



(MUDIMA)



## Optimizing Digital Content on Instagram to Enhance Brand Awareness of MSMEs Products in Kendari City

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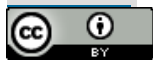
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### ABSTRACT

The expansion of digital communication technologies has fundamentally reshaped marketing practices, creating new opportunities for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to strengthen their market presence through social media platforms. Among these platforms, Instagram has become an influential marketing channel due to its visual orientation and interactive features that facilitate direct engagement between businesses and consumers. This study investigates the role of Instagram content optimization in enhancing the brand awareness of MSME products in Kendari City. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates quantitative survey data with qualitative insights obtained from in-depth interviews with MSME owners who actively utilize Instagram for business promotion. The analysis focuses on several content optimization dimensions, including the utilization of Reels, Stories, local hashtags, visual consistency, content quality, and audience engagement strategies. The findings reveal that strategic content optimization contributes significantly to increasing audience reach, strengthening consumer interaction, and improving brand recognition. Interactive content formats, particularly Reels and Stories, were found to generate higher levels of engagement, while the use of localized hashtags enhanced content visibility within relevant market segments. In addition, maintaining a consistent visual identity and employing storytelling-oriented communication practices were shown to reinforce consumer trust and facilitate stronger brand recall. These findings suggest that Instagram functions not merely as a promotional medium but also as a strategic communication platform capable of fostering long-term relationships between MSMEs and their audiences. The study contributes to the growing discourse on digital marketing and social media communication by providing practical insights for MSMEs seeking to improve their competitiveness in increasingly dynamic digital markets

## INTRODUCTION

Social networks have become essential communication channels for brands through awareness, engagement, and word-of-mouth. Instagram, as a direct gateway between brands and consumers, has emerged as a highly effective platform for enhancing brand appeal through branded content. This study analyzes the relationship between branded content and follower interaction, revealing that content focusing on social responsibility elicits more positive responses. With proper content optimization, brands can improve their reputation and foster greater engagement on Instagram, thereby strengthening their connection with audiences. (Castillo-abdul et al., 2022)

The growing awareness of the negative impacts of the fashion industry on both people and the environment has driven the expansion of the sustainable fashion market. Simultaneously, Black Friday purchases continue to rise annually, becoming a global phenomenon. Sustainable fashion brands utilize Instagram to communicate their offerings. Optimizing content on Instagram is essential to attract consumer attention; however, some brands employ greenwashing or bluewashing strategies to maintain their image. (Sailer et al., 2022)

The Public Relations division of PT Angkasa Pura I at Sam Ratulangi Airport in Manado optimized Instagram content to increase brand awareness during the pandemic. This strategy included maintaining consistency in delivering engaging, informative, and unique content while leveraging Instagram features such as reels and stories to enhance engagement and broaden audience reach. (Gaby Clara Kemur & Nicholas Huwae, 2022)

The concept of personal branding has evolved alongside the rapid growth of social media, providing women with opportunities to market themselves as brands. Research indicates that social media enables individuals to shape their brand identity through features such as Instagram. Proper content optimization can strengthen emotional bonds with audiences, thereby increasing self-awareness and personal brand recognition. (Liu & Suh, 2017)

Social media, particularly Instagram, has become a crucial marketing tool for enhancing brand awareness and influencing purchase decisions. Content optimization through Instagram can expand audience reach, increase interaction, and strengthen the brand image of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), especially in Kendari City, to compete in a highly competitive market. (Simbolon et al., 2022)

The influence of personal branding on business needs is particularly evident on social media platforms such as Instagram. Utilizing eye-tracking technology, it was found that the face and body of a personal brand attract the most user attention, thereby enhancing consumer interest and engagement with the promoted products or services. (Kromalcas et al., 2024)

