oriented process. In today's digital ecosystem, communication is no longer evaluated solely by the effectiveness of message delivery but by its ability to stimulate participation, interaction, and long-term audience relationships. This transformation has given rise to the concept of strategic digital

communication, in which organizations integrate communication planning, audience insights, platform characteristics, and creative content development to achieve both organizational and branding objectives (Lim et al., 2022; Dwivedi et al., 2023). Consequently, communication practitioners are increasingly required to develop adaptive strategies that respond to rapidly changing digital environments, where audience attention has become one of the most valuable and competitive resources.

The increasing fragmentation of digital media has further intensified competition for audience attention. Rather than relying on traditional promotional messages, organizations must compete within algorithm-driven platforms where content visibility depends largely on audience interaction, relevance, and engagement signals. Recommendation systems employed by social media platforms prioritize content capable of generating high viewing duration, comments, shares, and other interactive behaviours, making audience engagement a strategic determinant of communication effectiveness. Consequently, communication success is increasingly influenced by an organization's ability to integrate creative content strategies with platform-specific characteristics instead of relying exclusively on advertising expenditure or message frequency (Rawangngam et al., 2025). This development reflects a broader shift from media-cantered communication toward audience-cantered communication, where understanding user behaviour becomes an essential component of strategic communication planning.

Among various digital communication formats, short-form video has emerged as one of the most influential communication media in recent years. The rapid growth of platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels has transformed audience consumption patterns by offering concise, visually engaging, and algorithmically distributed content that can capture attention within seconds. Unlike conventional social media formats, short-form videos combine visual storytelling, music, motion graphics, humour, and interactive features into highly engaging communication experiences. Their ability to encourage immediate audience participation through likes, comments, shares, remixes, and user-generated content has made short-form video a strategic communication channel across various industries.

Recent empirical studies consistently demonstrate the strategic importance of short-form video within contemporary digital communication. Shen (2023) found that platform selection plays a more significant role in generating audience engagement than merely modifying content across different social media platforms, indicating that communication effectiveness is closely associated with platform characteristics. Similarly, Dong et al. (2023) reported that storytelling quality, emotional appeal, content relevance, and appropriate publication timing significantly enhance audience engagement in branded short videos. Complementing these findings, Yang and Sun (2025) argued that audiences construct brand meaning through communication signals embedded within short-form video content, emphasizing that transparency, perceived value, and authenticity strengthen brand associations. Collectively, these studies suggest that successful communication on short-form video platforms depends not only on technological affordances but also on organizations' ability to strategically combine platform dynamics, creative storytelling, and audience-centered communication.

The growing strategic importance of short-form video has consequently encouraged organizations to reconsider how communication is designed, produced, and distributed. Increasingly, organizations employ creative narratives, cultural trends, humour, and experiential storytelling to communicate brand values while encouraging meaningful audience participation. This transformation indicates that short-form video should no longer be viewed merely as a digital marketing tool but as an integral component of strategic digital communication. Nevertheless, despite the growing body of research examining the effectiveness of short-form videos, existing studies have predominantly focused on communication outcomes, such as engagement metrics, brand awareness, and purchase

intention, while paying comparatively limited attention to the strategic communication processes underlying the production of entertainment-based content. This limitation provides the foundation for the present study, which seeks to understand how strategic communication is operationalized through entertainment-oriented content production on TikTok and Instagram Reels.

Building meaningful audience engagement within short-form video platforms requires more than simply publishing attractive content. As digital communication becomes increasingly saturated, organizations are shifting from product-oriented communication toward entertainment-based communication, where audiences are encouraged to participate voluntarily through enjoyable, relatable, and emotionally engaging experiences. Rather than interrupting users with explicit promotional messages, brands increasingly integrate entertainment, storytelling, humour, cultural trends, and everyday experiences into their communication strategies to create content that audiences willingly consume, share, and discuss. Krowinska and Dineva (2025) argue that branded entertainment stimulates active customer engagement because it simultaneously satisfies functional, symbolic, and hedonic motivations, while Pentina and Zhang (2023) demonstrate that entertainment value strengthens audience–brand relationships by increasing emotional involvement and social interaction. These findings suggest that entertainment has evolved from being a creative execution technique into a strategic communication approach that facilitates relationship building in digital environments.

Within entertainment-based communication, storytelling plays a central role in translating commercial messages into meaningful communication experiences. Digital storytelling enables organizations to communicate brand values through narratives that audiences perceive as authentic, emotionally appealing, and culturally relevant. Instead of emphasizing product specifications or persuasive advertising claims, organizations increasingly employ humorous situations, lifestyle narratives, visual aesthetics, and platform-specific trends to establish stronger emotional connections with audiences. Tafesse (2022) highlights that storytelling significantly enhances brand communication by increasing audience involvement and encouraging content sharing, whereas Dong et al. (2023) identify storytelling and emotional appeal as the most influential predictors of audience engagement in branded short-form videos. These findings reinforce the view that storytelling is not merely a creative device but a strategic communication mechanism capable of transforming promotional content into participatory audience experiences.

The effectiveness of entertainment-based communication, however, is largely determined by how content is strategically produced. Content production extends beyond technical execution and encompasses a systematic communication process involving audience analysis, idea generation, creative planning, trend identification, scripting, visual production, editing, platform optimization, and post-publication evaluation. Harmeling et al. (2022) emphasize that valuable digital content results from a deliberate value-creation process rather than isolated promotional activities, while Lim et al. (2022) argue that successful social media communication requires aligning creative decisions with platform characteristics and audience expectations. Consequently, content production should be understood as a strategic communication process through which organizations continuously adapt creative ideas to changing digital environments and audience preferences.

