

The Effectiveness of Instagram in Event Marketing: An Empirical Study of Engagement Strategies

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of Instagram as a promotional tool for event organizers in Makassar, explicitly focusing on marketing strategies. Utilizing qualitative data gathered through interviews with marketing managers, event coordinators, content creators, graphic designers, and customers, as well as observational analysis of the company's Instagram account; the research provides insights into audience engagement and brand visibility. The results reveal that high-quality visual content and consistent branding significantly enhance audience interaction and emotional connection. Additionally, creative and engaging posts attract attention and foster strong relationships with potential customers. The findings suggest that effective use of Instagram allows event organizers to differentiate their brands and provide unique experiences, ultimately improving customer satisfaction and event attendance. Overall, the study highlights the integral role of strategic social media practices in the contemporary event marketing landscape, underscoring the importance of understanding audience preferences and delivering tailored content.

Keywords: Instagram, Branding, Promotion, Visualization, Product.

1. Introduction

In recent years, numerous studies have focused on the role of social media, particularly Instagram, as an essential tool in business communication, branding, and marketing. Instagram's visual format and interactive features have proven effective in boosting brand visibility and fostering consumer engagement, especially in creative industries like event organizing. Researchers such as (Alves et al., 2017; Cheung et al., 2020) highlight that image-based posts on Instagram have unique psychological effects compared to text content, positively impacting brand promotion. While there is extensive research on Instagram's general role, studies specifically examining Instagram's use as a branding tool for event promotion with a qualitative approach remain limited, which this study aims to address.

Indonesia's tourism and creative economy sector was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022. However, following extensive efforts focused on national economic recovery, Indonesia's tourism and creative economy sectors began to revive in early 2023 (Firdausy, 2023). In the first semester of 2022, international tourists' arrival showed a notable increase compared to the previous year, rising by 926% with 743,000 visits (Kemenparekraf/Baparekraf RI, 2023). This growth highlights the significant impact of tourism on Indonesia's economic development, including the rise of the event or Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition (MICE) sector.

Event organization contributes to national and local economic growth, with MICE activities designed to gather specific groups or professional circles. Organizing events has become crucial for both commercial and non-commercial entities, aiming to support Public Relations (PR) activities in creating a positive image among internal and external stakeholders. Additionally, such events are integral to a company's marketing communication strategy, especially in below-the-line activities.

Typically, all corporate activities, both internal (such as team member training, family gatherings, and meetings) and external (such as exhibitions, sponsored events, seminars, and product launches), are directly managed by the PR or

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Marketing Communication Division. Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conferences, and Exhibitions constitute the core of MICE (Aburumman, 2020; Rogerson, 2005) and play a crucial role in driving demand within the tourism sector. MICE has emerged as a new form of tourism, driven by the growing number of conventions and exhibitions as business expands.

MICE tourism, a specialized area within business tourism, centers on specific topics, issues, or agendas (Ronald et al., 2020, 2022). To attract large numbers of visitors to a destination and extend their stays, attractions, and facilities, including events and related amenities, must be available (Butler, 2014; Wang et al., 2023). MICE tourism involves hosting events like conferences, meetings, and exhibitions, which help attract tourists during low seasons and encourage extended stays and visitor spending. This type of tourism also positively impacts other sectors, such as transportation, accommodation, and food and beverage services (Momani et al., 2023). Moreover, the MICE sector offers promising opportunities in Indonesia's digital era, evidenced by the increasing adoption of digital technology in MICE events, including social media, mobile applications, and virtual reality, especially in product marketing and branding. Digital technology can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of MICE event organization and broaden the reach of MICE tourism promotion to various countries. Optimal use of digital technology could position Indonesia as a more competitive MICE destination in the digital age.

In this continuously evolving digital era, social media has become an essential tool for branding various products. Among the different social media platforms, Instagram has carved a significant niche as one of the most popular and influential platforms, particularly among the younger generation (Papadaki, 2024). Instagram's creative, concise, and interactive format has made it an effective medium for introducing, building brand awareness, and promoting events and activities (Purnomo Aji et al., 2022). As technology progresses, using social media as a marketing tool has become essential, especially for event promotion. With the rise of diverse social media platforms, Instagram has gained considerable attention due to its rapid user growth and substantial influence. Digital platforms are believed to impact consumer engagement for businesses positively. Data on Indonesia's most widely used social media platforms at the beginning of 2024 is presented in **Figure 1**.

