

Digital political messages and public engagement: Interpretation of mayor Damar Prasetyono's instagram content

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Abstract

This study examines how digital political messages are constructed through the Instagram account @masdamar.magelang, managed by the Mayor of Magelang. While existing research on political social media communication often emphasizes campaign strategies and engagement metrics, limited attention has been paid to the structural composition of message narratives within the context of local governance. Using the Nine Block Conversation Planner framework, this qualitative study analyzed 20 Instagram posts published between November 2025 and February 2026. Data were collected through documentation and examined using thematic content analysis focusing on message purpose, audience, narrative structure, and value orientation. The findings revealed that aspirational and belief-oriented messages dominated the account's communication strategy. Moral values, collective aspirations, and symbolic representations of integrity served as central narrative devices for constructing emotional resonance and leadership identity. Instagram operates not only as an information platform but also as a performative space for values-based political storytelling. However, the dominance of symbolic narratives suggests limited policy-oriented considerations. This study extends the application of the Nine Block framework to the analysis of digital political leadership and contributes to broader discussions on affective political communication and identity construction in social media environments.

Keywords

Instagram, Message content, Mayor of Magelang

Introduction

Advances in information and communication technology (ICT) have accelerated significantly in recent years, particularly through the widespread adoption of the internet. Contemporary ICT development is largely characterized by the widespread use of online platforms, particularly social media. These platforms enable individuals to interact, disseminate information, and influence audiences more quickly, largely due to

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society's increasing reliance on information distributed through digital channels [1]. In the Indonesian context, social media has emerged as a key instrument for conducting political campaigns that shape public opinion. This development has had a broad impact on various aspects of life, including politics and society, making communication faster and easier, while also making it transparent, thus making the information disseminated more effective. Social media also serves as a link between the government and the public. The forms of interaction between the government and the public on social media vary, including discussions, close encounters, outreach, and criticism of the government. Another benefit of social media for political figures is that it serves as a platform for conveying political messages such as visions and missions, work programs, profiles, achievements, and so on during and after the election process [2].

As a result, social media has evolved into a crucial instrument in the contemporary digital communications landscape. A qualitative approach to political communication offers in-depth insights into its role in the context of regional leadership. In this regard, social media serves as a strategic platform through which leaders can foster emotional closeness with citizens. By communicating public policies in a more human-centered manner, leaders are able to strengthen perceptions of transparency, responsiveness, and accountable governance. Regarding the qualitative approach in this research, political communication is relevant because it can explore meanings, messages, and communication strategies that cannot be measured quantitatively [3]. Through qualitative analysis, research can examine how messages are constructed, identify the values leaders wish to project, and analyze how these messages represent the relationship between leaders and the public. It also allows for an exploration of how communication strategies are formulated and implemented across social media platforms, as well as their implications for voter perceptions and behavior. Furthermore, the emergence of the digital industry—commonly referred to as new media—has significantly accelerated the dissemination of information, prompting individuals and institutions to develop their own digital platforms to engage wider audiences. Instagram serves not only as a medium for storing information but also as a space for constructing political meaning [4].

Through visual content, narratives, textual captions, and interactions with followers, regional leaders construct representations of leadership, demonstrate closeness to the community, and articulate specific values they wish to emphasize. Within this framework, Instagram functions as a symbolic communication space, where actors not only document activities but also actively shape public perceptions of leadership. Therefore, this study examines the political communication conveyed by Damar Prasetyono through his Instagram account (@masdamar.magelang). Using a qualitative approach, this study explores the communication strategies he uses on social media, focusing on how messages are framed, disseminated, and interpreted within the broader context of digital political engagement [5]. Based on the researcher's observations, the Instagram account @masdamar.magelang has approximately 19.1

thousand followers. This figure indicates a substantial level of reach in the social media realm, especially on Instagram. With a follower base approaching 20,000, the account can be considered active and capable of facilitating broad communication and engagement. Currently, Instagram is used not only for personal expression and social interaction, but also by public figures and community leaders, including regional heads, as an initial medium for disseminating political information and shaping public discourse.

In this context, Instagram acts as a symbolic political communication platform. Each post not only conveys information but also represents the values, attitudes, and identity of the leadership that it wishes to portray to the public. This account consistently creates content ranging from leadership activities, calls for citizen participation, to social campaigns such as stunting prevention, infrastructure development, and the promotion of local potential [7]. Through a visual approach and popular language, messages are delivered in a format that is easily accepted by various levels of society. This condition makes the media's role in reporting political discourse can be seen as conveying political messages as conveyed by. In this context, social media acts as a bridge between the government and the public, encouraging public participation in various development programs. Current government programs indeed demand an active role from the public to participate in their success [6].