Another critical outcome of this communication process is audience engagement, which extends beyond observable behavioural indicators such as likes, comments, and shares. Contemporary engagement also encompasses cognitive and emotional involvement that reflects audiences' perceptions, trust, and relationships with brands. Hollebeek et al. (2022) conceptualize engagement as a multidimensional construct comprising cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions, whereas Dessart et al. (2022) emphasize that meaningful

engagement emerges through interactive communication that encourages participation and long-term relationship development. Likewise, Kim and Johnson (2022) argue that authentic brand communication strengthens audience trust and engagement, while Yang and Sun (2025) demonstrate that transparency and perceived value embedded within short-form videos reinforce positive brand associations. Collectively, these studies indicate that entertainment, storytelling, authenticity, and strategic content production constitute interconnected communication elements that shape audience engagement. Nevertheless, existing studies have primarily examined these constructs separately or concentrated on communication outcomes, leaving limited understanding of how they are strategically integrated throughout the content production process before audience engagement is achieved.

Despite the growing body of literature on short-form video communication, several important research gaps remain. First, previous studies have predominantly focused on communication outcomes, including audience engagement, brand awareness, purchase intention, and marketing performance (Dong et al., 2023; Rawangngam et al., 2025; Yang & Sun, 2025). While these studies confirm that storytelling, emotional appeal, and platform characteristics contribute to communication effectiveness, they provide limited understanding of the strategic communication processes through which entertainment-based content is conceptualized, produced, and continuously optimized before audience engagement occurs.

Second, existing research tends to examine communication elements independently. Studies on storytelling emphasize narrative quality, investigations of audience engagement concentrate on behavioural or psychological responses, and research on platform strategy primarily focuses on algorithmic visibility and content performance. Consequently, the relationships among strategic communication planning, creative content production, storytelling, platform adaptation, and audience engagement have rarely been integrated into a single analytical framework. This fragmented perspective restricts a comprehensive understanding of how organizations strategically develop entertainment-oriented content capable of sustaining audience engagement in highly competitive digital environments.

Third, empirical evidence remains concentrated in general consumer markets such as e-commerce, fashion, and lifestyle industries, while relatively limited attention has been devoted to the automotive sector, particularly in emerging digital markets such as Indonesia. As automotive brands increasingly adopt TikTok and Instagram Reels to engage younger audiences, understanding how entertainment-based communication strategies are implemented within this industry has become increasingly relevant from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

Addressing these gaps, this study adopts a strategic digital communication perspective by conceptualizing entertainment-based content production as a strategic communication process rather than merely a creative or technical activity. The study integrates strategic communication, entertainment-based communication, storytelling, content production, and audience engagement into a unified analytical perspective to explain how creative decisions made throughout the stages of pre-production, production, and post-production contribute to audience engagement. Accordingly, the novelty of this research lies in shifting the analytical focus from communication outcomes to the strategic communication processes underlying entertainment-based short-form video production.

Based on this perspective, the study aims to examine how Wuling Motors Indonesia strategically designs, produces, and optimizes entertainment-based content on Instagram Reels and TikTok to build audience engagement. By exploring the integration of creative planning, storytelling, platform adaptation, and audience feedback throughout the content production process, this study contributes to the growing literature on strategic digital communication while providing practical insights for organizations seeking to develop more effective entertainment-based communication strategies within short-form video ecosystems.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategic Digital Communication

Strategic digital communication refers to the deliberate use of digital technologies and communication platforms to achieve organizational objectives through planned, interactive, and audience-centered communication. Unlike conventional communication, which primarily focuses on message dissemination, strategic digital communication emphasizes the integration of communication planning, audience insights, content development, and platform characteristics to foster meaningful relationships with stakeholders (Lim et al., 2022; Dwivedi et al., 2023). Within contemporary digital ecosystems, communication effectiveness is increasingly determined not only by the quality of information delivered but also by the organization's ability to create relevant, engaging, and platform-specific communication experiences.

The emergence of algorithm-driven social media has fundamentally reshaped the characteristics of strategic digital communication. Digital platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels no longer distribute content chronologically but rely on recommendation systems that prioritize audience interaction, watch time, content relevance, and engagement signals. Consequently, organizations must continuously adapt their communication strategies by integrating creativity, storytelling, audience analytics, and platform optimization into the communication process (Shen, 2023; Rawangngam et al., 2025). Strategic communication within digital environments therefore extends beyond message design to encompass the continuous management of communication throughout the entire content lifecycle, from planning and production to evaluation and refinement.

Recent studies consistently position strategic communication as a dynamic capability that enables organizations to respond to rapidly evolving audience preferences and digital media environments. In this perspective, communication is understood not merely as promotional activity but as a strategic organizational function that creates value through sustained interaction and relationship building. Accordingly, effective digital communication requires a systematic integration of communication objectives, creative execution, technological affordances, and audience participation to achieve meaningful engagement (Harmeling et al., 2022).

Building upon this perspective, the present study positions strategic digital communication as the overarching analytical framework for understanding entertainment-based content production on Instagram Reels and TikTok. Rather than treating content production as a purely technical or creative activity, this study conceptualizes it as a strategic communication process in which creative planning, storytelling, platform adaptation, and audience feedback are deliberately integrated to strengthen audience engagement. This perspective provides the theoretical foundation for examining how Wuling Motors Indonesia strategically develops and manages entertainment-based short-form video content within contemporary digital communication ecosystems.