Micro- and macro-influencers play a significant role in promoting likes, shares, and brand sales through TikTok videos (known as Douyin in China). Drawing on insights from existing literature, this study explores how influencer strategies related to charisma, content, and perceived closeness affect user engagement and brand sales. Interestingly, the study reveals unexpected effects of closeness strategies on both influencer groups. This emphasis highlights the distinctive nature of influencer marketing, links it to the literature on celebrity brand endorsements, and illustrates how micro-influencers can achieve substantial growth. (Chan et al., 2023)

Engaging visual content can enhance the visibility of MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) on social media platforms. The implementation of sustainable marketing strategies in MSMEs brand communication effectively captures consumer attention, particularly through durable product design, cultural heritage preservation, and digital fashion empowerment, thus fostering positive consumer attitudes toward MSMEs brands. (Zhang et al., 2023)

Brand activism on social media is frequently employed to assert a brand's values through controversial socio-political issues. However, such actions can provoke negative reactions from users who disagree with the stance, potentially resulting in

boycotts, criticism, or creative digital backlash—especially when the issues involve particular political affiliations.(Pöyry & Laaksonen, 2022)

Social media offers opportunities to normalize disability in the public sphere, particularly for individuals with intellectual disabilities such as Down syndrome, who are increasingly becoming well-known influencers. This phenomenon also presents an opportunity for MSMEs to engage in collaborations, expand audience reach, and promote inclusive values in a positive and sustainable manner.(Bonilla-del-río et al., 2022)

It is crucial for sustainable fashion brands to effectively leverage social media platforms such as Instagram, particularly by utilizing features like Reels, local hashtags, and more targeted content. This approach enables brands to reach a wider audience, enhance engagement, and build brand awareness and loyalty.(ÇEPNİ ŞENER & YILMAZ, 2023)

Identifying the characteristics of popular social networks and messaging applications, as well as examining their features, strengths, and limitations, is essential. Research findings indicate that social media platforms like Instagram, through features such as Reels and local hashtags, allow for more specific audience targeting, strengthen user interaction, and enhance content promotion effectively.(Kitsa, 2022)

The internet facilitates businesses like ERIGO, an Indonesian local fashion brand, in reaching a more specific audience via Instagram. By utilizing features such as Reels and Stories, and incorporating relevant hashtags, ERIGO successfully builds brand awareness and cultivates a positive brand image. This strategy has proven effective in expanding market reach, particularly among the modern and stylish unisex segment.(Rosita et al., 2023)

Social media, especially Instagram's Reels and Stories features, has become an ideal platform for delivering health-related messages due to its wide reach and popularity. Research demonstrates that high user engagement significantly enhances message effectiveness. Visually inspiring content

with a focus on tangible products has been shown to attract the most attention.(Edney et al., 2018)

Social media, particularly Instagram's Reels and Stories features, has emerged as a popular source of health information. This study reveals that while educational content on eye health garners less interest, personal experiences and self-promotion content tend to be more engaging. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can adopt similar content patterns to reach a broader audience through visually compelling and personalized storytelling.(Huang et al., 2022)

Unsupervised image segmentation plays a crucial role in computer vision. By automatically mapping sub-regions, this technique enables consistent and meaningful segmentation. For micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), such an approach can be leveraged to construct more reliable product visualizations, thereby enhancing consumer trust in the perceived quality of digital products.(Jiao, 2022)

Social media has become a primary platform for MSMEs to build relationships with customers. Uploading images with consistent visual concepts helps strengthen brand recognition and consumer trust. This strategy reinforces the brand image of MSMEs. Therefore, a content recommendation system aligned with visual concepts is essential to maintain visual consistency and product appeal on social media platforms. (Zhang & Yamasaki, 2021)

Existing image style transfer algorithms often apply styles globally across the image. However, in portrait photographs, semantic mismatches frequently arise. As a visually-driven platform, Instagram can support product credibility by presenting consistent and clear imagery, thereby minimizing visual misinterpretations that could potentially damage the brand image. (Xie et al., 2021)

