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WHEN COMPLETE PLANS BREAK DOWN: AUDITING THE MARKETING COMMUNICATION PLANNING FRAMEWORK IN A YOGURT COMPANY

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Abstract

This study examines why a formally complete marketing communication plan fails to produce its intended effect, using the Marketing Communication Planning Framework (MCPF) as an audit instrument in a mid-sized Indonesian yogurt producer. It adopts a descriptive qualitative single-case design that combines participant observation, company KPI documents, and in-depth interviews with seven informants (five internal staff and two customers), analysed with the Miles and Huberman model and triangulated across sources, techniques, and time. All eight MCPF elements were present; effectiveness was constrained not by missing elements but by weak connections between them. Information flow between the managerial and operational levels was broken: the field representatives serving the highest-turnover outlets were never shown the annual campaign calendar or the success criteria for field activities, and no upward channel carried their observations back. At the same time, brand awareness was measured once a year while content, influencer, and event decisions were made weekly, so turnover became the default working indicator and the campaign's core message, which frames digestive health as the origin of beauty, was never tested against the criteria customers actually apply. Second-quarter Instagram engagement reached only about one sixth of the company's own target, and neither customer informant had encountered the campaign after almost two quarters. The study shows that measurement failure in integrated marketing communication can stem from misaligned measurement cadence and severed vertical communication rather than from unwillingness to measure, and that the MCPF, normally a planning tool, can serve as a diagnostic audit instrument.

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INTRODUCTION

In the healthy food and beverage industry, marketing communication plays a decisive role because consumers weigh many factors before purchasing: nutritional content, product authenticity, fit with their lifestyle, and trust in the brand. Consumers of health products are typically highly involved in the decision process because the product bears directly on their wellbeing. That involvement does not translate automatically into responsiveness, however. Tavares *et al.* (2026) and Ballco and Gracia (2022) both find the effect of health claims conditional on nutrition knowledge, price, taste, and brand perception rather than uniform across consumers. Marketing communication in this industry must therefore be educational yet emotional and

relatable enough to build trust, which makes it unusually dependent on whether the intended message reaches and persuades the intended audience.

Whether it does so is rarely established. Firms commonly prepare communication plans without ever auditing their implementation. Reid (2005) argued that performance auditing of integrated marketing communication (IMC) actions and outcomes is seldom conducted systematically, even though such auditing is the precondition for knowing whether communication objectives have been met. Two decades later a bibliometric review of 304 IMC articles published between 2015 and 2024 found the field intellectually fragmented, with measurement still an unresolved priority (Qi et al., 2025). The gap is not that firms reject evaluation in principle, but that little is known about how evaluation breaks down in the daily practice of an operating firm.

The gap bites hardest in mid-sized firms. Pisicchio and Toaldo (2021) and Butkouskaya et al. (2024) show that such firms can offset resource constraints through innovation orientation and dynamic capability, while Porcu et al. (2020) find a collaborative rather than controlling corporate culture to be an important antecedent of firm-wide IMC. What these studies establish statistically they cannot show in motion: the mechanism by which a formally complete communication plan fails to translate into effect. Observing that mechanism requires simultaneous access to a firm's internal reasoning, documents, and field-level practice while its campaign is running, which a single case with insider access can satisfy and survey designs generally cannot.

Two choices follow. The first is the evaluative lens. Kliatchko (2008) supplies a definitional structure but not a procedural sequence; the firm-wide IMC scale of Porcu et al. (2017) and the IMC capability construct of Luxton et al. (2017) measure integration as a latent property through managerial self-report; Reid (2005) establishes the principle of performance auditing without specifying what is to be audited. The Marketing Communication Planning Framework (MCPF) of Fill and Turnbull (2023) is preferred here because it names eight elements, so a failure can be located at a point rather than scored globally; because it is explicitly cyclical, which makes a broken feedback return visible as a finding rather than as missing data; and because its elements are defined by observable practice, so they can be operationalised from documents and observation as well as interviews. The MCPF is therefore used here not as a planning tool, its conventional role, but as a diagnostic audit instrument.

The second choice is what this study adds. Prior work has shown that IMC evaluation is weak (Reid, 2005), that integration can be scored (Porcu et al., 2017), and that implementation maturity varies across firms (Manoli & Hodgkinson, 2020). What has not been examined is the internal mechanism linking a complete plan to a null outcome inside one organisation while its campaign is still running, and specifically the role of vertical information flow, which Manoli and Hodgkinson (2021) identify as under-explored relative to the attention given to outward message consistency. The study therefore addresses one research question: how does a formally complete marketing communication plan fail to produce its intended effect inside a single organisation while its campaign is running, and at which points of the MCPF cycle does that failure originate?

This study therefore takes one firm as an instance through which to examine that mechanism. A single-case design was preferred to a multi-case comparison deliberately: a multi-case design can establish that implementation maturity differs across firms, but it cannot follow one campaign from planning document to field execution to customer

response within a single cycle, which is what tracing a mechanism requires. Heavenly Blush Yogurt satisfied four conditions. It operates in the healthy food and beverage category, where purchase depends strongly on message credibility. It was running a defined campaign, Ready Gut Set Glow, throughout the observation period, so planning, execution, and outcome could be traced in one cycle (*Ready Gut Set Glow*, 2025). It had all eight framework elements in place, which separates problems of completeness from problems of connection. And it granted the first author working access to internal documents, decision-makers, and field operations. The analytical claims are nevertheless framed at the level of the mid-sized healthy food producer rather than the brand.