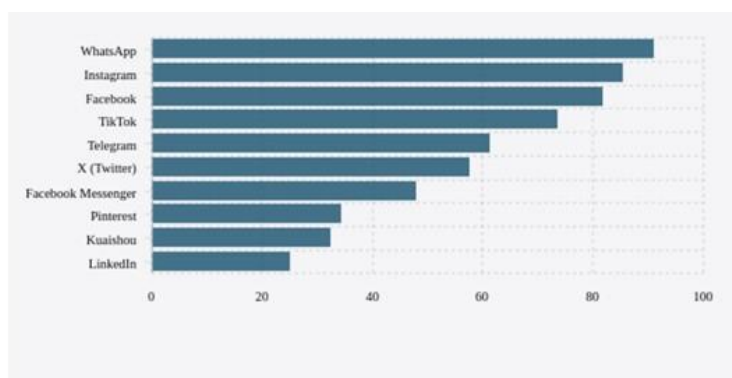


Figure 1. Data on Social Media Users at the beginning of 2024 (Cindy Mutia Annur, 2024)

Based on data in Figure 1, WhatsApp had the highest user engagement in Indonesia at the start of 2024, followed by Instagram at 85.3%, Facebook at 81.6%, and TikTok at 73.5%. As Indonesia's second most popular social media platform, Instagram accounts for 49.9% of the national population. This popularity makes Instagram one of the primary platforms for businesses to communicate, build brands, and market their products or services (Challa & Anute, 2021). Instagram's ability to spread information quickly and widely makes it a powerful tool to enhance product or service sales by building brand awareness (Salunke & Jain, 2022).

Instagram has become essential to modern life, especially among younger generations who rely on social media daily. Initially founded in 2010 by Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom, Instagram started as a photo-sharing platform where users could apply filters and share images. The name "Instagram" itself combines "insta," meaning instant, and "gram," from telegram, highlighting its emphasis on quick communication. Over the years, Instagram has proliferated,

offering users tools to share visually appealing content, and it is now widely used for personal sharing and brand promotion.

Today, Instagram stands out from other social media platforms due to its image-centric nature, which differs from text-based networks like Facebook and Twitter. Studies, such as those by (Li & Xie, 2020) and (Casaló et al., 2021), emphasize how Instagram's visual focus influences users' moods differently than text-focused posts. Given this unique approach, Instagram has become a highly effective tool in the creative industry, including event organizing. Although studies have analyzed various aspects of event organization (Appel et al., 2020; Rogerson, 2005), few have focused on branding events through Instagram for marketing activities in other tourism industries, such as hotels, restaurants, tourist villages, and other businesses (Diniati et al., 2022; Palazzo et al., 2021; Riza et al. et al., 2024). This study aims to explore Instagram's role as a branding tool in the context of event promotion.

2. Research Method

The research approach used in this study is qualitative, with descriptive qualitative methods (Lexy J, 2019). Descriptive research is conducted to determine the presence of independent variable values, whether single or multiple, without comparing or connecting them to other variables (Sugiyono, 2020). The data type utilized is qualitative, consisting of non-numeric data presented as text. According to (Creswell., 2017), the primary data sources in qualitative research are words and actions, supplemented by additional materials like documents. The data sources in this study are divided into primary and secondary data obtained through interviews and observations of direct events. Data collection techniques include interviews to gather direct information by posing questions to informants. Document data, such as photographs or records, also complement information that may need to be acquired through interviews. The selected informants include marketing professionals and customers interacting with the brand through social media platforms. Integrating theory within the matrix aids in framing the research findings within broader academic discussions, enhancing the rigor and relevance of the study. Below is the informant table, their roles in the research, and the theoretical foundations of the instruments used.