Without an engaged and supportive community, it's difficult for a program to achieve optimal results, even if it's been carefully designed or refined. This is because, essentially, government programs are implemented by the community and ultimately return to the community [9]. If the program is aimed at the community but there is no participation in the community, then the government program will not last long and will even lead to conflict in the community. Judging from the description above, to encourage the implementation of SPBE (electronic-based government system), it is natural that the form of government activities and activities need to be known to the public, formal and informal activities must be shared with the public as a form of information that can be disseminated by official government institutions using the help of the internet and print media or social media. The work program on the Instagram account @masdamar.magelang researchers saw the content uploaded through their Instagram. It seems that the Mayor of Magelang, H. Damar Prasetyoo, actively uses social media to convey various work programs that directly touch the needs of the community [8].

This research offers a contemporary perspective on the effectiveness of the digital communication strategy implemented by the official Instagram account @masdamar.magelang in managing social media. Leaders with character can be a source of inspiration for the community, where the examples they demonstrate can build public trust in their leadership [10]. Through the content delivered on Instagram accounts, leadership communication not only functions as a means of conveying information, but also as documentation of government activities which are part of a broader public communication strategy for the people of Magelang City [13]. Along with

the development of social media, Instagram is no longer only used as a medium for sharing information, but has become a means of political communication that enables interaction between leaders and the public (Dhanny Susetyawidianta and Galang). Through this platform, public aspirations can be conveyed openly, both through comments and direct messages, thereby strengthening the relationship between the government and citizens[11].

Although many studies have examined political communication on social media, most of them have focused on campaign strategies, electability, and audience engagement metrics [12]. Limited research specifically analyzes the internal structure of digital political messages in the context of local government leadership using a structured analysis framework. Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions: how are political communication messages constructed and structured in the Instagram content of the Mayor of Magelang based on the Nine-block conversation planner framework? This study aims to analyze the structure, narrative patterns and strategic elements of political communication messages conveyed through the Instagram account @masdamar.magelang.

The novelty of this research lies in the application of the Nine Block Conversation Planner framework, commonly used in marketing communications, to analyze the political communication strategies of local government leaders. This study extends the framework to the context of digital political leadership communication, particularly in local governance settings. Thus, this research contributes to the development of message structure analysis in political communication studies [14].

Method

This study adopted a qualitative approach, utilizing data collected from Instagram posts published on @masdamar.magelang. The data consisted of screenshots of content uploaded between November 28 and December 2, 2025. This period was chosen due to the intensity of official engagement and its relevance to government activities and public communications conducted by regional leaders. From the total posts during this time period, posts that met the established analysis criteria were purposefully selected and examined using the Nine Block Conversation Planner framework to identify the structure of political communication messages conveyed through Damar Prasetyono's Instagram account.

The Nine-Block Conversation Planner serves as the theoretical foundation of this research. This framework categorizes messages into nine thematic types commonly applied in marketing and public communications to increase relevance and stimulate public engagement, including word-of-mouth effects. By classifying Instagram content according to these themes, this study evaluates how structured message design contributes to more effective communication and facilitates the achievement of strategic goals.

Results and discussion

Results

A total of 20 Instagram posts published between November 2025 and February 2026 were analyzed in this study. Each post was examined based on engagement metrics and thematic categorization. The complete list of posts (P01–P20) is provided in Appendix A, while **Table 1** presents the distribution of engagement across posts. **Table 1** summarizes the engagement performance of each analyzed post, including the number of likes, comments, and total interactions. The table also categorizes each post based on its primary thematic focus. Furthermore, to provide a clearer picture of audience interaction patterns, descriptive statistics of engagement metrics are presented in **Table 2**.

Table 1. Analyzed instagram posts and engagement metrics (November 2025–February 2026)

No	Date	Content Theme	Like	Comment	Total Involvement
1.	2025-11-14	Public Infrastructure	1,437	85	1,522
2.	2025-11-28	Institutional Ceremony	890	3	893
3.	2025-11-30	Leadership Appointment	459	11	470
4.	2025-12-02	Anti-Corruption Day	79	0	79
5.	2025-12-03	Intergovernmental Coordination	249	2	251
6.	2025-12-05	Field Inspection	550	22	572
7.	2025-12-08	Civil Servant Involvement	231	2	233
8.	2025-12-08	Youth Empowerment	216	4	220
9.	2025-12-09	Civil Events (LKBBV)	809	5	814
10.	2025-12-09	Gender Empowerment	124	2	126
11.	2025-12-10	Anti-Corruption Campaign	243	13	256
12.	2025-12-10	Corruption-Free City	243	13	256
13.	2025-12-19	Appreciation Message	246	6	252
14.	2025-12-19	National Defense Day	68	0	68
15.	2025-12-20	RT/RW Honorarium	123	1	124
16.	2026-01-06	Community Visit	778	21	799
17.	2026-01-21	Public Safety	1,621	83	1,704
18.	2026-01-29	Public Facilities Update	3,719	120	3,839
19.	2026-02-05	Cultural Activities	73	0	73
20.	2026-02-06	Bottom-Up Aspirations	104	3	107