The firm is a mid-sized Indonesian producer of yogurt-based products, including Greek Yogurt, Yoguruto, and Tummy Yogurt Drink, differentiated by the HB10 low-acidity culture on which its health claims rest. Its communication has shifted from an offline distribution focus towards marketplaces and collaboration with key opinion leaders (Ahmad, 2023). During the study period it pursued an explicit brand awareness target, making the relationship between stated communication objectives and observed outcomes directly examinable.

Marketing Communication and the MCPF

Fill and Turnbull (2023) define marketing communication as an audience-centred activity that encourages engagement and promotes conversations with and among audiences, resting on three interrelated aspects: audience, requiring that messages rest on an understanding of audience behaviour and needs; engagement, requiring that messages prompt the target audience to respond to the brand; and responses, which measure communication success in attitudinal, emotional, and behavioural terms. This aligns with Kliatchko (2008), who defines IMC as an audience-driven business process for strategically managing stakeholders, content, channels, and results. Finne and Grönroos (2017) go further, placing the consumer rather than the firm as the party who integrates messages; by implication, evaluation cannot be conducted from the internal side alone.

Communication in an organisation serves one of four core tasks known as the DRIP framework: differentiate, reinforce, inform, and persuade. Usually only one or two are pursued in a single campaign (Fill & Turnbull, 2023).

For planning and sequencing marketing communication activities, Fill and Turnbull (2023) offer the MCPF. Its processes are not linear but integrative and interdependent, resting on an objective-and-task approach that produces a plan for each communication tool which is then combined into a strategy. The MCPF comprises context analysis, communication objectives, marketing communication strategy, marketing communication mix, resources, scheduling and implementation, evaluation, and feedback.

The first element, context analysis, examines the market and communication factors affecting a brand's progress towards its long-term goals, spanning the customer context (segment characteristics, awareness and attitudes, involvement, the decision-making unit, and media usage), the business context (corporate and marketing strategy, brand and competitor analysis), the internal context (finance, organisational identity and culture, marketing expertise, and agency availability), and the external context (stakeholders and their communication needs, alongside social, political, economic, and technological conditions), as set out by Fill and Turnbull (2023).

The second element, communication objectives, balances the plan and removes the single-minded focus on sales. Fill and Turnbull (2023) distinguish corporate objectives, referring to organisational vision; marketing objectives, which are results-oriented; and marketing communication objectives, derived from the brand's current and desired future context. All three should be expressed in SMARTER terms: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound, equality-driven, and responsible. The first element, context analysis, examines the market and communication factors affecting a brand's progress towards its long-term goals, spanning the customer context (segment characteristics, awareness and attitudes, involvement, the decision-making unit, and media usage), the business context (corporate and marketing strategy, brand and competitor analysis), the internal context (finance, organisational identity and culture, marketing expertise, and agency availability), and the external context (stakeholders and their communication needs, alongside social, political, economic, and technological conditions). The second, communication objectives, balances the plan against a single-minded focus on sales by distinguishing corporate, marketing, and marketing communication objectives, all of which should be expressed in SMARTER terms: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound, equality-driven, and responsible. Anabila (2020) found that organisations setting communication objectives beyond sales targets achieved stronger brand equity. The third, marketing communication strategy, concerns the overall approach used to realise those objectives, divided into push, pull, and profile strategies (Fill & Turnbull, 2023). found that organisations setting communication objectives beyond sales targets achieved stronger brand equity. The third element, marketing communication strategy, concerns the overall approach used to realise those objectives, divided into push, pull, and profile strategies.

The fourth element, marketing communication mix, covers five principal tools, advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, and personal selling, plus sponsorship, exhibitions, and field marketing; audiences are reached through paid, owned, and earned media, with informative, emotional, user-generated, and branded content. Batra and Keller (2016) stress that effectiveness turns on fit between objectives, tool characteristics, and the consumer journey rather than on deploying every tool at once, Baxendale et al. (2015) find touchpoint positivity more consequential than touchpoint frequency, and Vollero et al. (2019) show that in digital contexts brand meaning is negotiated with consumers through user-generated content rather than controlled by the firm.

The fifth element, resources, covers finance, marketing expertise, and time; Luxton et al. (2017) position IMC as an organisational capability built from internal knowledge and skill, so that human-resource constraints bear directly on brand performance. The sixth, scheduling and implementation, concerns the timing and duration of message delivery across chosen channels; the seventh, evaluation, ensures objectives are met and resources used efficiently; and the eighth, feedback, returns information on tool performance, resource adequacy, and strategic fit into the context analysis of the next campaign (Fill & Turnbull, 2023). That return presumes information moving in both directions across organisational levels, and Manoli and Hodgkinson (2021) show that vertical and cross-functional internal communication is far less studied than outward consistency yet determines whether the movement occurs at all. The operational indicators used to observe each element in this study are set out in Table 2.

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RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method. Following Sugiyono (2021), qualitative research rests on post-positivist philosophy, examines objects in their natural condition with the researcher as key instrument, collects data through triangulation, analyses inductively, and emphasises meaning over generalisation.

The research object is the marketing communication activity of Heavenly Blush Yogurt, examined against the MCPF. Seven informants participated: five internal staff selected purposively as decision-makers and direct implementers, and two customers drawn from the new customer category. Informant profiles appear in Table 1.

