

NOTHING BEATS A FABULOUS POST: THE INFLUENCE OF INSTAGRAM MARKETING FOR VALUE CREATION AND PROMOTION

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Abstract: The study aims to identify the effectiveness of social media marketing, specifically Instagram marketing, for product promotion based on the product and service's value for MSMEs. Indonesian MSMEs have difficulty to identify its competitive advantages and to promote their product and services' value to their consumers. Using case studies for local brand restaurants in Bandung, this study explores how social media promotion has helped the restaurants to identify their visual identity and to increase consumer engagement so that they can improve their promotion effectively. This study is a qualitative study that explores factors influencing marketing strategy for value creation and promotion. Using a qualitative study with two case studies, the research shows that social media marketing is an important aspect for small F&B businesses in Bandung. Specifically, Instagram marketing would give small businesses an affordable option and opportunity to boost their brands and enhance their reach through the content. It provides interaction with the audiences and the relationship made with their consumers creates valuable values and intrigues voluntary brand advocacy.

Keywords: *Social media marketing, value creation, customer engagement, digital marketing*

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1. Introduction

Indonesian MSMEs have difficulty to identify their competitive advantages and to promote their product and services' value to their consumers, including MSMEs in the culinary industry. This is caused by the significantly increasing number of new culinary businesses in Bandung i.e. restaurants. Dinas Koperasi Usaha Mikro Kecil dan Menengah Kota Bandung note that in 2024, there are 10,181 MSMEs which 40.9% consisted of culinary business. The growing number indicates higher needs to promote competitiveness among restaurants. Businesses deliver their values and uniqueness through menu, location, ambience, and user experience in order to cater to a certain group of target market. Furthermore, in order to expand, businesses also do innovation, for example through product development or creating new products. Only in this way, culinary businesses keep up with the fast-changing trend in the industry.

However, focusing only on product development is not enough. In order to deliver and communicate its value, businesses need to reach their target audiences. In today's business ecosystem, businesses are able to reach larger audiences through digital marketing. Digital

marketing allows businesses to connect and engage with its audiences through digital channels accessed through electronic devices and internet-connected technologies. One of the most used digital marketing channels is social media e.g. Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. In social media, businesses interact with their audiences to exchange information about the brands and products through visual and audio e.g. photos, reels/video, copywriting/caption. On the other hand, UNESCO (2023) mentions that 4 of 10 people in Indonesia are active social media users, and the Ministry of Communication and Information of Indonesia (2023) mentions that 9 Of 10 internet users in Indonesia prefer to search for information through social media. The growing trends of social media indicates the high needs of businesses to optimize social media as their digital marketing channel.

Digital marketing has shown its effectiveness to persuade consumers to purchase goods or services provided the service is excellent and the products are appealing (Adnyana & Suryanata, 2021; Ardisa, Sutanto & Sondak, 2022). According to a qualitative study conducted by Lukni Burhanuddin Ahmad et. al. (2023), consumers in Bandung have tendencies of showing high interest to purchase after watching videos or contents in social media, especially for culinary products. This trend is also influenced by the increasing numbers of key opinion leaders (KOL) that create content about specific interests e.g. culinary with niche audiences that become their followers. It means content in digital marketing does not only share information, but also build value and trustworthiness that further drives higher intention to buy.

Furthermore, study from Ariska, Purwitasari & Yustie (2022), many micro, small and medium enterprises have revealed their satisfactory experiences utilising digital marketing channels to boost their sales as digital marketing has given them cost effective solutions to promote their products. Specific to culinary businesses, digital marketing helps businesses to market their brands efficiently due to the lower cost. For instance, advertising in social media requires a lower budget compared to conventional marketing channels, such as advertisements in radio or television. This is particularly beneficial for MSMEs with higher need to save resources. Furthermore, digital marketing allows efficiency due to its ability to target specific markets based on location, interest, preferences, and behavior through the advanced algorithm. (Rahman, 2023) Thus, businesses can target specific audiences who are those with higher possibility to purchase.