Entertainment-Based Brand Communication

The increasing competition for audience attention within digital platforms has encouraged organizations to adopt entertainment-based brand communication as an alternative to conventional promotional strategies. Unlike traditional advertising, which primarily emphasizes product information and persuasive appeals, entertainment-based communication integrates storytelling, humor, emotions, cultural trends, and experiential narratives into brand messages to create enjoyable and meaningful communication experiences. The primary objective is not merely to persuade audiences but to foster voluntary participation, emotional attachment, and long-term relationships through content that audiences actively consume and share (Krowinska & Dineva, 2025; Pentina & Zhang, 2023).

A central characteristic of entertainment-based brand communication is its emphasis on storytelling. Rather than presenting product attributes directly, organizations communicate brand values through narratives that are relevant to audiences' daily experiences, social identities, and cultural contexts. Digital storytelling enables brands to construct authentic and emotionally engaging messages that enhance audience involvement while reducing resistance to promotional communication. Tafesse (2022) argues that storytelling functions as a strategic communication mechanism that strengthens audience interaction and content sharing, whereas Dong et al. (2023) demonstrate that emotional appeal and narrative quality significantly increase engagement within short-form video environments. These findings indicate that storytelling has become a strategic communication resource rather than merely a creative execution technique.

Another defining characteristic of entertainment-based communication is authenticity. As digital audiences become increasingly selective toward commercial content, communication effectiveness depends on the extent to which audiences perceive brand messages as credible, relevant, and value-driven. Authentic communication strengthens trust and emotional attachment, thereby encouraging audiences to participate in ongoing interactions with brands (Kim & Johnson, 2022). Consequently, entertainment should not be understood solely as a source of amusement but as a communication strategy that creates meaningful audience experiences while reinforcing brand identity.

In the context of this study, entertainment-based brand communication serves as the conceptual foundation for understanding how Wuling Motors Indonesia designs short-form video content on Instagram Reels and TikTok. This perspective positions entertainment not as an end product but as a strategic communication approach through which storytelling, authenticity, and audience participation are deliberately integrated into the content production process to build sustainable audience engagement.

Strategic Content Production

Strategic content production refers to the systematic process through which organizations conceptualize, develop, distribute, and evaluate digital content to achieve specific communication objectives. Unlike conventional content creation, which often emphasizes technical production or aesthetic quality, strategic content production integrates communication planning, audience insights, creative decision-making, and platform optimization into a continuous communication process. Within digital media environments, content production is therefore regarded as a strategic organizational capability that enables brands to create relevant and engaging communication experiences while adapting to rapidly changing audience preferences and platform algorithms (Lim et al., 2022; Harmeling et al., 2022).

The strategic nature of content production begins during the pre-production stage, where communication objectives, target audiences, creative concepts, and platform characteristics are carefully identified. At this stage, organizations continuously monitor audience behavior, social trends, and digital conversations to generate content ideas that are both relevant and timely. Trend analysis and audience insights enable communication practitioners to anticipate user expectations while ensuring that creative concepts remain aligned with organizational objectives. Consequently, pre-production represents not merely a planning activity but a strategic communication process in which organizational goals are translated into audience-centered communication strategies.

The production stage focuses on transforming strategic ideas into compelling communication messages. Within entertainment-based communication, production involves much more than recording or editing audiovisual materials. It encompasses storytelling, visual composition, emotional appeal, humor, music selection, creative scripting, and the integration of platform-specific features that collectively enhance audience experience. Tafesse (2022)

argues that storytelling functions as a strategic communication resource because it enables organizations to communicate brand values through emotionally engaging narratives. Similarly, Dong et al. (2023) demonstrate that emotional storytelling significantly increases audience engagement within short-form video platforms, highlighting the importance of creative execution in shaping communication effectiveness.

Strategic content production continues beyond publication through the post-production stage, where organizations evaluate communication performance using both platform analytics and audience feedback. Rather than treating content publication as the endpoint of communication, organizations continuously monitor engagement metrics, audience responses, viewing behavior, and emerging trends to improve subsequent content strategies. This iterative process enables communication teams to refine storytelling approaches, optimize publication timing, and adapt creative decisions to changing platform dynamics. Accordingly, post-production serves as an organizational learning process that transforms audience interaction into strategic knowledge for future communication activities.

Viewed collectively, strategic content production represents an integrated communication cycle connecting planning, creative execution, and evaluation. Each stage influences the next through continuous feedback and adaptation, allowing organizations to respond proactively to evolving digital environments. Within entertainment-based short-form video platforms, communication effectiveness therefore depends not solely on creative talent but on the organization's ability to strategically coordinate audience insights, storytelling, platform affordances, and performance evaluation throughout the entire content production process. Based on this perspective, the present study conceptualizes strategic content production as the primary analytical framework for examining how Wuling Motors Indonesia develops entertainment-based content on Instagram Reels and TikTok to strengthen audience engagement.

Audience Engagement in Digital Communication

Audience engagement has become one of the central concepts in contemporary digital communication, reflecting a shift from passive message reception toward active participation within interactive media environments. Unlike traditional communication models that primarily measure communication effectiveness through message exposure, audience engagement emphasizes the quality of interactions established between organizations and audiences across digital platforms. Consequently, engagement is increasingly understood as a multidimensional communication outcome that encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement rather than merely observable online activities such as likes, comments, or shares (Hollebeek et al., 2022).

From a communication perspective, audience engagement develops through meaningful communication experiences that encourage audiences to participate, interact, and co-create value with organizations. Dessart et al. (2022) argue that engagement emerges when audiences perceive communication as relevant, authentic, and personally meaningful, thereby strengthening emotional attachment and long-term relationships. Similarly, Pentina and Zhang (2023) demonstrate that entertainment-oriented digital communication increases audience engagement because it satisfies both informational and hedonic motivations while encouraging voluntary interaction. These findings indicate that engagement is influenced not only by message content but also by the overall communication experience created throughout the interaction process.