Table 1. Informant Roles and Theoretical Foundations in Research

Informant List	Initials	Role	Reference	Theory
Marketing Manager	MM	Develops and implements marketing strategies through social media, especially Instagram.	(Kotler, 2015)	Marketing Mix Theory
Content Creator	CC	Creates engaging and relevant content to build brand image and attract audience attention.	(Foroudi et al., 2016)	Content Marketing Theory
Graphic Designer	GD	Designs visual elements such as logos, colors, and styles for brand consistency on social media.	(Butler, 2014; Volgger et al., 2021)	Visual Identity Theory
Event Organizer	EO	Organizes events and ensures brand representation aligns with brand values.	(Dragin-Jensen et al., 2022; Lin & Lee, 2020)	Event Management Theory
Customer 1	C1	Provides feedback on their experiences and perceptions of the promoted event products.	(Sousa et al., 2024; Vu, 2021)	Service Quality Model (SERVQUAL)
Customer 2	C2	Provides feedback on their experiences and perceptions of the promoted event products.		Service Quality Model (SERVQUAL)
Customer 3	C3	Provides feedback on their experiences and perceptions of the promoted event products.		Service Quality Model (SERVQUAL)
Researcher	R	Analyzes data on the effectiveness of social media in building brand image.	(Salim et al., 2012; Shin & Xiang, 2020; Swaminathan et al., 2022)	Social Media Marketing Theory

Source: Reference Review, 2024

The data analysis technique used is descriptive qualitative, systematically describing, depicting, and explaining results derived from various qualitative data sources. The data analysis begins with gathering data from multiple sources, such as interviews or documents, and then organizing the information into distinct sections for discussion. The research location is PT. Slemmersindo Makassar is an event planning and production agency based in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, focusing on Instagram appearance analysis. The research was conducted from April to September 2024.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Result

In the rapidly evolving digital marketing landscape, social media platforms like Instagram have become essential tools for businesses, particularly in the event industry. Understanding how to leverage these platforms effectively is crucial for engaging audiences and enhancing brand visibility. The following insights, gathered from a diverse group of informants, provide a nuanced perspective on the strategies and experiences of PT. Slemmersindo in utilizing Instagram for event promotion. By examining the viewpoints of key stakeholders—including marketing managers, event coordinators, content creators, graphic designers, and customers—this analysis aims to highlight the integral role Instagram plays in shaping audience perceptions and driving participation in events.

The insights gathered from various informants reveal a comprehensive understanding of the role of Instagram in promoting events and engaging with audiences in today's digital landscape—the Marketing Manager at PT. Slemmersindo (MM) emphasizes that leveraging Instagram is crucial, stating, "In today's digital age, leveraging Instagram is crucial for us. It allows us to promote our events and engage with our audience in real-time." This highlights the platform's ability to create emotional connections through visually compelling content that resonates with potential customers. The Event Organizer (EO) echoes this sentiment, noting that "*media sosial, terutama Instagram, memberi kita platform untuk menunjukkan keunikan setiap acara,*" while also maintaining a consistent brand identity through logos and color themes. This consistency is vital for establishing a recognizable brand presence that attracts attention.

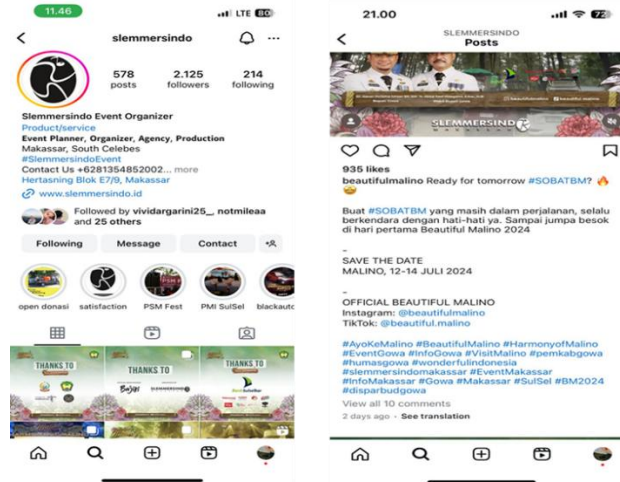
The Content Creator (CC) reinforces this view: "Creating engaging content is at the heart of our strategy. We focus on high-quality visuals and relevant hashtags to increase visibility." This focus on quality and relevance ensures that their posts resonate with their audience, making Instagram the primary platform for storytelling. The Graphic Designer (GD) adds another layer, stressing, "The consistency of our visual identity across all platforms is essential," which aligns with the branding strategy to strengthen their presence on Instagram.