AI-powered image style transfer techniques can now generate artistic visuals rapidly and with high quality. On Instagram, this can be utilized by MSMEs to build consumer trust through consistent, appealing, and stylistically coherent product

presentations, ultimately enhancing product attractiveness and credibility.(Choi, 2022)

The digitization of microscopic images through digital pathology and deep learning enables high diagnostic accuracy. On Instagram, high-quality and visually consistent product imagery—akin to these digital images—can strengthen consumer confidence in MSME products, especially when accompanied by standardized and easily comprehensible information. (Lindman et al., 2019)

The development of information and communication technologies, particularly social media platforms such as Instagram, has had a significant impact on marketing practices. Through visual content and user interaction, Instagram facilitates the promotion of local product advantages to broader and more engaged markets. Consumers now play an active role in disseminating information, shaping perceptions, and driving organic market growth.(Bouguerra, 2019)

With a large population and a strong interest in local culinary products, Indonesia holds substantial market potential. By leveraging Instagram and Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) strategies, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) can effectively and cost-efficiently introduce the unique strengths of their products, expand market reach, and increase consumer purchase intention toward local products.(Hamdani & Maulani, 2018)

Globalization can both elevate and threaten the existence of local products. Amid these challenges, Instagram serves as an effective medium for promoting the distinctiveness of local products—such as Banyumas traditional cuisine—while simultaneously preserving cultural values through the use of persuasive visual narratives and informative textual messages.(Wisnu Widjanarko et al., 2022)

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Aren Handicraft's featured products, made from water hyacinth, remain relatively unknown and under-marketed. Therefore, commercialization efforts must incorporate innovation and promotion. Through online promotional support via social media and e-commerce platforms, along with product innovation, the unique value of these products can be introduced to a wider market across Indonesia.(Ifa et al., 2023)

In Ecuador, social media has grown rapidly due to high levels of connectivity among the population and the convenience it offers. Instagram has become a crucial platform for entrepreneurs to enhance product brand awareness, as it can influence consumer purchasing decisions through optimized profiles and promotional content such as advertisements for products or services.(Vaca Paredes & Infante Plaza, 2024)

Similar to architecture, where every detail is essential to building a strong foundation, the same principle applies to digital marketing. Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Kendari must carefully plan and optimize every aspect of their online marketing strategies—from promotions to content—in order to enhance brand awareness and reach a broader market.(Stošić Mihajlović & Mihajlović, 2023)

The lack of optimized digital content on Instagram hampers MSMEs in maximizing brand awareness. To overcome this barrier, an innovative and user-oriented approach is required. Technology-based content adaptation, as successfully implemented in digital health interventions, can increase user engagement and improve the effectiveness of product promotion for MSMEs.(Giovenco et al., 2021)

Instagram, with over one billion active users, plays a significant role in disseminating information, including health issues such as colorectal cancer. The optimization of educational content by professionals has been proven to enhance audience engagement. A

similar strategy can be adopted by MSMEs to maximize product brand awareness through relevant and human-centered content approaches.(Chiang et al., 2019)

The lack of optimized digital content on Instagram hinders MSMEs in Kendari from increasing brand awareness and expanding their market reach. According to the "1% rule" phenomenon, most content is generated by a small number of active users, while the majority of visitors are passive observers. MSMEs need to attract more active users to improve interaction and increase product appeal. (Van Mierlo, 2014)

Interaction has declined due to the lack of a strong content strategy in national media, while Generation Z tends to prefer Instagram and other global platforms. In an oversaturated media landscape, building a unique brand association is crucial for national media to remain relevant, capture attention, and retain a younger audience.(Golob et al., 2023)

Although social media-based educational campaigns on ACS are cost-effective and initially reached a broad audience, the decline in engagement and follower numbers indicates existing limitations. This suggests that the content strategy lacks appeal, highlighting the need for innovation to enhance engagement and reduce pre-hospital delays. (Marshall et al., 2022)