Within short-form video environments, audience engagement is strongly associated with the integration of storytelling, authenticity, emotional appeal, and platform-specific communication strategies. Recommendation algorithms employed by TikTok and Instagram Reels amplify content that successfully generates audience interaction, making engagement both a communication objective and a mechanism that determines content visibility.

Consequently, communication practitioners must strategically design content capable of attracting audience attention while sustaining interaction through creative narratives, emotional resonance, and contextual relevance (Shen, 2023; Yang & Sun, 2025). In this context, engagement should be understood as a dynamic communication process in which audiences actively respond to and interact with brand communication rather than merely consuming digital content.

Building upon these perspectives, this study conceptualizes audience engagement as the outcome of strategic communication processes implemented throughout entertainment-based content production. Rather than treating engagement solely as a quantitative performance indicator, this research views it as the result of integrated communication practices involving audience analysis, storytelling, creative execution, platform adaptation, and continuous evaluation. Accordingly, audience engagement functions as both an indicator of communication effectiveness and evidence of successful strategic content production within short-form video platforms. This perspective aligns with the objective of the present study to explain how entertainment-based communication strategies contribute to building meaningful and sustainable audience relationships on Instagram Reels and TikTok.

Conceptual Framework

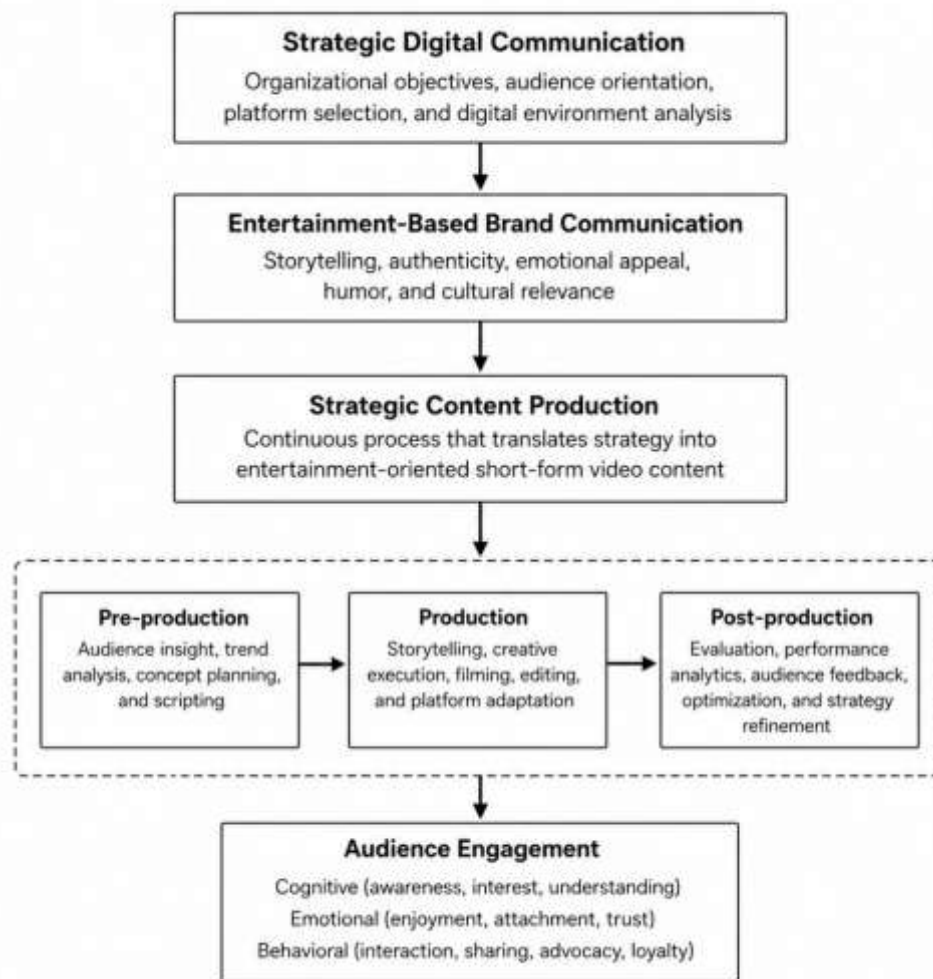
The preceding literature suggests that entertainment-based content production should be understood as a strategic communication process rather than merely a creative or technical activity. Strategic digital communication provides the overarching perspective through which organizations formulate communication objectives, identify audience characteristics, and determine appropriate digital platforms. Within this perspective, entertainment-based brand communication functions as the communication strategy that translates organizational objectives into engaging and meaningful audience experiences through storytelling, authenticity, and emotional appeal.

The implementation of this communication strategy is operationalized through strategic content production, which consists of three interconnected stages: pre-production, production, and post-production. During the pre-production stage, communication teams formulate creative ideas, analyze audience preferences, monitor digital trends, and develop communication concepts. The production stage transforms these strategic decisions into entertainment-oriented short-form videos through storytelling, visual design, editing, and creative execution. Subsequently, post-production involves evaluating audience responses, engagement metrics, and platform analytics to optimize future communication strategies. These three stages form a continuous communication cycle in which audience feedback informs subsequent content development.

Within this framework, audience engagement is conceptualized as the outcome of an integrated strategic communication process rather than merely a performance metric. Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral audience responses emerge from the successful integration of strategic planning, creative storytelling, platform adaptation, and continuous evaluation. Accordingly, this study proposes that entertainment-based content production serves as the communication mechanism through which organizations build meaningful audience engagement on algorithm-driven short-form video platforms.