Table 1. Informant Profiles

Code	Informant	Position / Category	Party
I1	Informant 1	Product Manager	Internal
I2	Informant 2	Product Manager	Internal
I3	Informant 3	Digital Marketing Manager	Internal
I4	Informant 4	Field Marketing Representative	Internal
I5	Informant 5	Field Marketing Representative	Internal
E1	Customer E1 (18, student)	Customer (new customer)	External
E2	Customer E2 (22, freelancer)	Customer (new customer)	External

Source: Primary data (2025)

Primary data came from interviews with internal and external parties and from direct field observation. Secondary data comprised the company's social media key performance indicator (KPI) documents covering followers gained, engagement rate, and content published during the first and second quarters of 2025.

Two collection techniques were used. The first author conducted participant observation while working within the company's marketing communication function as a social media specialist, acting as a moderate participant who joined some but not all activities (Sugiyono, 2021). Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted between March and June 2025, lasting 30 to 60 minutes per informant, recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. All interviews were conducted in Indonesian; the quotations presented here were translated by the authors, and the original transcripts are retained by them.

The first author's dual role as social media specialist and researcher is the principal threat to this design and was managed rather than assumed away. Access and consent were obtained in writing from marketing management before fieldwork; informants were told that participation was voluntary, that refusal carried no employment consequence, and that they would be identified by code rather than name. Because informants could still be recognised by colleagues from their role, position labels in Table 1 and in attributed quotations are generalised, and the city in which each field representative works is not linked to individual statements. Interviews were conducted by the first author but designed and reviewed by the second author, who has no relationship with the company and independently audited transcripts, codes, and category assignments, with disagreements resolved against the transcript. A reflexive journal separated observational records from the author's interpretations, so that inferences drawn from insider knowledge could be traced and challenged. The company held no right of review over the findings and no account was edited at its request; where internal perception and documented performance diverged, both were reported. These safeguards limit rather than remove positional bias, and the two bearing most directly on it are the external coding audit and the inclusion of customer informants,

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whose accounts allowed internal assumptions to be tested against evidence from outside the organisation.

Sampling Logic and Scope Conditions

The informant structure follows from the object of study. Because the unit of analysis is the firm's communication process rather than the consumer population, internal informants were chosen for role coverage: the two product managers who set campaign objectives, the digital marketing manager who executes them, and the two field representatives who implement them at the point of sale. Together they span every level at which MCPF elements are decided or enacted, which is the condition for locating where the process breaks.

The role of the two external informants is more limited and needs to be made explicit. They are not a sample from which to generalise about consumer attitudes. They act as a disconfirming test of one internal proposition – that the campaign message had got through to its audience and matched its purchase criteria. Both were new customers, active social media users who followed the brand's accounts, so they were the most favourable possible case for that proposition. That neither had observed the campaign after almost two quarters thus disconfirms the internal claim without the need for a population parameter and is consistent with evidence that consumers often treat health claims as marketing language rather than decision inputs (Stuthridge et al., 2022). This design cannot provide quantitative awareness measurement on a representative sample, which would be necessary to confirm the positive proposition that a revised message would reach consumers.

Geographical scope is a further limiting factor. The field representatives cover Surabaya and Malang, and both customers were recruited in East Java. East Java is a large market but not a proxy for Indonesia: Jakarta differs in retail density, media consumption, and price sensitivity, and the eastern provinces differ again in distribution reach. The communication failure documented here is a property of organisational structure and would be expected wherever that structure operates, but its consequences at the point of sale, and the level of brand awareness itself, may differ outside East Java. The findings are accordingly offered as a mechanism that travels, not as magnitudes that do.

Operational Definitions and Analysis

Each MCPF element was operationalised as a set of indicators observed through interviews, observation, and documents, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Operational Definitions of MCPF Elements and Observed Indicators

MCPF Element	Observed Indicators
Context analysis	Target market characteristics; brand awareness at events and sponsorships; competitor analysis; financial constraints; external trends.
Communication objectives	Long- and short-term goals; brand awareness target; measurement cadence; conformity with SMARTER terms.
Marketing communication strategy	Deployment of push, pull, and profile strategies; fit between strategy and principal sales channel.
Marketing communication mix	Use of the eight tools; use of paid, owned, and earned media; content types and performance; purchase intent after events.
Resources	Adequacy of staff numbers and expertise; budget availability; training and development programmes.
Scheduling and	Existence of a main calendar; content planning; cross-team

implementation	coordination.
Evaluation	Success indicators in use; management of content performance data; evaluation of influencer and event selection.
Feedback	Mechanisms for collecting and processing input; existence of open internal discussion.

Source: Adapted from Fill & Turnbull (2023) & processed by the authors (2025)

Analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model as cited in Sugiyono (2021), comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Verbatim transcripts were read repeatedly, relevant statements were assigned open codes, adjacent codes were grouped into categories, and categories were mapped onto the eight MCPF elements as themes, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Examples of the Coding Process

Verbatim Statement (abridged)	Open Code	Category	Theme
"All women can glow up and become the best version of themselves. Starting from the inside, starting from their digestion." (I1)	Digestive health framed as the route to beauty	Core campaign message	Communication objectives
"I don't really pay attention to it, because I just want to make it a snack." (E1, on digestive and skin claims)	Core claim not attended to	Message–audience mismatch	Context analysis
"The indicator of success? Turnover..." (I2)	Turnover as sole indicator	Sales-oriented evaluation	Evaluation
"Honestly, to this day I still do not understand what the success indicator for an event at Heavenly Blush is." (I5)	Indicator unknown at field level	Criteria not communicated downward	Evaluation; Feedback
"There should be one... But I have never known what it looks like, because I was never told." (I5, on the main calendar)	Main calendar not shared	Broken vertical information flow	Scheduling and implementation
"None. None at all... We learn by ourselves. Independently." (I4, on training)	No formal training	Unsystematic capability building	Resources
"We do use it, but not that much... whether to do something further with it, I don't think we have thought about that yet." (I3, on user-generated content)	Earned media unmanaged	Most influential channel least managed	Marketing communication mix