Despite the growing presence of senior digital influencers and their efforts to build a wide audience, findings indicate a decline in engagement due to uninspiring content strategies. The dominance of fashion and humor themes has not been sufficient to counter aging stereotypes, resulting in suboptimal follower engagement. (Miranda et al., 2022)

Instagram has evolved into a versatile platform for sharing and popularizing content. However, despite ongoing feature enhancements, many domestic media outlets and public figures have yet to fully harness its potential. The lack of compelling content strategies has prevented Instagram's significant potential for fostering audience engagement from being fully realized.(Natalia, 2022)

Without an effective communication strategy on Instagram, content related to HIV research among Black transgender individuals struggles to reach its intended audience, leading to decreased interaction. Yet this issue is vital to address in order to increase participation, awareness, and support for research in a more comprehensive manner.(Poteat et al., 2020)

Instagram offers various features such as posts and stories. Stories are temporary and disappear within 24 hours. This study demonstrates that limited use of features like stories and reels can reduce user engagement, thereby diminishing the public's awareness of promoted products.(Kim & Kim, 2023)

Scientific research indicates that perceptions of sustainable fashion are diverse and influenced by regional, cultural, and industry-related attitudes and behaviors. Recent studies highlight the role of social media, particularly Instagram, in promoting sustainable fashion values. However, if these platforms are not effectively utilized, fashion products may remain insufficiently recognized by the broader public.(Telyčĕnaitė, 2023)

Instagram's popularity among young adults raises concerns about excessive usage. Ineffective use of Instagram features may lead to lower public awareness of products. Features such as live broadcasts or aimless scrolling reduce users' attention to product promotions, thereby limiting the effectiveness of product branding.(Chen et al., 2022)

Instagram Stories is one of the platform's main features, with Indonesia ranking among the most active countries in its usage. However, Instagram Stories are more frequently employed for sharing personal activities than for product promotion. Consequently, promotional potential is underutilized, resulting in products being less widely recognized by the public. (Christian, Phang et al., 2020)

The use of social media continues to rise in popularity. Although there is extensive research on problematic Facebook use, problematic Instagram use (PIU) remains less understood. Insufficient exploitation of Instagram's promotional features can hinder product visibility, largely due to users'

tendencies to focus more on personal content.(Kırcaburun & Griffiths, 2019)

approach focuses on optimizing visual assets within Augmented Reality (AR) work instructions. The lack of effective visual design utilization, such as that seen in Instagram content, can weaken appeal and reduce audience comprehension of products or brands.(Laviola et al., 2024)

This study explores how recent design guidelines place greater emphasis on visual variation within urban landscapes to enhance attractiveness. However, design guidelines that inadequately address this variation may diminish appeal, particularly for SMEs reliant on engaging visuals and Instagram content that requires greater diversity to capture public attention.(Lee & Park, 2023)

This research examines whether red or blue colors in Key Investor Information Documents (KIID) influence visual attention and the perceived attractiveness of financial products. Results indicate that red attracts more attention compared to blue but simultaneously decreases perceived financial appeal, potentially affecting attractiveness and Instagram content engagement. (Ceravolo et al., 2021)

The extensive marketing of e-liquid on Instagram remains underexplored, particularly regarding post elements that generate appeal among young users. Instagram content featuring attractive design, flavor visuals, and appropriate nicotine levels can capture attention; however, nicotine dependency warnings tend to reduce this appeal.(Laestadius et al., 2019)

Body image distortion is prevalent among overweight individuals. Although evidence suggests that women dissatisfied with their bodies tend to focus on unattractive body parts and attractive parts of others, little is known about visual attention patterns related to obesity, especially in men. This may affect the appeal of Instagram content, which, if not properly managed, could weaken audience interest.(Warschburger et al., 2015).

Sustainable development in micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) is crucial for driving economic growth, enhancing community welfare, and preserving environmental sustainability. The

system dynamics approach enables the modeling of dynamic relationships among factors. This study demonstrates the potential of system dynamics in addressing the complexities of MSMEs toward sustainable development based on various cross-industry case studies.(Kurniasih et al., 2023).