Based on this conceptual perspective, the study examines how Wuling Motors Indonesia strategically develops entertainment-based content on Instagram Reels and TikTok by exploring communication practices implemented throughout the stages of pre-production, production, and post-production.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study
(Strategic Entertainment Content Production Framework – SECPF)



Source: Processed by the author

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study, which positions Strategic Digital Communication as the overarching theoretical perspective guiding organizational communication in digital environments. Within this perspective, Entertainment-Based Brand Communication serves as the communication strategy through which organizations deliver engaging and meaningful brand messages by integrating storytelling, authenticity, emotional appeal, and audience participation. This strategy is operationalized through Strategic Content Production, which comprises three interconnected stages: pre-production, production, and post-production.

During pre-production, communication teams identify audience insights, analyze digital trends, formulate creative ideas, and develop content concepts. The production stage transforms these strategic plans into entertainment-oriented short-form videos through storytelling, creative execution, visual composition, editing, and platform adaptation. Subsequently, post-production focuses on evaluating audience responses, engagement analytics, and performance outcomes to refine future communication strategies. These stages constitute a continuous communication cycle in which audience feedback informs subsequent content development. Ultimately, the framework conceptualizes Audience Engagement—represented by cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions—as the outcome of an integrated strategic communication process rather than merely a social media performance metric. Accordingly, this framework explains how entertainment-based content production

functions as the communication mechanism through which organizations build meaningful and sustainable audience engagement on algorithm-driven platforms such as Instagram Reels and TikTok.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to explore how entertainment-based content production strategies are implemented to build audience engagement on Instagram Reels and TikTok. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because the research aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of communication practices, creative decision-making, and organizational processes underlying digital content production within a real-world context. According to Yin (2018), case studies are particularly suitable for investigating contemporary phenomena in which the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident. In this study, Wuling Motors Indonesia was selected as the case because of its consistent use of entertainment-oriented short-form video content across multiple social media platforms.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at Wuling Motors Indonesia, focusing on the company's digital communication activities through Instagram Reels and TikTok. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in planning, producing, and evaluating digital content. The informants consisted of members of the digital marketing and creative communication teams who possessed comprehensive knowledge of content production strategies. Additional information was obtained from publicly available social media content and platform analytics to provide contextual understanding and support data triangulation.

Data Collection

Data were collected through three complementary techniques. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants to explore communication strategies, creative workflows, and decision-making processes throughout content production. Second, non-participant observation was employed to examine the characteristics of entertainment-based content published on Instagram Reels and TikTok, including storytelling approaches, visual presentation, audience interaction, and platform adaptation. Third, document analysis was undertaken by reviewing internal communication materials where available, content planning documents, organizational reports, and digital artifacts such as videos, captions, audience comments, and engagement metrics. Combining multiple sources of evidence enabled the study to obtain a comprehensive understanding of strategic communication practices.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021). The analysis involved six stages: familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and interpretation. Throughout the analytical process, themes were continuously compared across interview transcripts, observational notes, and digital documents to identify recurring communication patterns. The analysis was guided by the conceptual framework developed in this study, emphasizing strategic digital communication, entertainment-based brand communication, strategic content production, and audience engagement. This approach enabled the findings to explain not only what communication practices were implemented but also how and why they contributed to audience engagement.

Trustworthiness

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed methodological triangulation by integrating interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Data source triangulation was also applied by comparing information obtained from different informants and digital communication artifacts. Member checking was conducted by confirming interview interpretations with selected participants to ensure the accuracy of the findings. Furthermore, an audit trail documenting data collection and analytical decisions was maintained throughout the research process to strengthen the dependability and transparency of the study.

RESULTS

Strategic Content Production as a Digital Communication Process

The findings reveal that entertainment-based content production at Wuling Motors Indonesia is implemented as a structured strategic communication process rather than a series of isolated creative activities. Although the production workflow generally follows the conventional stages of pre-production, production, and post-production, these stages are highly interconnected and continuously adapted to audience preferences, platform characteristics, and organizational communication objectives. This indicates that content production is not merely concerned with creating visually attractive videos but also with managing communication strategically to maximize audience engagement across Instagram Reels and TikTok.

Interview findings demonstrate that communication practitioners consistently integrate communication objectives, audience insights, creative storytelling, platform adaptation, and performance evaluation throughout the production process. Rather than treating these activities as separate tasks, the production team perceives them as complementary components within a continuous communication cycle. Content ideas are generated based on campaign objectives, transformed into entertainment-oriented narratives during production, and subsequently refined through audience feedback and platform analytics after publication. This iterative approach allows communication strategies to evolve continuously in response to changing audience behavior and digital platform dynamics.

Another significant finding concerns the flexibility of the production process. While a structured workflow provides consistency in planning and execution, the production team does not rigidly adhere to predetermined concepts. Instead, creative decisions are continuously adjusted according to emerging trends, platform algorithms, and audience responses. This adaptive approach enables Wuling Motors Indonesia to maintain communication relevance without compromising brand identity, illustrating that strategic content production is characterized by both systematic planning and creative responsiveness. Such flexibility reflects the dynamic nature of strategic digital communication, where communication effectiveness depends on the organization's ability to balance long-term communication objectives with rapidly evolving digital environments.

These findings support the argument proposed in the conceptual framework that entertainment-based content production should be understood as an integrated strategic communication process. Consistent with Lim et al. (2022) and Harmeling et al. (2022), effective digital communication requires the integration of communication planning, creative execution, and continuous evaluation rather than focusing exclusively on content creation. However, this study extends previous literature by demonstrating that the three production stages operate as an adaptive communication cycle rather than a linear workflow. Accordingly, the following sections discuss each stage of strategic content production—pre-production, production, and post-production—to explain how communication strategies are operationalized in building audience engagement on Instagram Reels and TikTok.