Setiawati & Wibisono (2020) identified that social media marketing in culinary businesses has its effective impact as long as there is community supporting the marketing channel. It means, reviews and testimonies affect the intention. Good reviews and significant numbers of likes from existing consumers will lead to ease of search which later affects purchase intention. Similarly, a study from Ningrum and Rostika (2021) indicates that electronic word of mouth (EWOM) has a positive and significant effect on consumer engagement that can leverage the business identity. An example of effective promotion in social media for culinary business in Bandung is Jabarano Coffee which is able to obtain more than 25,000 followers with a total engagement of 0.67%, whereas the ideal rate is around 1%-5%. The contents provided on their social media page are also diverse, exploring the variety of menu, ambiance, and products. This also results in interactions on social media through comments and likes and further building a community base on Instagram Channel.

Understanding the growing significance of social media as a digital marketing channel in culinary business, this study explores the effectiveness of social media marketing for product promotion. It also delves how social media promotion has helped the restaurants to identify their value and visual identity and to turn it into their promotion.

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2. Research Methods

Studies show a successful digital marketing strategy should consider the seven laws of digital marketing, which are product and service differentiation, idea generation, utilize creativity, identify customer position in digital media, fulfill the promises, keep the digital marketing and organizational strategy aligned, and understand what the market needs (Sanjaya & Tarigan 2009). This marketing concept is the result of the digitalization that allows everyone to have the same access toward the market as long as they have the access to the internet (Kartajaya, 2009).

Further research has identified that an apt marketing channel will lead to successful promotion. There are several digital marketing channels: social media e.g. TikTok, Instagram, Facebook; Search Engine Optimization (SEO); Google Advertising. However, each industry has its own fittest channel. In the culinary industry, social media is the most effective tool to attract consumers (Ahmad et. al, 2014). The unique feature of social media marketing is the ability to visualize fragmented data e.g. product and service knowledge through visual and audio i.e. user generated contents in forms of pictures and videos. The contents provided keep the audiences informed, but at the same time also intrigues further curiosity. Furthermore, the interactions i.e. comments and likes make the recommendation more credible. As far as social media has emerged, Instagram is still the most popular and effective marketing channel as it has more comprehensive tools, such as demographic targeting and categorization of business contents compared to TikTok (Hainlein, et. al, 2020).

Paniagua and Sapena (2014) explain how social media marketing affects business performance using Venkatraman and Ramanujam's (1986) model. It explains how social media exposes business' identity and reputation, engages business with audiences through conversation, sharing, and presence, and creates relationships with customers. Social media activities further generate social capital that affects business' social performance e.g. customers relationship that drives loyalty, customers' preference and social marketing that affects its financial performance e.g. promotions that increase revenue growth, and networking that affects organizational performance to fulfil certain standards e.g. product and service quality to improve customers' satisfaction.

Some examples of best practices in social media marketing, especially using Instagram have successfully leveraged businesses' revenue, as long as they could keep the marketing and the organizational strategy aligned. It means, businesses should not only create proper brand images in social media, but also provide the best products and services for the consumers so that it fulfils the promise made. It is because in social media: (1) People's recommendations which are implied through their attitude influence others' perspective toward the business (Hasugian & Insdallah, 2022); (2) People's attracted to user generated contents (UGC) only if the products showcased also have its own uniqueness and appeal –experiential feature; (3) Good experience i.e. service, quality product, and unique concept of the business affects customers' willingness to recommend the product in social media (Hermawan, 2019).

Furthermore, an attitude influencing others' perspective can be enhanced by Key Opinion Leaders (KOL). KOL are those who are significantly followed and trusted by their audiences

to review and recommend products. KOLs usually have their own specialties which make them more reliable for their followers (He & Jin, 2022).

Based on the above studies, a theoretical framework is built to explore the factors that make Instagram marketing an effective tool for value creation and promotion. This analysis is important as social media plays a vital role in determining whether people will make their ‘first try’. Thus, social media activation for value creation and promotion is the prerequisite condition of how businesses could further communicate its product and value to achieve its marketing objectives. There are several aspects of social media marketing that affect value creation which will impact the engagement rate and purchase intention.