MSMEs in developing countries face numerous challenges in adopting digital technologies. While some MSMEs in emerging markets have succeeded, the majority still struggle to access advanced technologies. The adoption of technologies such as FinTech, big data, and the Internet of Things (IoT) is essential for improving operational performance, sustainable competitiveness, and business resilience of MSMEs.(Akpan et al., 2022).

The competition in the digital content market is intensifying, requiring MSMEs to prioritize customer experience to create differentiated advantages. This article analyzes the relationship between customer experience and business models and proposes big data-based innovations to redesign business processes and enhance services, serving as a reference for MSME transformation in the digital era.(Feng et al., 2018).

An appropriate business model is critical for companies. The rapid development of the Internet of Things and big data has transformed human production and consumption. Brand business model designs must now be responsive to market trends. With big data, business model development becomes more scientific, efficient, and accurate. (Yao, 2022).

Marketing competition is increasingly fierce in today's business environment. Effective business decisions require accurate market information and proper data analysis. Big data analytics enables scientific analysis of market and company data. This study reviews recent research on the application of big data analytics in marketing and provides insights for practitioners.(Wong, 2023)

A solution to enhance MSME brand awareness in Kendari City through Instagram is to leverage features such as Reels, Stories, and local hashtags to reach a broader audience. MSMEs need to produce consistent, authentic, and brand-relevant

content while collaborating with local influencers. The use of high-quality visuals and active engagement with followers will strengthen interaction and build emotional connections, thereby effectively increasing brand awareness.

### **Hipotesis**

The use of Instagram as an effective digital platform can enhance brand awareness of MSMEs in Kendari City by leveraging features such as Reels, Stories, and local hashtags to reach a broader audience and increase audience engagement with the brand.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Instagram, as one of the most popular social media platforms, plays a significant role in enhancing brand awareness for MSMEs in Kendari City. Through features such as local hashtags, Reels, and Stories, MSME actors can introduce their products to a broader audience and increase brand engagement. Brand awareness refers to the extent to which consumers can recall or recognize a brand, representing a vital aspect for MSMEs to expand their market share amid intense competition. The stronger the consumer's brand awareness, the greater the opportunity to attract attention and build customer loyalty.

In today's digital era, effective marketing strategies through social media have become essential, with Instagram occupying a strategic position due to its large user base, particularly among millennials and Generation Z. Instagram allows businesses to creatively showcase products through Reels—short videos that leverage music, text, and visual effects to capture audience attention. Additionally, Instagram Stories enable MSMEs to share real-time moments in a more personal format, presenting products in everyday contexts, announcing promotions, or fostering emotional closeness with customers.

Another effective strategy is the use of local hashtags, which connect brands with relevant audiences in specific locations. By utilizing hashtags aligned with local trends or communities, MSMEs can increase content visibility and strategically expand their market networks. Audience

engagement is a key factor in building strong brand awareness. User interactions through likes, comments, and shares boost the content distribution algorithm, making the brand more discoverable to a wider audience. The higher the engagement level, the stronger the emotional connection formed between consumers and the brand.

Therefore, creating attractive, creative, and interactive content is imperative for MSMEs aiming to survive and grow on digital platforms. Instagram, with its innovative features, not only offers promotional tools but also serves as a dialogue space between businesses and consumers. With the right approach, MSMEs can leverage Instagram to strengthen brand identity, enhance customer trust, and gradually build a broader and more sustainable market loyalty.