Source: Data processed (2025)

Credibility was tested through source, technique, and time triangulation (Sugiyono, 2021): comparing accounts across internal informants and between internal informants and customers, comparing interview material against field observation and KPI documents, and repeating enquiry on separate occasions. Internal informants described social media as the most effective channel for reaching the target, for instance, whereas the KPI documents show engagement far below the company's own threshold. This divergence was not resolved by privileging one source but treated as a finding about the distance between internal perception and measured performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Amid increasing competition in the yogurt category, the firm developed the Ready Gut Set Glow campaign, which invites Indonesian women to consume high-fibre, high-protein, low-sugar yogurt to care for their digestion as the first step to "glow up" (Rahmah, 2025). In DRIP terms, the campaign both informs and persuades. The following sections assess each of the eight MCPF elements and discuss the findings in relation to the literature.

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Context Analysis

Internal informants were consistent in their description of the target market: active women in the middle-to-upper income bracket who value health and attractiveness. They differed, however, on age. I1 defined the target as women aged 20–55, whereas I2 described a range from senior secondary school age to 45 or 55, narrowing the core segment to first jobbers up to age 55. Disagreement among decision-makers on so basic a parameter is itself a finding: the customer context is shared in spirit but not specified with the precision the MCPF assumes.

Internal informants estimated brand awareness at 5% of the target market, a figure taken from an annual company survey conducted roughly a year after the campaign began; the following survey was scheduled for December 2025. Awareness is therefore measured, but only once a year. Field observation adds a nuance absent from the company data: the brand is better recognised among sport-oriented consumers than among beauty-oriented ones, even though the current campaign relies on a beauty theme.

The mismatch runs deeper than channel selection. The campaign's core proposition, as I1 articulated it, places digestion at the origin of beauty.

> "There is one thing we repeat over and over, both online and offline: that all women can glow up and become the best version of themselves. Starting from the inside, starting from their digestion." (I1 – Product Manager)

Yet when E1 was asked what she attends to when buying yogurt, she named sugar content and preservatives and dismissed the very claims on which the campaign is built.

> "Oh, as for that, I don't really pay attention to it, because I just want to make it a snack. At most the preservatives." (E1 – customer, on digestive and skin-glow claims)

The company's central proposition and the customer's actual decision criteria therefore diverge at the level of the message itself, not merely its distribution. Kliatchko (2008) places stakeholders as the first pillar of IMC, so that understanding the audience must precede decisions about content and channel, while Finne and Grönroos (2017) argue that integration ultimately occurs in the consumer's mind rather than in the firm's planning documents. The gap identified here arises at the earliest stage of the MCPF and is carried through every element that follows.

The psychological cost of that divergence exceeds a simple failure to inform, and two mechanisms compound it. The first is relevance. E1 places yogurt in the snack category and screens it on sugar and preservatives, whereas the campaign addresses it as a beauty intervention mediated by digestion. A message answering a question the consumer is not asking is not processed weakly but peripherally or not at all, which is why repetition cannot remedy it. Tavares et al. (2026) make the same point from the claims literature: the effect of a health claim depends on whether motivation and prior knowledge make the claimed benefit personally consequential, not on the claim's presence.

The second is claim distance. The proposition asks the consumer to accept a two-step causal chain, from product to digestion and from digestion to appearance, in a category bought in seconds at a shelf. Stuthridge et al. (2022) found that consumers frequently classify such claims as marketing language rather than information, with habit and price dominating the decision, and a longer chain gives that classification more to work with. Collins and Lalor (2024), studying yogurt and dairy specifically, report that consumers attend to concrete and verifiable attributes more readily than to

physiological benefit claims, which matches E1's screening exactly.

The consequence for brand perception is not neutral. Field observation established that the brand is better known among sport-interested consumers than beauty-interested ones, so repositioning towards beauty risks diluting an association that already works without a compensating gain; the finding reported under evaluation below, that beauty and lifestyle sponsorships generated less traffic and turnover than sports events and office activations, is consistent with this. The mismatch identified at context analysis is therefore not a discrete error at one element but an accumulating cost: it misdirects creative resource, weakens an existing association, and, never being tested against consumers during execution, cannot be detected by any element downstream.

On the business context, I1 reported that Heavenly Blush ranks first in the yogurt category within premium supermarkets but falls outside the top five in minimarkets, which serve a middle-to-lower segment. This qualifies the 5% awareness figure considerably: the brand is dominant in its chosen niche and marginal outside it, so a low aggregate score may reflect deliberate positioning rather than communication failure. The company nonetheless conducts no direct competitor analysis, only analysis of indirect competitors, which departs from the business context component of the MCPF and deprives the firm of the benchmark needed to judge whether 5% is low by category standards.

On the internal context, the campaign had been running for nearly two quarters without perceptible impact, which informants linked to divisional budget constraints. Continuous efficiency measures left staff stretched, although informants also framed the constraint as a spur to creativity, echoing Pisicchio and Toaldo (2021) on innovation orientation offsetting resource constraints in small and medium enterprises. The KPI data presented below indicate that such compensation has not yet occurred in practice.