Pre-production Strategy

The findings indicate that pre-production represents the strategic foundation of entertainment-based content production at Wuling Motors Indonesia. Rather than functioning merely as an initial planning stage, pre-production serves as a communication planning process

in which campaign objectives, audience characteristics, creative concepts, and platform dynamics are systematically aligned before content creation begins. This strategic orientation ensures that every content idea contributes to broader communication objectives while remaining relevant to audience expectations.

Interview findings reveal that communication objectives constitute the primary reference for content planning. Informants explained that each content initiative is designed according to specific objectives, such as increasing brand awareness, encouraging audience engagement, or communicating product features. These objectives subsequently determine the narrative style, entertainment elements, and performance indicators used to evaluate communication outcomes. Consequently, content ideation is not driven solely by creativity but by strategic communication goals established before production activities commence.

Another important finding concerns audience-centered planning. Prior to developing content concepts, communication teams identify audience segments, monitor behavioral patterns, and evaluate current social media trends. This process enables the team to determine communication styles and entertainment formats that are most relevant to different audience groups. Rather than replicating viral content, trends are selectively adapted to reinforce brand identity while maintaining contextual relevance within TikTok and Instagram Reels. Such practices demonstrate that audience insight and trend analysis function as complementary communication resources guiding creative decision-making.

The study also finds that content calendars facilitate coordination between campaign planning and content distribution. Scheduled planning provides production teams with flexibility to respond to emerging trends without disrupting broader communication objectives. Accordingly, pre-production functions as an adaptive planning mechanism that integrates organizational objectives, audience understanding, and creative ideation into a coherent communication strategy.

These findings reinforce previous studies emphasizing the importance of communication planning in digital content production (Lim et al., 2022; Harmeling et al., 2022). However, this study extends existing knowledge by demonstrating that pre-production is not simply an administrative planning phase but a strategic communication process through which entertainment-based content is intentionally designed to maximize audience relevance and engagement.

Production Strategy

The production stage demonstrates how strategic planning is translated into entertainment-oriented communication practices. The findings reveal that content production at Wuling Motors Indonesia extends beyond technical video creation to encompass storytelling, creative execution, visual aesthetics, emotional appeal, and platform-specific adaptation. Production therefore represents the stage at which strategic communication objectives are transformed into communication experiences capable of attracting and sustaining audience attention.

Interview data indicate that production activities remain flexible despite being guided by previously established concepts. Informants explained that creative adjustments frequently occur during filming and editing to enhance narrative quality or respond to contextual opportunities. This flexibility allows communication teams to improve visual presentation, strengthen emotional appeal, and optimize message delivery without deviating from campaign objectives. Such adaptive decision-making illustrates that creativity functions as an ongoing communication process rather than a fixed production procedure.

Another prominent finding concerns storytelling. Participants emphasized that audience attention within short-form video platforms depends heavily on compelling openings, concise narratives, and visually engaging sequences. Communication messages are therefore designed to capture audience attention within the first few seconds while maintaining narrative

coherence throughout the video. Visual elements, music, subtitles, and editing techniques are strategically combined to strengthen emotional resonance and encourage audience interaction. These findings confirm that storytelling operates as a strategic communication mechanism rather than merely a creative production technique.

The findings are consistent with Tafesse (2022), who argues that storytelling enhances audience participation by creating meaningful communication experiences, and Dong et al. (2023), who identify emotional appeal and narrative quality as key determinants of audience engagement in branded short-form videos. Nevertheless, this study further demonstrates that storytelling effectiveness depends on continuous creative adaptation throughout the production process, enabling organizations to balance communication consistency with platform-specific expectations.

Post-production Strategy

The findings demonstrate that post-production represents a continuous process of communication optimization rather than the final stage of content creation. Beyond editing and technical refinement, post-production involves platform adaptation, publication scheduling, performance evaluation, and strategic learning that inform subsequent communication activities. Consequently, communication effectiveness is understood as an iterative process in which audience responses continuously shape future content strategies.

Interview findings indicate that publication timing is determined through analysis of previous content performance, audience online behavior, and current platform trends rather than fixed scheduling routines. Informants explained that publication decisions are adjusted according to audience activity patterns to maximize content visibility and interaction. This adaptive scheduling reflects an understanding that communication success within algorithm-driven platforms depends on both content quality and contextual timing.

Another significant finding concerns performance evaluation. Rather than relying on a single indicator, communication teams evaluate content according to campaign objectives. Awareness-oriented campaigns are assessed using reach and views, whereas engagement-oriented campaigns emphasize likes, comments, and shares. Weekly performance reports enable communication practitioners to identify successful content characteristics while simultaneously recognizing opportunities for improvement. Informants also explained that high-performing content is frequently adapted or recreated, whereas less effective formats are modified based on audience responses.

These findings extend previous research by demonstrating that post-production functions as an organizational learning process rather than a technical completion stage. Consistent with strategic digital communication theory, audience analytics become communication feedback that guides future planning, creative execution, and platform adaptation. Accordingly, post-production completes a continuous communication cycle in which evaluation not only measures performance but also supports the ongoing refinement of entertainment-based communication strategies for subsequent content production.