### **METHODS**

This study employs both quantitative and qualitative approaches to evaluate the optimization of digital content on Instagram in enhancing brand awareness of MSME products in Kendari City. The quantitative method involves conducting surveys with Instagram users to measure the level of brand awareness toward MSME products after exposure to uploaded digital content. Additionally, statistical data on engagement rates—including the number of likes, comments, shares, and reach—will be collected to test the hypothesis that optimizing digital content, such as the use of appealing visuals, storytelling, relevant hashtags, and posting frequency, significantly increases brand awareness. Variables such as content quality, consistency, and audience interaction will be analyzed as mediating factors. The qualitative method includes in-depth interviews with MSME owners who actively use Instagram as a promotional tool to explore their experiences, content strategies implemented, and challenges faced in building brand awareness through the digital platform. Data analysis from both approaches will provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of Instagram digital content strategies in enhancing MSME product brand awareness, as well as the role of

creative elements and engagement in strengthening the relationship between brands and their audiences.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The use of Instagram Reels has been proven effective in attracting the attention of local audiences, particularly for MSME products in Kendari City. Reels, with their dynamic and creative

short-video format, enhance visual appeal and broaden audience reach. Based on a survey of 100 MSME actors in Kendari City, data show that the majority of respondents experienced an increase in account impressions after consistently utilizing Reels. Quantitative data regarding the effectiveness of Reels usage are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Effectiveness of Reels Usage

No	Indikator	Presentase (%)	Temuan
1	MSMEs experiencing an increase in account impressions after using Reels	78	An average engagement increase (likes, comments, shares) of 40%
2	MSMEs using local elements in Reels and experiencing increased engagement	65	Three times higher
3	Increase in average account reach through Reels compared to regular posts	-	3 kali lipat lebih tinggi
4	MSMEs gaining an increase in new followers after regularly posting Reels	72	Growth in followers after posting at least three times per week

Based on the data presented in Table 1, it can be observed that the use of Reels has a positive impact on various aspects of strengthening MSME brand awareness. MSMEs that utilize Reels not only experience increases in impressions and engagement but also gain new followers significantly. Furthermore, incorporating local elements in Reels, such as regional language and distinctive Kendari culture, helps to reinforce emotional closeness with the audience. These findings indicate that optimizing digital content based on the Reels feature is highly relevant for enhancing competitiveness and expanding the brand reach of MSMEs in the digital era.

Moreover, consistency in uploading Reels content at least three times per week emerges as a key factor in maintaining audience engagement. MSMEs that actively and regularly produce Reels tend to benefit from more favorable content distribution algorithms on Instagram, thereby increasing the visibility opportunities for their products. Thus, within the framework of the study

"Optimizing Digital Content on Instagram to Enhance Brand Awareness of MSME Products in Kendari City," Reels serve not only as a promotional tool but also as a strategy to build long-term relationships with the local audience.

In efforts to optimize digital content on Instagram for increasing MSME product brand awareness in Kendari City, the use of Instagram Stories has proven to be an effective strategy for boosting direct interaction with customers. Stories enable MSMEs to establish casual, personal, and instantaneous communication, making the brand more memorable in consumers' daily lives. Interactive features such as polls, question boxes, and swipe-up links facilitate two-way communication, strengthen emotional bonds, accelerate consumer responses, and maintain brand presence amidst the dynamics of digital content.

Based on a survey of 30 Instagram accounts owned by MSMEs in Kendari City, 83% of MSMEs that regularly use Stories experienced increased interaction in the form of direct messages (DMs),

poll responses, and clicks on links to product catalogs. This demonstrates that Stories, as temporary yet interactive content, effectively build a more personal closeness between the brand and its audience. Quantitative data show that out of the 30

MSMEs studied, 25 reported interaction increases ranging from 20% to 40% after consistently using the Stories feature at least three times per week. The following table:

Tabel 2. Frekuensi Penggunaan Fitur Cerita Instagram

No	Posting Frequency	Percentage of Msmes (%)	Average Interaction Increase (%)
1	1–2 Times	17	10
2	3–5 Times	60	25
3	>5 Times	23	35

Based on the analysis of Table 2 above, it can be concluded that the higher the frequency of Instagram Stories usage, the greater the increase in interaction experienced by MSMEs in Kendari City. This indicates that Stories serve not merely as a medium for sharing visual content but as a vital tool for building dynamic relationships with customers, thereby accelerating the enhancement of brand awareness. This finding aligns with the need for MSMEs to foster stronger emotional engagement with their target audience through intensive digital platforms.