Communication Objectives

Interviews at this stage focused on managerial informants as decision-makers. All stated the same long-term goal, to become the best yogurt brand in Indonesia in both product and service, with short-term goals tailored to each role and the principal target expressed as brand awareness.

> "At the start of the year we set a target. This year the target is awareness at the end of the period… Ten percent, Chels. So from 5 percent to 10 percent… We are still optimistic we can reach 10% awareness when we run the survey in December 2025." (I1 – Product Manager)

Read against the MCPF, the long-term goal is a corporate objective, the role-specific short-term goals are marketing objectives, and the 10% awareness target is a marketing communication objective, so all three tiers required by Fill and Turnbull (2023) are formally present. Tested against SMARTER terms the target is specific, measurable, and time-bound, with a survey date attached.

The difficulty is not the absence of a time-bound objective but the mismatch between measurement and decision cadence. Awareness is measured once a year, while decisions about content, influencers, and events are taken weekly and quarterly. In the intervening months no awareness figure exists to steer by, and the indicator that fills the vacuum is the one available continuously.

> "The indicator of success? Turnover... People knowing but not buying is definitely a problem, because there is a broken journey. Better that we do not advertise but people buy, than that we advertise a lot and people do not." (I2 – Product Manager)

This is a sharper version of the problem Reid (2005) identified: organisations may state communication objectives formally yet audit performance by sales measures, so that the contribution of communication is never isolated. The case supports Anabila (2020) from the opposite direction and refines it: the displacement of communication objectives by sales measures need not stem from a refusal to measure, but can follow from measuring at a frequency too low to inform the decisions being made.

Marketing Communication Strategy

All three tactics are being used. The push strategy is from previous years, when the goal was sales and expanding the distributor. The company created partnerships with distributors throughout Indonesia and 95% of the company's sales originate from offline supermarkets, supported by in-store promotions, sampling, sales promotion personnel and events. Pull and profile initiatives are currently running in parallel through channels targeting end customers, including the official website, e-commerce, pop-up stores, social media content, key opinion leaders, advertising and WhatsApp ordering.

The imbalance to be aware of is between the income generating channel and the channel that gets campaign funding. 95% of the sales come via the push strategy, although the Ready Gut Set Glow campaign and its creative assets are focused on digital channels. Since most transactions take occur at physical points of sale, better communication at these locations through point-of-sale materials and product education provided by promotion staff could be more effective in achieving the awareness target than producing additional digital content. This also matches both customers' accounts: E1 had first seen the brand in a minimarket and at a bazaar and E2 had been approached by promotion workers in a supermarket.

The more telling question is why the allocation is counter-revenue. The interviews lead to four convergent explanations, not a single blunder. The first is that of measurability. Digital channels deliver follower, reach and engagement statistics continually and at zero marginal cost but the contribution of point-of-sale items or promotion-staff education to awareness is not quantified individually. The measurement-cadence challenge is a budgeting decision: if the awareness statistic is only accessible once a year, the channel that reports numbers weekly gets planning attention, no matter which channel is generating revenue. The second reason is organisational. Product management owns the campaign, and a three-person digital team executes it, but the field reps are outside of that organization and never get the campaign calendar, as the scheduling piece indicates. No representative in the allocation process means that the channel does not compete for resources, a phenomenon directly documented by Manoli and Hodgkinson (2021).

The third is historical. The push strategy, and its distributor relationships, are remnants of an earlier growth era, not a communication channel to be invested in but an asset to be conserved. In internal accounts we have offline as the sales structure and online as the marketing structure, which masks the fact that all the brand encounters of both customer types stated took place offline. Fourth, the resource constraint itself: because of ongoing efficiency initiatives, the cost of producing digital material per unit of output is lower. Each reason stands on its own merit. Together they create an

allocation where the campaign's creative attention is focused on the channel that manages a small portion of transactions, while the 95% of sales that take place offline are served by staff who don't know what the campaign is. Batra and Keller (2016) suggest that efficacy depends on fit between objectives, instruments and stage of consumer journey. The failing here is not to appreciate that idea but to act on it in certain organisational circumstances.

Marketing Communication Mix

All eight tools are currently in use. The campaign message is communicated via online advertising, raising awareness. Sales advertising is consciously restricted to maintain the luxury image. Discounts and items are saved for existing clients. Offline direct marketing educates new customers about products, and internet direct marketing helps existing customers with bulk buy. Activation is event orientated where sponsorship and exhibitions are backed by field marketing through sampling and product education.

Paid media is advertising and influencer endorsement that is curated and managed by product managers. Owned media is used but seen as resource-constrained, whereas earned media is comprised of reviews and mentions by public personalities and customers. Both customers claimed they bought because of earned media, not corporate promotion.

> "I once ran into a friend at Hokky. Out of nowhere she recommended Heavenly Blush, said she always eats it." ... "Yes. That is why I bought it." (E1 – customer, on peer recommendation)

This is consistent with Baxendale et al. (2015) who discovered that word of mouth had a greater effect on brand consideration than paid touchpoint frequency. It is also consistent with Vollero et al. (2019) who demonstrated that brand meaning is negotiated through user-generated material. The digital manager personally agreed that the least consciously controlled channel with the strongest proved influence on both customers is.