The discussion section explains the results of data processing, interprets findings logically, links them to relevant reference sources. Contains specific or unique findings from research results. Possible follow-up activities can also be presented in this section

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Table 1. Summary of Strategic Content Production at Wuling Motors Indonesia

Aspect	Pre-production (Strategic Planning)	Production (Creative Execution)	Post-production (Evaluation & Optimization)
Main Purpose	Plan content based on communication objectives and audience insight.	Transform ideas into entertaining short-form videos that are relevant and engaging.	Optimize content performance and learn from audience responses.
Key Activities	Define objectives & KPIs, understand audience, analyze trends, develop concepts, and prepare content calendar.	Write script, shoot video, create visual & audio elements, edit, and adapt format for TikTok & Instagram Reels.	Determine posting time, monitor analytics, evaluate results, report performance, and refine strategy.
Strategic Focus	Audience insight, trend relevance, brand alignment, and meaningful creative concept.	Strong storytelling, visual appeal, concise message, and platform-specific optimization.	Data-driven decisions, engagement & reach optimization, and continuous learning from audience feedback.
Key Insight (Informant Quote)	<i>"We always adjust the content to the objective. We also look at who the audience is and what trends are relevant, but it must still align with the brand."</i> (RA, May 13, 2025)	<i>"At the production stage, we focus on storytelling, engaging visuals, and a simple message. In Reels and TikTok, the first few seconds are very crucial."</i> (DS, May 13, 2025)	<i>"We look at the data to see which content works and why. It becomes the basis for our next content."</i> (DY, May 13, 2025)
Key Metrics Used	Alignment with objectives, audience fit, trend relevance, and concept feasibility.	Quality of execution, clarity of message, creativity, originality, and platform optimization.	Views/Reach (awareness), Likes/Comments/Shares (engagement), Engagement Rate, Watch Time/Completion Rate, follower growth.
Outcome for Next Cycle	A relevant and feasible content concept aligned with audience needs and communication goals.	Published entertaining short-form video that conveys brand message and encourages audience interaction.	Insights and lessons learned to improve planning, execution, and distribution of the next content.

Source: Processed by the author

Table 1 summarizes the strategic content production process implemented by Wuling Motors Indonesia across three interconnected stages: pre-production, production, and post-production. The findings indicate that each stage serves a distinct strategic function within the overall digital communication process. Pre-production emphasizes communication planning through audience analysis, trend monitoring, and creative ideation. The production stage focuses on transforming these plans into engaging short-form video content using storytelling, creative execution, and platform-specific optimization. Meanwhile, post-production is dedicated to evaluating content performance through audience analytics and feedback, enabling continuous refinement of future communication strategies. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that entertainment-based content production is implemented as a continuous, data-driven communication cycle designed to strengthen audience engagement on Instagram Reels and TikTok.

Building Audience Engagement through Entertainment-Based Content

The findings demonstrate that audience engagement at Wuling Motors Indonesia is not generated solely by the publication of entertaining short-form videos but by the integration of strategic communication practices throughout the entire content production process. Entertainment-oriented content functions as a communication mechanism that attracts audience attention, stimulates interaction, and strengthens relationships between the brand and its digital audiences. Consequently, audience engagement emerges as the cumulative outcome of strategic planning, creative execution, and continuous content optimization rather than as an isolated performance indicator.

Interview findings reveal that communication practitioners consistently prioritize audience relevance over promotional intensity. Rather than focusing exclusively on product specifications, content is designed around everyday experiences, humor, storytelling, trending topics, and culturally relevant narratives that resonate with target audiences. Informants explained that entertainment serves as the entry point for capturing audience attention, while brand messages are embedded naturally within the storyline to reduce perceptions of overt

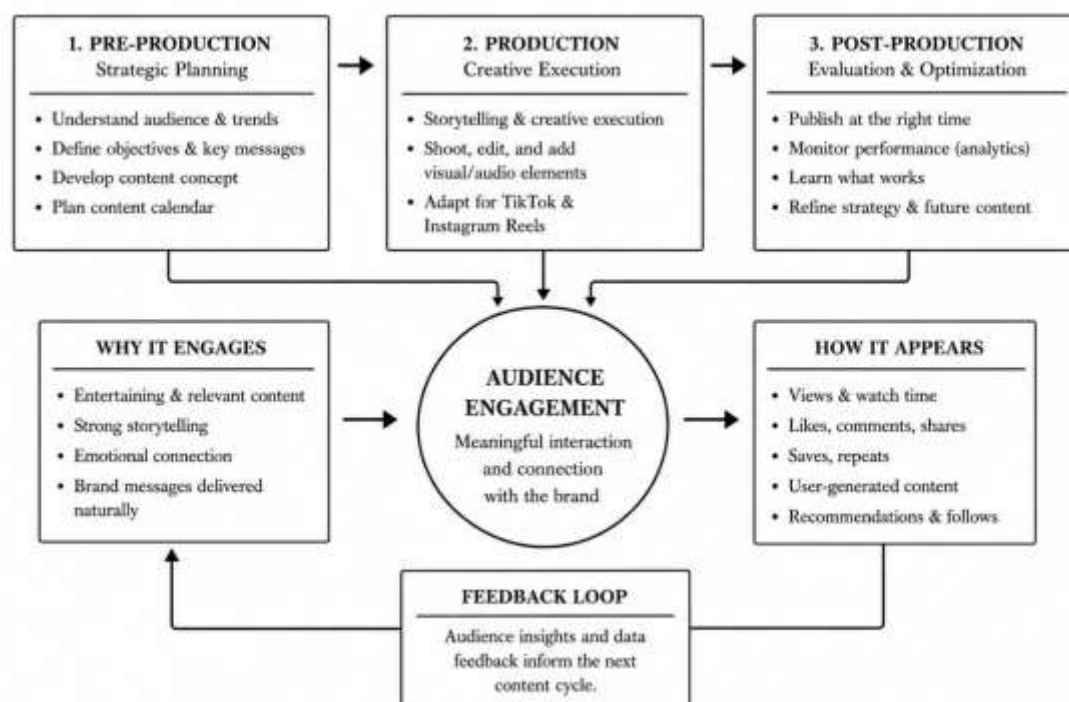
advertising. This communication approach encourages audiences to voluntarily interact with content through viewing, commenting, sharing, and participating in online conversations, thereby creating more meaningful engagement with the brand.