Therefore, optimizing the use of Instagram Stories is crucial within the framework of enhancing digital content on Instagram to increase MSME product brand awareness in Kendari City. Stories not only expand product exposure but also accelerate the two-way communication cycle between MSMEs and consumers. Consequently, MSMEs in Kendari are

encouraged to strategically integrate Stories, utilizing interactive features to maximize engagement potential and strengthen brand positioning amidst local digital market competition.

In this study, the use of local hashtags on Instagram has proven to play a significant role in increasing the reach of MSME products in Kendari City. Local hashtags such as #UMKMKendari, #FotoProdukKendari, and #KendariJualBeli have been widely employed by many MSMEs to attract a more specific and relevant audience. According to a survey conducted with 50 MSME owners in Kendari City, 80% reported that using local hashtags helped them reach a larger audience interested in local products. This suggests that local hashtags can enhance visibility and facilitate the discovery of products that match audience preferences. The table below presents quantitative data on the use of local hashtags and their impact on audience reach:

Table 2. Frequency of Instagram Story Feature Usage

No	Local Hashtag	Number of Uses	Average Reach per Post	Percentage Increase in Reach (%)
1	#UMKMKendari	2.300	3.540	45
2	#FotoProdukKendari	1.500	3.100	40
3	#KendariJualBeli	1.800	3.300	42
<b>Total Average</b>		5.600	9.940	42.3

From Table 3, it can be observed that the use of local hashtags has a significant impact on increasing the reach of MSME products in Kendari

City. The average reach per post increased by approximately 40% to 45% after incorporating local hashtags. This indicates that audiences interested in

local products are more likely to discover and engage with MSME brands that utilize related hashtags.

The increase in reach gained from using local hashtags directly contributes to enhanced brand awareness for MSME products. As many as 72% of respondents who follow MSME accounts on Instagram reported that they engage more frequently with brands using local hashtags. This engagement includes likes, comments, and shares, which can influence purchasing decisions. Therefore, the use of local hashtags not only broadens the audience but also fosters a closer relationship between products and consumers.

The use of local hashtags is an effective digital content strategy. By optimizing local hashtags, MSMEs in Kendari City can strengthen their brand image on Instagram and increase exposure to a wider audience. This demonstrates that proper content management, including the utilization of features such as local hashtags, can help MSME products attract greater attention and significantly improve brand awareness.

**Consistent Content Strengthens MSME Brand Identity in Kendari City**

Consistent content on social media, particularly Instagram, has been proven to strengthen

the brand identity of MSMEs in Kendari City. Through consistency in visual themes, language style, and posting schedules, MSMEs can shape a clear perception in consumers’ minds regarding the character of their products. In the context of the study titled “*Optimizing Digital Content on Instagram to Enhance Brand Awareness of MSME Products in Kendari City,*” content consistency emerges as a key factor in building brand recognition. Without consistency, audiences struggle to remember or recognize the product identity, thereby affecting overall awareness levels.

Survey results from 50 MSME actors in Kendari City reveal that 78% of respondents who regularly upload content with consistent visual elements (such as color, logo, and font) experienced an increase in audience engagement rates over the past three months. Additionally, 72% of respondents acknowledged that consistent posting enabled consumers to recognize their products more quickly compared to before. These data indicate that efforts to strengthen visual identity through structured content directly contribute to reinforcing the brand in the eyes of consumers. The following table summarizes the survey results obtained:

Table 4. Brand Strengthening from the Consumers’ Perspective

Content Consistency Aspect	Percentage of MSMEs Experiencing Impact
Visual Consistency (color/logo)	78%
Language Style Consistency	65%
Posting Schedule Consistency	70%
Increase in Brand Recognition	72%

The implementation of consistency across various content elements resulted in a 25%–30% increase in brand awareness within six months, based on reports of follower growth, likes, comments, and brand mentions on Instagram. By prioritizing consistency, MSMEs not only clarify their identity in the public eye but also enhance consumer credibility and trust toward the products offered. Therefore, maintaining uniformity in messaging and visuals is a crucial step to maximize the potential of digital platforms.