> "We do use it, but not that much. We just turn it into organic content that we repost daily, so they feel appreciated. But whether to do something further with it, I don't think we have thought about that yet." (I3 – Digital Marketing Manager, on user-generated content)

The firm also runs a share-to-story programme that rewards customers with free product at events, but the programme is transactional rather than designed for sustained advocacy. Content output is deliberately weighted towards educational material, which I3 justified on the grounds that buyers need to understand why they are buying. The two customers expressed their own content preferences: E1 favoured practical tips and E2 favoured longer, story-based content. Of the content items counted in Table 4, 31 were produced by the first author during the observation period; the implications are addressed in the limitations.

Table 4 compares the company's social media KPI achievement in the first two quarters of 2025 against the targets the company set for itself.

Table 4. Social Media KPI Achievement, Heavenly Blush Yogurt, Q1 and Q2 2025

Indicator	Q1 Target	Q1 Actual	Q2 Target	Q2 Actual
Instagram followers	52,500	50,100	55,000	52,422
Instagram engagement rate	1.00%	0.06%	1.00%	0.17%
Content published (per quarter)	60	22	60	37
TikTok followers	50,000	46,700	50,000	47,000

Indicator	Q1 Target	Q1 Actual	Q2 Target	Q2 Actual
TikTok likes	200,000	202,400	250,000	208,000
TikTok engagement rate	3.00%	0.69%	3.00%	0.73%

Source: Company social media KPI documents, Q1–Q2 2025, processed by the authors.

Table 4 reports six indicators across Instagram and TikTok. All indicators were below target in both quarters save from Q1 TikTok likes. The trajectory improved in Q2 - Instagram engagement climbed from 0.06% to 0.17% and content output rose from 22 to 37 pieces which is consistent with the content planning established from the second quarter. But the gap to objective was still large, with Q2 Instagram engagement at about one sixth of the company's stated minimum criterion. Then there is the factor of resources, as the constraint is not just the quality of the creative, but also the capacity to produce, as content output was also below aim.

Resources

Insider sources said the biggest problem was a lack of staff, which they blamed on budget efficiency efforts. I3 mentioned a digital team of three persons encompassing performance advertising and analytics, influencer management and content generation and admitted that three people are probably not enough for the variety of digital marketing activities. I1 recognised a process constraint, not a skills deficit, on their own.

> "The challenge is how to ride the wave, where trends change very fast, so we are chased by time to create the content… There is a division specifically handling influencers but there are internal obstacles. It needs a process or time that is still long, and that is what we want to fix." (I1 – Product Manager)

Regarding competence, I1 assessed the team skills as sufficient, but they lacked experience. This tension is instructive rather than paradoxical considering recurrent allegations that there are insufficient resources; what is seen as sufficient is individual technical skill; what is seen as absent is the organization's collective capacity to respond rapidly. This difference is important since a competence problem calls for training, whereas a capacity problem asks for more people, easier approval processes, or delegated authority. Neither field representative stated any remedy had been applied.

> "No, there is none… everything self-taught, learning by doing. There is no such thing as training. Whereas that is what I would expect from a company. Marketing is dynamic, the trends keep changing. The team should be developed, their skills and knowledge upgraded." (I5 – Field Marketing Representative)

I4 said the same is true in almost the same words: the team is learning autonomously. This has direct implications for Luxton et al. (2017) who conceptualise IMC as an organisational capability built on internal knowledge and skill rather than a series of stand-alone promotional activities. The absence of training is not merely an employee welfare issue but an impediment to building IMC capability and through it brand performance. In the Indonesian context, Mandagie and Rana (2023) find that IMC and social media adoption help build employee-based brand equity and suggest that shared internal knowledge is a necessity to convey external messaging. What makes this instance different is the absence of the transformation of constraint into advantage since constraint is managed with continual efficiency measures and human improvisation rather than with planned process design.

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Scheduling and Implementation

The company maintains an annual campaign calendar divided into quarters, including predictable items such as product launches. I2 described it as flexible in timing and tactics while fixed in main message. The digital division maintains content planning applied consistently since the second quarter, which explains the rise in output recorded in Table 4.

> "Ideally we have what is called a marketing calendar, but as I said ours is flexible… we adjust to whatever is the priority that day, that quarter, that month. So it is flexible, but we do have a main calendar." (I3 – Digital Marketing Manager)

The most striking finding on this element is that managers know the main calendar exists while field representatives do not.

> "There should be one. Every company should have a calendar for the year, what they intend to do. But I have never known what it looks like, because I was never told." (I5 – Field Marketing Representative)

The document intended as the alignment instrument therefore stops at managerial level, so the staff who interact directly with consumers at the points of sale generating 95% of revenue work without knowledge of the campaign direction. Porcu et al. (2020) found a collaborative rather than controlling corporate culture to be an important antecedent of firm-wide IMC, and planning that is centralised managerially but not socialised operationally is characteristic of the controlling pattern. This also clarifies why Kliatchko (2008) treats integration as a business process: without information flow across levels, the consistency designed on paper does not materialise at the touchpoints that matter.

The connection between this break and the KPI shortfall in Table 4 can be traced in four steps, each evidenced separately above. First, the campaign calendar and the success criteria for field activities stop at managerial level, as I5 states directly. Second, field activity therefore proceeds unaligned to the campaign: events run without a definition of success, and point-of-sale education carries no obligation to reproduce the campaign message. Third, the campaign is consequently absent from the touchpoints both customers actually used, a minimarket shelf, a bazaar, a supermarket promotion, and a peer recommendation, and present only on the digital channels the company can observe. Fourth, with offline execution detached and generating no earned material, the digital channels carry the campaign alone while being measured against thresholds set for a fully supported one, and engagement falls to roughly one-sixth of the lowest acceptable level. The shortfall in Table 4 is therefore not solely an artefact of content quality or posting volume, both of which improved in the second quarter without closing the gap; it is the endpoint of a campaign executed on one channel and measured as though it ran on all of them.