This study explores the relationship between values and engagement in Instagram marketing which is subsequently proposed as the theoretical framework based on social media marketing model and practices (Paniagua and Sapena, 2014; Hasugian & Insdallah, 2022; Febriyantoro, 2018; Ranteallo & Andiallo, 2017; Chen, et. al., 2021; He & Jin, 2022). Table 1 shows how aspects, values and engagement are connected in the proposed theoretical framework.

Table 1. Social Media Marketing Effects on Value and Engagement

Aspect	Value	Engagement
accurate and relevant information	interest and commitment	follow up from attraction to intention to buy
entertaining and trustworthy visual and content	broader awareness and knowledge	higher level of attraction
responsiveness and interactiveness	reputation and identity	customer loyalty
targeted and paid ads	relevance	higher possibility of purchase
UGC and/or KOL	recommendations and reach	virality and reputation

The initial aspect in social media marketing is information that can attract interest from the general audience, followed by entertaining or trustworthy information that provides broader awareness and knowledge which subsequently gain a higher level of attraction. Customer loyalty is then obtained through responsive and interactive marketing, which will strengthen the reputation and identity. When customer loyalty is attained, the improved sales can be boosted by managing targeted and paid advertisements that are relevant to the targeted audience. Moreover, more engagement and wider reach such as virality and reputation will be obtained if a business can manage UGC and KOL well. UGC and KOL should be well maintained with relevant recommendations including testimonials, repost and likes.

To explore the connectedness of Instagram marketing with the marketing performance, this research uses two case studies that are newly established restaurants with good vibes and various menus that distinctively show the impact of the Instagram marketing strategy with people’s attitude toward the brand. Research was conducted by direct observation and in-depth interviews with two businesses. These two businesses have similarity in terms of scale of business which is classified as middle enterprises, established around one year, and in Bandung.

Bugaritz is a cozy and easy to access restaurant with a variation of menu. Founded in 2023, Bugaritz Cafe & Resto has 177 reviews with a score of 4.4 (out of 5) from Google review. Bugaritz regularly posts in their Instagram to promote their product and especially the coziness of the place. It is shown by the high engagement for the reels that promotes the ambience of its venue with a highlighted text about “good vibes” (See Figure 1).

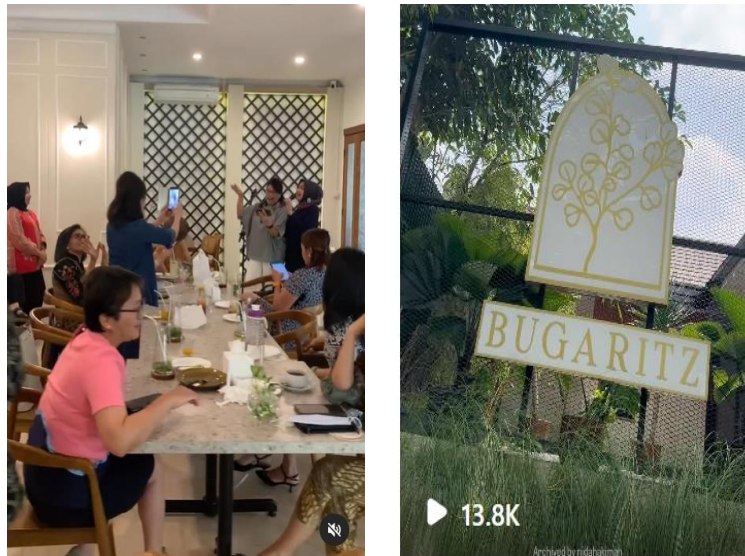


Figure 1. Bugaritz' ambience

Data collection through interviews were conducted with the manager or owner in each location. The interview lasted for two hours each which provided a thick and deep understanding of their efforts to maintain Instagram marketing.

Marsada is a restaurant that sells Bataknese authentic traditional food. The restaurant was established in 2023. It has 4.7 (out of 5) google review score with a total of 67 reviews (See Figure 2). Marsada actively posts in their Instagram account with mainly focuses on menu, showcases and events.



Figure 2. Marsada's food post

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

Study shows a strong connection between the Instagram marketing strategy and value to the engagement of the targeted audience. Aligned with the theory that the interest and commitment are created through accurate and relevant information, the interview with

Bugaritz's manager reveals that the way Bugaritz maintains their content really attracts new customers.