Table 2. Appendix A. list of analyzed instagram posts

Postal ID	Format	Instagram Link
Po1	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DSE49KxiZ7y/
Po 02	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DSAViqLCfBY/
Po 03	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DSCL5hoCQbV/
Po 04	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DSCm_QWie_M/
Po 05	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DR_2hBriUzy/
Po 06	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DR3Yn4qCXxd/
Po 07	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DRzZ2EwCUIX/
Po 08	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DRw2LmBiZr/
Po 09	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DRrOOGhiUFN/
Po 10	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DRCLJppiTM2/
Po 11	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DSeYwc7CTkE/
Po 12	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DSb5sfDCXag/
Po 13	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/p/DSbCXCoE1xw/
Po 14	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DSZlPfiw_B/

Po 15	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUSPAfeCXCx/
Po 16	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUXqi_xCXg3/
Po 17	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUFqKT9CZNz/
Po 18	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DTxoZ3WiU6s/
Po 19	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DTKTIFxiVmy/
Po 20	Reel	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUZXqq7k7fq/

Discussion

The findings indicate that the dominant pattern in @masdamar.magelang's Instagram content is aspirational and belief-driven messaging. These messages are constructed through narratives that emphasize moral integrity, perseverance, collective responsibility, and shared civic values. Rather than focusing primarily on detailed policy explanations, the communication strategy prioritizes symbolic representations of leadership values and ethical positioning. This predominance of aspirational framing reflects the "aspiration and belief" element of the Nine Block Conversation Planner framework (Kelly, 2007), which encourages communicators to build emotional resonance through shared vision and value alignment.

In the context of digital political communication, aspirational messages play a crucial role in constructing symbolic leadership identities. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, serve not only as information channels but also as performative arenas where political actors curate identities and relational closeness with audiences [15]. The findings suggest that Mayor Damar Prasetyono's communication strategy aligns with what Enli (2017) describes as "authenticity construction," where leaders emphasize personal values and moral commitments to foster trust and perceptions of connectedness [16]. By repeatedly invoking integrity, collective aspiration, and moral responsibility, the account cultivates an image of values-driven and humanistic leadership.

Furthermore, the dominance of aspirational content can be interpreted through the lens of affective political communication. Contemporary scholars argue that social media engagement is heavily influenced by emotional and value-based narratives rather than purely rational policy discourse [17]. Posts highlighting moral beliefs and collective dreams tend to strengthen emotional engagement and symbolic identification, which in turn strengthens public trust and the leader's legitimacy. This aligns with the engagement patterns observed in Table 1, where posts combining governance actions with aspirational framing generate higher levels of interaction.

Overall, the dominance of aspirations and faith-based messages on @masdamar.magelang illustrates how local political leaders strategically use digital platforms to construct a humanistic, visionary, and moral leadership identity. This confirms that social media functions not only as an information tool, but as a narrative arena for value-based political communication in the context of contemporary local governance.

Conclusion

This research shows that the Instagram account @masdamar.magelang strategically uses aspirational and faith-oriented messages as the dominant form of digital political communication. Rather than emphasizing detailed policy exposition, the account prioritizes moral values, collective aspirations, and symbolic representations of leadership integrity. Through the application of the Nine Block Conversation Planner framework, the findings reveal that elements of aspiration and faith serve as central narrative mechanisms for building emotional resonance, strengthening relational closeness, and reinforcing the identity of humanistic and visionary leadership in the digital public sphere. Instagram thus operates not only as an information channel, but as a performative space for values-based political storytelling.

At the same time, the dominance of symbolic and affective narratives indicates relative limitations in policy-oriented deliberation, reflecting broader dynamics in contemporary digital governance. While aspirational communication enhances symbolic engagement and legitimacy, it can limit deeper participatory discourse and policy transparency. Theoretically, this study extends the application of the Nine Blocks framework to the domain of local digital political leadership, contributing to scholarship on affective political communication and identity construction in social media environments. Future research could adopt comparative, longitudinal, or audience-centered approaches to further examine how aspirational narratives shape public perceptions and democratic engagement.

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