The same break explains why the shortfall was not corrected. Detection requires that those closest to the touchpoints report what they observe upward, and no such channel exists. Manoli and Hodgkinson (2021) find that internal communication takes its form from the communication climate, and a climate in which information moves downward, stops before reaching implementers, and does not return is the condition under which a measurable failure persists for two quarters without an organisational response.

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Evaluation

Turnover remains the working success indicator, as I2 stated plainly. More revealing is that at field level the criterion is not merely narrow but unknown.

> "Honestly, to this day I still do not understand what the success indicator for an event at Heavenly Blush is. What I do know is that the indicator should be whether the event brings impact, one of which is people coming to the booth… and there should be synergy with sales." (I5 – Field Marketing Representative)

This is the concrete form of the problem Reid (2005) identified. Without a per-activity performance record and a criterion known to those executing it, the organisation cannot distinguish what worked from what did not, and the feedback loop the MCPF requires cannot close. The same absence applies to content: no recapitulation of views, interactions, and engagement per post is maintained, so the data are not used as a basis for content strategy.

Influencer selection presents a more complex picture than a simple criteria deficit. I2 observed that not all influencers are effective, and I4 argued that the company selects influencers who are large but insufficiently known to the public, recommending a shift towards mega influencers to maximise awareness reach; E2 independently reported greater trust in influencers who already have a name. This appears to conflict with Beichert et al. (2024), whose analysis across the influencer marketing funnel found that targeting low-followership influencers outperforms high-followership targeting on three return-on-investment metrics. The tension resolves once the objective is specified: that evidence concerns revenue efficiency, whereas the company's stated objective for the period is awareness reach. The finding is therefore not that internal judgement is wrong, but that the selection debate proceeds without reference to which objective the influencer spend is meant to serve.

The campaign's reach can be assessed directly through the external informants. After nearly two quarters, neither customer had heard of the campaign. Both are active social media users who follow the brand's accounts, which places the finding beyond a simple problem of audience selection.

> "From my side I have not known about that yet... No, I do not yet know what the Ready Gut Set Glow campaign is." ... "So perhaps the campaign could be pushed harder." (E2 – customer)

Against this, the sales figure most often cited internally requires careful reading, and I1 supplied the qualification.

> "At the moment we cannot yet see the awareness impact, because we can only see it later. But in sales terms, year to date, before we used the Ready Gut Set Glow campaign and after we (I1 – Product Manager) yet see the awareness impact, because we can only see it later. But in sales terms, year to date, before we used the Ready Gut Set Glow campaign and after we used it, we had an increase of 13%. That could be one indicator… only one, though, because there are many indicators." (I1 – Product Manager)

The 13% increase coincided with the campaign period, but this qualitative design has no comparison group and cannot support a causal claim; the same period also saw the Yoguruto Lemon and Mango launch and a series of event activations, so I1's own hedge is the appropriate reading. The more substantive finding is the asymmetry the quotation reveals: a sales figure is available continuously while an awareness figure is not available until December, which is precisely the measurement-cadence problem identified under communication objectives. Internal informants also acknowledged that

campaign advertising lacked a creative indicator capable of leaving a lasting impression, and that sponsorship of beauty and lifestyle events generated less traffic and turnover than sports events or office-to-office activity.

Feedback

Feedback from customers is collected in stages. It is sorted into good or negative insight; patterns are analysed, and ideas are created that are acted on by each division. Both external sources provided us with concrete suggestions. E1 suggested campus activities, quizzes, seven-day consumption challenges, and a consumer community with daily photo check-ins, while E2 wanted a more aggressive push for the campaign. The recommendations from E1 point to the type of sustained advocacy mechanism that the present share-to-story program, which is transactional, does not have, suggesting there is need for a structure the corporation has not yet established.

Conversely, there is no open channel for internal input. Its absence closes the upward channel from operational to managerial level and completes the pattern illustrated under scheduling and implementation: information flows downward, stops before reaching implementers, and does not return. Feedback is the link in the MCPF that gives the findings of the evaluation to the context analysis of the following campaign (Fill & Turnbull, 2023). The planning cycle does not close without that link.

Synthesis and Contributions

The evaluation of the eight elements reveals a comparable trend. The question of completeness is not an issue for the firm: all the elements of the framework exist, and all the communication tools are used. The challenge is in the linkages between the elements and three weak points recur throughout the examination. The first is a message–audience mismatch at context analysis. The basic premise, which positions digestion as the source of beauty, was never validated against the criteria customers really apply, therefore the mismatch sailed through every subsequent element unchallenged. The second is a rhythm mismatch between aims and evaluation: awareness is measured annually whereas content, influencer and event decisions are made weekly and quarterly, thus turnover becomes the working metric by default.

CONCLUSION

This study asked how a formally complete communication plan fails to produce effect. The answer here is that completeness and connection are different properties. All eight MCPF elements are present; what is absent is the transmission between them. Three conclusions follow.