The Social Media Specialist (SS) underscores the importance of creative content, asserting, "*Saya percaya bahwa konten kreatif adalah jantung dari strategi kami. Setiap postingan harus menceritakan sebuah cerita.*" Brainstorming sessions for new ideas and the strategic use of hashtags enhance reach and interaction. Active engagement through comments also fosters more robust relationships with followers. The Owner (O) further supports this perspective by recognizing social media as a vital tool for increasing brand visibility, revealing, "*Banyak klien baru datang kepada kami setelah melihat postingan kami di Instagram.*" However, they also acknowledge the challenge of staying relevant amid the overwhelming amount of competing content on the platform.

Additionally, customers echo the informants' sentiments, highlighting Instagram's effectiveness in discovering events. Customer 1 (C1) states, "I often discover events through Instagram. The visuals are compelling and provide a glimpse of what to expect." Customer 2 (C2) appreciates the creativity in PT. Slemmersindo's posts remark, "It reflects their professionalism and makes the events look exciting." Customer 3 (C3) agrees, noting that Instagram is "a fantastic way for event organizers to connect with their audience."

Lastly, the Customer Relations Officer (CRO) highlights Instagram's role in gathering feedback from event participants, stating, "*Instagram memberi kesempatan bagi kami untuk mendengarkan umpan balik dari peserta acara.*" This allows the company to tailor its branding and content strategies to meet audience preferences. By conducting quick surveys via Instagram Stories, they adapt to the desires of their audience, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement based on direct input. These perspectives collectively illustrate how strategic and creative use of Instagram can effectively enhance brand awareness, audience engagement, and customer satisfaction in the event industry.

In line with the interview findings, the researcher's observations regarding PT were made. Slemmersindo's Instagram account provides empirical evidence of the relationship between follower count and content-generated engagement. Figure 1 clearly compares the follower count, which stands at 2,125, alongside 578 posts, averaging 936 likes per post. This data underscores the importance of content quality and consistency in enhancing audience engagement, reiterated by the Marketing Manager and Event Organizer during the interviews.



Picture 2. Instagram Account View @ slemmersindo

The display analysis in Image 2 indicates significant trends in audience engagement and content effectiveness on PT. Slemmersindo's Instagram account. This image illustrates various metrics, such as likes, comments, and shares, which highlight the interaction levels of followers with the posted content. The data suggests that posts featuring dynamic and visually appealing content, such as videos and interactive stories, garner higher engagement rates than static images or plain text. Furthermore, the timing and frequency of posts also play a critical role in audience responsiveness, with specific periods showing spikes in engagement correlating with event promotions or significant announcements.

Overall, Image 2 reinforces the importance of strategic content planning and the incorporation of diverse media formats to maximize follower interaction and enhance the overall effectiveness of the account's social media strategy. By understanding these patterns, PT. Slemmersindo can refine its approach to better connect with its audience and achieve its marketing goals.

Here is a matrix synthesizing insights from the interviews and observations regarding PT's use of Instagram. Slemmersindo as a promotional tool for events. This matrix highlights key themes from the qualitative data, illustrating the interaction between strategic content creation and audience engagement. By examining these findings, a deeper understanding of how effective social media practices contribute to brand visibility and customer interaction in the events industry can be achieved.