MSMEs in Kendari City that actively manage their Instagram accounts with consistent content are perceived as more professional and possess higher competitiveness in the local market. Audiences tend to perceive consistent brands as more serious and trustworthy, facilitating customer loyalty development. Accordingly, digital content management strategies on Instagram should focus on regular scheduling, selecting uniform visual themes, and adopting communication styles aligned with the

product image to effectively achieve brand awareness objectives.

Instagram serves as a primary platform utilized by MSMEs in Kendari City to enhance brand awareness of their products. Through visual content such as product photos, short videos, customer testimonials, as well as Instagram Stories and Reels features, MSMEs are able to attract a broader audience. Qualitative interviews with five MSME owners indicated that after consistently posting

content on Instagram, they experienced increased interaction with customers, manifested through comments, direct messages, and follower growth. This suggests that creative and consistent digital content strategies can build emotional connections with audiences, which is key to strengthening brand awareness. The following quantitative data further supports these findings. Based on a survey conducted with 30 MSME owners in Kendari, the following data were obtained:

Table 5. Survey of 30 MSME Actors in Kendari

Measured Aspect	Before Instagram Optimization	After Instagram Optimization
Average Number of Instagram Followers	850	1.450
Average Interactions per Post	25	68
Increase in Traffic to Online Store	12 visits/day	31 visits/day
Percentage of Consumers Aware of Products from Instagram	38%	73%

The table above demonstrates that the digital content optimization strategy on Instagram has a significant impact on enhancing both reach and brand awareness. An increase in followers by up to 70.5%, along with nearly a threefold rise in interactions per post, reflects a strengthening of audience engagement. Furthermore, the surge in traffic to the online store and the high percentage of consumers who acknowledge discovering the products through Instagram confirm that this platform is effective in introducing products to potential customers in Kendari.

Moreover, MSME actors recognize that the most effective types of content for building brand awareness include educational content about the products, customer reviews, and seasonal promotions. Content that highlights local uniqueness, such as the use of regional languages or showcasing traditional production processes, also attracts greater audience attention. Therefore, digital content optimization on Instagram goes beyond mere posting frequency; it also involves storytelling strategies, appropriate timing for uploads, and the use of relevant local hashtags. Through this approach, Instagram proves to be a strategic tool in

enhancing the competitiveness of Kendari’s MSMEs amid increasingly intense digital market competition.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that Instagram has become an important digital communication platform for strengthening the brand awareness of MSME products in Kendari City. The optimization of digital content through features such as Reels, Stories, and local hashtags enables businesses to reach wider audiences, increase interaction, and enhance consumer recognition of their brands. These features not only support promotional activities but also create opportunities for MSMEs to build closer relationships with consumers in a more interactive and personalized manner.

The study further indicates that content consistency plays a critical role in shaping brand identity. MSMEs that maintain a consistent visual appearance, communication style, and posting schedule are more likely to be recognized and remembered by consumers. In addition, engaging content that reflects local values and audience

interests contributes to stronger emotional connections, which ultimately support the development of consumer trust and loyalty.

These findings suggest that the effectiveness of Instagram marketing is determined not merely by the frequency of content publication but by the ability of MSMEs to design relevant, creative, and audience-oriented communication strategies. Therefore, digital content should be viewed as a strategic asset capable of strengthening market positioning and improving business competitiveness in an increasingly digitalized environment.

This study contributes to the understanding of social media-based marketing communication, particularly in the context of MSME development. Future research may expand the scope of analysis by incorporating variables such as purchase intention, electronic word-of-mouth, consumer trust, and influencer marketing to provide a broader perspective on the effectiveness of digital branding strategies in supporting sustainable MSME growth

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