First, measurement failure in integrated marketing communication need not stem from an unwillingness to measure. The company holds a specific, measurable, time-bound awareness objective and surveys against it annually, but because content, influencer, and event decisions are taken weekly and quarterly, no awareness figure exists at the point of decision, and turnover, being continuously available, occupies the vacant indicator position. This refines Reid (2005) and Anabila (2020) in that sales measurements can displace communication objectives due to misaligned cadence rather than neglect, which is a distinct problem with a different fix.

Second, vertical information flow is a prerequisite for integration, not an implementation detail. The annual calendar and the criteria for field success stop at managerial level, and field observations have no upward route back. Without that link,

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the MCPF cycle does not close, and a shortfall can persist for two quarters without correction. This extends Porcu et al. (2020) on corporate culture and supports Manoli and Hodgkinson (2021) in treating internal communication processes as constitutive of integration rather than incidental to it.

Third, the MCPF can serve as an audit tool, not merely a planning tool. Because it enumerates eight elements and specifies a closing feedback loop, it locates failure at a point in a process rather than producing the global integration score that scale-based measures such as Porcu et al. (2017) and Luxton et al. (2017) are designed to provide. Element-level location is the more useful output for diagnosing why a plan did not work.

Managerial Implications

Four immediate steps follow. First, measurement frequency should match decision timing: a streamlined quarterly awareness check alongside the annual survey would allow mid-campaign adjustment. Second, influencer selection criteria should be formalised around engagement rate and audience fit and tied to a stated objective; the evidence favouring low-followership influencers concerns revenue efficiency (Beichert et al., 2024), whereas the company's objective is awareness reach. Third, because 95% of sales are generated offline, the main calendar and event success criteria should be shared regularly with all field representatives, together with a standing feedback forum. Fourth, because earned media was decisive for both customers, the transactional share-to-story mechanism should be developed into a sustained advocacy programme, for which the community and challenge formats proposed by E1 offer a starting point.

Three broader implications are structural rather than tactical and apply to mid-sized firms in similar categories. The first concerns the sequence of investment. A firm in this position may read poor performance as a content problem and respond by increasing output, but the case shows that where vertical communication is broken, more output raises cost without raising effect. Repairing the information architecture is a prerequisite for further communication spending, not an alternative to it.

The second concerns measurement design as a strategic choice. A firm that measures its stated objective less often than it makes decisions has effectively delegated its strategy to whichever indicator reports continuously. Firms unable to fund continuous brand tracking should therefore define an inexpensive proxy that moves at decision frequency and state in advance how it will be read against the annual measure.

The third concerns capability. Luxton et al. (2017) and Mandagie and Rana (2023) treat IMC as an organisational capability built from internal knowledge and skill. Where constraint is met with efficiency measures and individual improvisation, that capability does not accumulate, since what is learned leaves with the individual. The conversion of constraint into advantage that Pisicchio and Toaldo (2021) and Butkouskaya et al. (2024) observe in mid-sized firms requires deliberate process design, and the absence of training reported by both field representatives marks where such design is missing.

Limitations and Future Research

Four limitations qualify these findings, the first bearing on all the others. The first author was employed by the organisation studied, as a social media specialist within the very function under examination. This made the study possible, since documents, managerial reasoning, and field practice could be observed simultaneously within the campaign cycle, but it introduces risks that the safeguards described in the

research methods limit without eliminating. An insider is likelier to adopt the organisation's categories, to treat as normal what an outsider would question, and to read ambiguous evidence consistently with colleagues' accounts. Two considerations are specific to this case. The first author produced 31 of the content pieces whose performance Table 4 records, so part of the KPI achievement evaluated is her own work, creating incentives towards both leniency and over-correction. And the interviews were conducted with colleagues and superiors, a relationship under which candour about managerial shortcomings cannot be assumed, particularly from the field representatives whose criticisms are the most pointed material here. The convergence of their accounts with the documentary record supports but does not prove that these were given freely, and replication by an external researcher would be the appropriate test.

Second, only two external informants participated, both new customers already familiar with the brand, so consumers wholly unfamiliar with the company remain unrepresented and no consumer-side generalisation is available. Third, the 5% awareness figure derives from an annual company survey whose sampling and instrument could not be independently verified, and a two-quarter window cannot capture longer-term effects. Fourth, informant coverage is confined to two East Javanese cities, so the magnitudes reported, including awareness levels and the offline sales share, should not be read as national.

Future research should recruit informants from the target market who do not yet know the brand, combine qualitative work with independent quantitative awareness measurement, extend the observation window so that campaign effects can be separated from concurrent factors such as product launches, and test across a multi-case sample whether the cadence and vertical-flow mechanisms identified here recur.

Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

AI was used in the preparation of this manuscript. The authors used artificial intelligence tools solely to assist with language improvement, grammar checking, and editing for clarity and readability. The authors remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and academic content of the manuscript. All AI-assisted content was reviewed and verified by the authors before submission.

Conflicts of interest

The first author was employed by Heavenly Blush Yogurt as a social media specialist within the marketing communication function during the period of data collection, and is therefore not independent of the organisation studied. This relationship is disclosed as a potential conflict of interest and is addressed in the Research Methods section, which sets out the consent, external coding audit, reflexive journal, and no-company-review safeguards applied. The company provided no funding for this research and exercised no control over its design, analysis, or conclusions. The second author declares no conflict of interest.

Author contributions

Conceptualization, C.D.N. and S.K.; data collection, C.D.N.; data validation, S.K.; formal analysis, C.D.N. and S.K.; writing—original draft preparation, C.D.N.; writing—review and editing, S.K. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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