Table 2. Synthesis of Findings: Interview and Observation Analysis of PT. Slemmersindo's Instagram Engagement

Category	Thematic Focus	Findings from Interviews	Findings from Observations
Importance of Instagram	Digital Marketing Strategy	The Marketing Manager (MM) emphasizes that leveraging Instagram is crucial for promoting events and engaging audiences in real-time.	Observations confirm a substantial follower count (2,125) and high engagement levels, averaging 936 likes per post, indicating the platform's effectiveness in connecting with audiences.
Content Quality	Visual Communication	The Event Organizer (EO) and Content Creator (CC) stress the significance of high-quality visuals and engaging content to resonate with potential customers.	Posts with dynamic content, such as videos and interactive stories, show significantly higher engagement rates than static images.

Brand Identity	Consistency in Branding	Consistent branding through logos and color themes is vital for establishing a recognizable presence, as noted by the Event Organizer (EO) and Graphic Designer (GD).	The observations reveal a coherent visual identity across posts, aligning with branding strategies and enhancing recognition among followers.
Engagement Strategies	Audience Interaction	The Social Media Specialist (SS) believes creative content is central to their strategy, and brainstorming sessions enhance interaction.	Analysis of engagement metrics indicates that the timing and frequency of posts affect audience responsiveness, with spikes in engagement aligning with event promotions.
Audience Feedback	Consumer Insights	The Customer Relations Officer (CRO) highlights Instagram's role in gathering participant feedback, allowing for tailored branding strategies.	Observations suggest that the use of Instagram Stories for quick surveys effectively captures audience preferences, showcasing a commitment to continuous improvement based on direct input.
Customer Discovery	Event Visibility	Customers express appreciation for discovering events through Instagram, with visual content enhancing their excitement and connection to the events.	Customer feedback aligns with observed trends, where visually appealing posts correlate with increased event visibility and attendee interest, demonstrating the platform's role as a discovery tool for potential attendees.
Challenges	Competitive Landscape	The Owner (O) acknowledges the challenge of staying relevant amid the platform's vast amount of competing content.	Despite high engagement rates, the need for consistent innovation in content strategy is evident from observations, as fluctuating engagement levels indicate that maintaining relevance is an ongoing challenge in a crowded digital landscape.

Source: Interview and Observation data, 2024

The "Synthesis of Findings: Interview and Observation Analysis of PT. Slemmersindo's Instagram Engagement" matrix serves as a comprehensive framework that integrates qualitative insights from interviews and quantitative data from observations to evaluate the effectiveness of PT. Slemmersindo's Instagram strategy. This matrix highlights the key themes and trends identified in the responses of various stakeholders, including marketing managers, event organizers, content creators, and customers, and it also correlates these findings with empirical metrics such as follower counts and engagement rates. By synthesizing these diverse perspectives, the matrix provides a nuanced understanding of how Instagram functions as a vital tool for brand promotion, audience engagement, and feedback collection, ultimately guiding PT. Slemmersindo in refining its content strategy to enhance its impact in the competitive event industry.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study clearly show that PT. Slemmersindo's strategic use of Instagram is pivotal in promoting their events and engaging with audiences effectively. The insights gathered from various stakeholders underscore the platform's significance in establishing emotional connections through visually compelling content. Marketing managers and event organizers emphasize that Instagram serves as a promotional tool and facilitates real-time engagement, fostering a sense of community among potential customers. This aligns with previous research by (Swaminathan et al., 2022), which indicated that social media platforms significantly enhance audience engagement through interactive and visually appealing content. Additionally, (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Siryayasa et al., 2024) highlighted the effectiveness of Instagram in building emotional connections with consumers, demonstrating how visual storytelling can elevate brand perception. The perspective is further supported by empirical evidence revealing