“Social media helps us gain new customers. Most of them are interested after seeing KOL or UGC contents”

The above statement maintains that Bugaritz's new customers were introduced through the suitable content in Instagram.

Similarly, Marsada also reveals that specialties will attract their customers.

“Although we sell Batakese food, social media has helped us to gain customers from different ethnicities because of our contents.”

This means that Marsada also utilizes social media as a media to expose their niche products to wider audiences.

In regards to entertaining contents, both businesses agree that product showcases influence the trustworthiness, hence impacting how people are further intrigued to try the products. Bugaritz explained that their Instagram contents serve different purposes, which aims to engage a wider audience with their unique responses. It is shown from the comments from the Instagram reel in September 2023 highlighting the ambience of the venues, food and coffee beans which attract a comment “Worth every bite!”.

“Showcasing various menus in reels helps us to popularize the underrated menu. Moreover, showing ambience and events in the restaurant also attract new customers or even our loyal customers to conduct events in our venue.”

It shows how social media content helps businesses to display the uniqueness of products and appeal to people through visuals.

Marsada also mentions that,

“Posting visual contents such as photos and reels improve the popularity of underrated products. The moment we post a certain menu, audiences will comment and message to seek further information about it.”

It implies how visualization of products through contents affects the willingness of people to explore new products.

In terms of responsiveness and interactiveness, both businesses agree that it affects their reputation, hence further results on customers' loyalty.

Bugaritz states that,

“The more we take a longer time to respond, the higher possibility of the potential customers changing their mind, for example canceling the plan.”

Marsada also states that,

“Customers expect a fast response. It makes them feel more satisfied as part of our service.”

It means that interaction with customers should be speedy and responsive as it is part of a business' reputation that should be maintained.

Both interviewees emphasized the challenges for customer retention. They explained that various efforts are employed to engage existing customers to come back to dine in. Bugaritz' manager emphasised the importance of maintaining the Instagram contents, for instance, reels, posts and stories to show the coziness of their place for customers to come back and invite others to order their menus.

“Making sure that customers will repurchase is not easy. They repurchase after rewatching the contents that shows cozy ambience”

On the other hand, Marsada states that social media does not really affect their retention rate, “Most customers come back if they are satisfied with the food and service. However, updates from our social media accounts help to remind the customers about our brand.” The value of relevant post to marketing strategies has served well to achieve customer loyalty.

Additionally, the performance of similar content oftentimes results differently depending on the ads sets e.g. placement, target audiences, and time of post, and frequency of post.



Figure 3. Bugaritz's event post

Bugaritz's post in March 2023 was boosted with Instagram Ads feature and shows better performance rather than those which were not boosted. This post has been viewed 17.000 times, better than the average views, which are around 1000 views. This content resulted in numbers of people who attended the event promoted which made the restaurant fully booked.



Figure 4. Marsada’s event post

Posting on 11 December 2023 that was boosted by the Instagram Ads. This advertisement has raised the engagement, liked by more than 200 users and followers. This post has attracted mention which is a good sign of higher possibility of purchase. This post also brought many people to the event.



Figure 5. Bugaritz’ KOL

The use of UGC and KOL are primary attempts to make virality. UGC and KOL are mostly trusted as usually comes in the form of honest review. Thus, it helps people to make decisions, whether to make a purchase or not.

In the case of Bugaritz, UGC and KOL relatively show higher engagement i.e. viewers and likes. However, it does not necessarily result in instant significant sales.

“The effects of UGC and KOL are not always significant. It depends on whether the followers of the KOL fit our brand. Sometimes, the unpredictable algorithm of social media also makes the impact random”.



Figure 6. Marsada's KOL

On the other hand, Marsada thinks that KOL and UGC have played significant roles in gaining new customers. Although the views are not high, the aforementioned KOL's content is very impactful toward the sales.

“After being reviewed by the KOL, our store got many new customers, especially from other cities”

However, Marsada follows by saying that KOL can make a business go viral, but the reputation of the business is a different thing, as it represents through the service and products. Only in that way, the chain of recommendation can be maintained.