Another important finding concerns the role of audience feedback in shaping subsequent communication strategies. Engagement metrics—including views, watch time, likes, comments, shares, and audience responses—are not interpreted merely as indicators of content popularity but as strategic feedback for future content development. Informants noted that communication teams regularly analyze audience reactions to identify successful storytelling patterns, preferred content formats, and emerging audience interests. These insights subsequently inform creative planning and platform adaptation, enabling continuous improvement in communication effectiveness. As a result, audience engagement functions not only as an outcome of communication but also as an input for future strategic decision-making.

The findings further indicate that meaningful engagement extends beyond quantitative interaction. Informants emphasized that successful content encourages audiences to recognize, remember, and emotionally connect with the Wuling brand. Positive comments, user-generated discussions, repeated viewing, and content sharing illustrate that engagement involves cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. This multidimensional perspective aligns with Hollebeek et al. (2022), who conceptualize engagement as the integration of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement, and with Dessart et al. (2022), who argue that engagement develops through interactive and relationship-oriented communication. The present findings further demonstrate that entertainment-based communication strengthens these dimensions by providing audiences with enjoyable and authentic communication experiences rather than purely promotional messages.

From a strategic communication perspective, the findings suggest that audience engagement is achieved through a continuous communication cycle in which audience insights inform content planning, storytelling enhances communication experiences, and post-publication evaluation guides subsequent communication strategies. This process reflects the Strategic Entertainment Content Production Framework (SECPF) proposed in this study, illustrating that entertainment-based content production is not simply a creative activity but an adaptive strategic communication process. Accordingly, organizations seeking to improve audience engagement on algorithm-driven platforms should integrate audience understanding, creative storytelling, platform optimization, and continuous evaluation into a coherent communication strategy rather than relying solely on viral content or promotional campaigns.

Overall, this study demonstrates that entertainment-based content production contributes to audience engagement by combining strategic communication planning with creative execution and data-driven evaluation. The findings therefore extend previous studies that primarily explain engagement as a communication outcome by showing that engagement is produced through an iterative and integrated strategic communication process. This process enables organizations to develop sustainable audience relationships while continuously adapting to changing digital media environments and audience expectations.

Figure 2. How Entertainment-Based Content Production Builds Audience Engagement

Source: Processed by the author

Figure 2 illustrates how audience engagement is built through an integrated entertainment-based content production process. The framework shows that strategic planning during pre-production, creative storytelling during production, and continuous evaluation during post-production work together to generate meaningful audience engagement. This engagement is reflected not only in behavioral indicators such as views, likes, comments, shares, and follows, but also in stronger emotional connections and audience participation. Importantly, audience responses are incorporated into a continuous feedback loop that informs subsequent content planning and optimization, demonstrating that audience engagement functions as both the outcome and the driving force of strategic digital communication.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how Wuling Motors Indonesia strategically develops entertainment-based content on Instagram Reels and TikTok to build audience engagement. The findings demonstrate that audience engagement is not generated solely by creative or entertaining content but emerges from an integrated strategic communication process encompassing pre-production, production, and post-production. During pre-production, communication objectives, audience insights, and trend analysis guide the development of relevant content concepts. The production stage translates these strategic plans into engaging short-form videos through storytelling, creative execution, and platform-specific adaptation. Subsequently, post-production emphasizes performance evaluation, audience analytics, and continuous optimization, enabling communication strategies to evolve in response to changing audience preferences and digital platform dynamics.

The study contributes to the literature on strategic digital communication by demonstrating that entertainment-based content production should be understood as a continuous communication cycle rather than a sequence of technical production activities. Unlike previous studies that primarily explain audience engagement as the outcome of content characteristics or platform affordances, this research shows that engagement is produced

through the integration of strategic planning, creative storytelling, audience-centered communication, and data-driven evaluation. Accordingly, the proposed Strategic Entertainment Content Production Framework (SECPF) provides a process-oriented perspective for understanding how organizations build meaningful audience engagement within algorithm-driven short-form video platforms.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that organizations should move beyond emphasizing viral content or promotional messages and instead adopt audience-centered communication strategies that integrate entertainment, authenticity, storytelling, and continuous performance evaluation. Communication practitioners should utilize audience insights and platform analytics not only to measure content performance but also to refine subsequent communication strategies through an iterative feedback process. Such an approach enables organizations to develop more sustainable audience relationships while maintaining communication relevance in increasingly competitive digital environments.

This study is subject to several limitations. The research focuses on a single automotive company within the Indonesian market, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other organizational or industrial contexts. In addition, the analysis emphasizes organizational communication practices without directly examining audience perceptions or experiences. Future studies may extend this framework by incorporating audience perspectives, comparing multiple organizations or industries, or employing mixed-methods approaches to examine the relationships between strategic content production and audience engagement across different digital platforms.

Overall, this study concludes that entertainment-based content production is most effective when implemented as an integrated strategic communication process that combines communication planning, creative execution, and continuous optimization. By positioning audience engagement as both the outcome and the feedback mechanism of strategic digital communication, this research offers a conceptual and practical foundation for organizations seeking to strengthen digital relationships with audiences through short-form video content.

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