a substantial follower count and high engagement rates, indicating that PT. Slemmersindo has successfully leveraged Instagram to enhance brand visibility and audience interaction.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that the quality of content and consistent branding are essential factors contributing to the success of PT. Slemmersindo's Instagram strategy. Both qualitative and quantitative findings highlight the importance of high-quality visuals and coherent branding in capturing audience attention and driving event participation. The use of creative content, as emphasized by the Social Media Specialist, plays a crucial role in enhancing interaction and fostering stronger relationships with followers. This finding resonates with the work of (Bae & Jeon, 2022), who noted that effective content strategies, particularly those that maintain visual consistency, are crucial for building brand loyalty in the digital space. Similarly, (Wooley et al., 2022) emphasized the role of high-quality visual content in enhancing customer engagement, reinforcing the idea that consistent branding across platforms strengthens brand identity. Additionally, customer feedback indicates that Instagram is an influential event discovery tool, affirming its value in the marketing landscape (Argyris et al., 2020). Overall, these findings assert that a well-executed Instagram strategy is vital for promoting events and instrumental in building brand loyalty and driving customer satisfaction within the competitive event industry. This reinforces the conclusions of prior studies that advocate for the strategic integration of social media in modern marketing efforts (Keller, 2009).

One explanation for the success of PT. Slemmersindo's Instagram strategy focuses on high-quality visual content and consistent branding. Research indicates that visual storytelling is a powerful tool in digital marketing, as it enhances audience engagement and emotional connection with the brand (Barbosa et al., 2022; Shahrin et al., 2022). The insights from the Marketing Manager and Content Creator align with the literature, suggesting that engaging visuals can significantly influence consumer perceptions and decision-making processes. For instance, studies have shown that visually appealing content can lead to higher consumer engagement, which translates into increased brand loyalty (Lima et al., 2024), by maintaining a coherent visual identity across its posts, PT. Slemmersindo strengthens brand recognition, and fosters trust among potential customers, which is crucial in the competitive event industry.

Furthermore, using audience feedback through Instagram, such as surveys and interactive stories, reflects a commitment to understanding consumer preferences and adapting strategies accordingly. This practice is supported by the findings of (Chatterjee et al., 2023; Kusumawati & Rahayu, 2020), who emphasize that businesses that actively seek and incorporate customer feedback are more likely to build lasting relationships with their audience. Additionally, research by (Horng et al., 2012; Kim & Lee, 2022) highlights the importance of customer-centric strategies in enhancing brand equity. PT. Slemmersindo's ability to gather insights directly from its followers allows for continuous improvement in its content strategy, ultimately enhancing audience satisfaction and engagement. The implications of this approach are significant; by prioritizing customer interaction and feedback, PT. Slemmersindo can refine its marketing efforts, improve event attendance, and establish a stronger foothold in the evolving landscape of social media marketing, as supported by recent studies on the effectiveness of social media engagement.

This study was limited by the relatively small number of informants involved, which may not fully represent the diverse perspectives within the event industry. At the same time, insights were gathered from key stakeholders at PT. Slemmersindo, a broader range of participants—including event attendees and industry experts—could provide a more comprehensive understanding of Instagram's impact on event promotion. Additionally, the focus on qualitative data may limit the generalizability of the findings, suggesting that future research should incorporate quantitative methods to evaluate the effectiveness of social media strategies more rigorously.

To enhance the findings of this study, it is recommended that PT. Slemmersindo conducted further research involving a larger sample size and a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches. This could include surveys to gauge customer preferences and behaviors more accurately and a comparative analysis with other event companies utilizing Instagram. Furthermore, exploring different content types and their effectiveness in audience engagement can provide valuable insights into optimizing social media strategies. Implementing these recommendations will not only strengthen PT. Slemmersindo's marketing efforts also contribute to the broader understanding of social media's role in the event industry

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings discussed in the previous chapter, this research addresses the effectiveness of social media, specifically Instagram, as a promotional tool for event organizers (EO) in Makassar. Instagram is an effective platform for direct and indirect advertising of products and events. The platform allows users to engage through various elements associated with the brand, such as logo design, slogans, color schemes, and visual styles. These

elements help distinguish the brand from competitors and give customers a unique experience. For effective branding, it is crucial to understand the target audience, convey the desired message, and ensure that brand elements are consistently applied across various channels, including Instagram. Therefore, using Instagram is highly effective in promoting products and events. Moreover, creative content is vital in attracting consumer attention and building interest in the services offered. By employing innovative and entertaining approaches, the content enhances awareness of the services and fosters strong relationships with the audience. This underscores the importance of strategic content creation in leveraging Instagram to connect with potential customers and achieve marketing goals in the event industry.

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