3.2. Discussions

The case studies reveal that social media marketing has shown its effectiveness in marketing for their specific markets. The ads set tools have enabled businesses to target specific audiences which makes the advertising efforts more effective and efficient. Moreover, audiences who have been exposed to particular Instagram posts have shown interest in making their first purchase, which means increasing opportunities for businesses to gain new

customers. This aligns with Fibriyantoro's statement (2018) about how social media increases public awareness toward brands.

In the case of Bugaritz's, social media marketing has enabled them to expose their uniqueness i.e. places and events. Moreover, as they provide various products, social media has helped them to expose the underrated products which indirectly also introduce them to a niche i.e. people who love the particular products. Thus, in short, social media marketing enables them to explore and understand their market better. In the case of Marsada, although they sell relatively niche products, social media has enlarged their market as they are able to visualize and communicate their brands with the audiences through their interactions. This also has been stated by Adyana & Suryanata (2021) that digital marketing should be followed with interesting products. The content posts also require follow-up action, such as maintaining the interaction. Both businesses agree that responsiveness is an important part to maintain good customer relationship as it has been stated by Ningrum & Roostika (2021).

UGC also plays important roles in gaining a larger market (He & Jin, 2022). This correlates with how the existing customers feel satisfied with the product and service, hence voluntarily advocating for the brand. In the case of Bugaritz, UGC and KOL play important roles to give recommendations to other audiences. However, interestingly, the results of UGC and KOL are not very significant i.e. the impact is not instant and massive, but still showing a growing trend. It is because sometimes, the followers of the KOL are not the brand's target market. In the case of Marsada, UGC and KOL play significant roles in attracting new customers, especially due to the niche products they sell. In their case, UGC and KOL sometimes result in a massive and instant virality which helps them to increase their popularity. The virality further increases their popularity and reputation as they are able to fulfill the promises they made in the digital marketing. This proves how social media increases awareness in the short-run, but in the long-run, businesses success also depends on their products and services (Hasugian & Indallah, 2022).

The contents posted represent businesses' identity and brand (Alves & Raposo, 2016). Moreover, its activities in social media i.e. conversations, interactions, and engagement imply their presence and relationship with the customers. Finally, the customers' experiences on both offline and online platforms will eventually build the businesses' reputation through the testimonials e.g. UGC and recommendations (Hermawan, 2019). However, the further correlations of how businesses leverage social media marketing for the whole business performance are influenced by many other factors e.g. management effectiveness, service and products, which are not directly related with social media. Hence, social media is an influential factor of how businesses build public awareness. The constant presence and interaction with the customers also improve the customer relationship. Thus, to some extent, social media helps businesses to maintain loyal customers through brand reputation.

4. Conclusions

F&B businesses in Bandung is a unique and interesting model to analyse due to the tight competition in the industry and how social media oftentimes instantly makes businesses go viral instantly. However, this article explores how social media marketing affects business' performance in general, specifically newly small F&B businesses in one year period. Social media marketing is important due to its roles: (1) To communicate businesses' value and to find its niche market; (2) To increase brand awareness through its presence and interaction with the audiences which drives buying intention and potentially leads to conversion/purchase; (3) The customer relationship intrigues voluntary brand advocation. This benefits small businesses

as it gives them an affordable option and opportunity to boost their brands and enhance their reach through the UGCs. Thus, social media marketing is an important aspect for small F&B businesses in Bandung.

Furthermore, how businesses leverage their social media marketing also depends on how they could fulfil their promises which is represented through the integrative online and offline marketing strategy. In practice, people will give positive testimonials and recommend a brand as so far the brand offers satisfying products and services. Therefore, the power of social media –to some extent could increase purchase. Social media also could maintain loyal customers as so far it has become a tool to maintain interaction with customers through social media presence. However, repeat purchase and brand loyalty requires a more comprehensive discussion as it is highly influenced by the in-store activities as well. In conclusion, social media marketing is an effective and affordable tool for small F&B businesses to create value and promote their brands. However, it also requires business to improve i.e. able to present the expected value through both online and offline activities.

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