

Instagram Marketing for Brand Awareness in Certification and Training MSMEs: Insights from Social Media Analytics

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Abstract

Early-stage micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the certification and training sector often struggle to build brand awareness on Instagram, where success depends heavily on trust, competence, and credibility. Most prior research has measured the effect of social media marketing through surveys rather than producing a directly applicable, data-driven model, and the certification services sector remains underexplored. This study addresses that gap by analysing Instagram discourse on professional certification and formulating an evidence-based Instagram marketing model. Using a social media analytics approach, 2,000 posts were collected through the SocialX application with the hashtag #sertifikasiprofesi and examined through five procedures: word cloud analysis, text network analysis, emotion analysis using an Indonesian RoBERTa model, sentiment network analysis, and BERTopic modelling. The findings show that the discourse is anchored in competency- and institution-oriented language (notably recognised schemes such as BNSP and LSP), framed around tangible career benefits, expressed through predominantly neutral-to-positive sentiment, and circulated within a sparse, broadcast-oriented network (288 nodes, 240 edges, density 0.6%) dominated by a few central institutional accounts. Based on these findings, this study proposes a marketing model that emphasises recognised credentials, concrete career outcomes, distinctive storytelling, cross-platform integration, and collaboration with influential accounts. The model is analytically derived; its implementation and evaluation are recommended for future research.

Keywords: Instagram Marketing, Brand Awareness, Social Media Analytics, Professional Certification, MSMEs, BERTopic

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1. Introduction

Digital transformation has reshaped the way organisations reach consumers and build the visibility of their brands. Within this shift, Instagram has emerged as one of the most relied-upon marketing channels, as it enables two-way communication, the delivery of visual messages, and near-instant interaction with audiences (Jain, 2023; Noval et al., 2026; Wilkes et al., 2021). For Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Instagram is not merely a promotional shop window but a space for cultivating both brand awareness and business credibility. A growing body of research reinforces this view, showing that social media marketing has a positive effect on brand awareness, customer engagement, and even purchase decisions (Dias et al., 2021; Pulukadang, 2025; Zhang, 2024).

This ideal, however, has not been fully realised among early-stage creative MSMEs, particularly those operating in the certification and training services sector. Unlike product-based businesses, services of this kind rest on trust,

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competence, and credibility, which makes building brand awareness considerably more complex (Husriadi, 2024; Verma & Chandra, 2025). Many certification and training institutions still grapple with limited human resources, weak digital marketing competence, and the suboptimal use of Instagram's features. Consequently, their marketing efforts frequently fail to generate adequate engagement and awareness. However, public demand for professional certification and competency training continues to rise, opening a market opportunity that calls for a more structured, data-driven digital marketing strategy (Beachum & Krallman, 2023; Parker & James, 2023).

Research on Instagram marketing has advanced rapidly in recent years (Pathan & Sneha, 2025; Salunke & Jain, 2022; Üliç Göreci et al., 2025). Many studies have found that social media marketing activity significantly influences brand awareness and customer engagement, whereas others have highlighted how consistent and interactive content can raise the brand awareness of MSMEs. However, most of this attention has been directed toward the retail, food and beverage, fashion, and other consumer-product sectors (Li, 2025; Liu et al., 2026; Purohit & Paul, 2026). Studies that specifically address certification and training service MSMEs remain comparatively scarce (Hidayat & Witta, 2024; Khan & Bansal, 2023).

This body of literature reveals several research gaps. Prior studies have largely measured the *effect* of social media marketing on brand awareness but rarely produced a model that MSMEs can directly adopt (S. Li, 2025; Liu et al., 2026; Purohit & Paul, 2026). Their approaches have also tended to rely on surveys or respondent perceptions, whereas analyses of large volumes of social media data remain uncommon (Dias et al., 2021; Pulukadang, 2025; Y. Zhang, 2024). The certification and training services sector has likewise received little attention, even though its marketing logic differs in its emphasis on legitimacy and trust. In short, few studies have drawn on Instagram data to identify patterns of content, hashtags, engagement, and audience-preferred topics as the basis for building a marketing model grounded in empirical evidence (Singh & Ashfaq, 2024; Yang et al., 2025; Y. Zhang, 2024).

This study takes a different path from previous studies. Rather than relying on surveys, it analyzes approximately 2,000 Instagram data points collected through SocialX to identify the dominant patterns of content, hashtags, engagement levels, and certification themes. The concepts of social media marketing, customer engagement, and brand awareness are integrated with a social media analytics approach that serves as the analytical foundation. This approach is positioned within a research and development (R&D) framework based on the ADDIE model, and the article focuses specifically on the *analysis* stage, mapping the actual conditions in the field and formulating an initial evidence-based model (Osievska et al., 2025; Siluo, 2025). In this way, the study does not simply explain the phenomenon but produces a data-grounded Instagram marketing model that is ready for further development by early-stage MSMEs.

Building on the foregoing, this study aims to: (1) analyse the existing state of Instagram marketing among certification and training service MSMEs based on data collected through SocialX; (2) identify the characteristics of content, hashtags, engagement, and certification topics most relevant to building brand awareness; and (3) formulate an evidence-based Instagram marketing model suited to the needs of early-stage creative MSMEs. Testing and evaluating the model's effectiveness in increasing brand awareness corresponding to the Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation stages of the ADDIE framework are left for future research. The findings are expected to enrich the social media marketing literature while providing an empirical basis for developing an applicable digital marketing model for certification service MSMEs in Indonesia.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research design

This study employed social media analytics (SMA) to examine the characteristics of digital marketing practices among certification and training MSMEs on Instagram. The SMA approach was selected because it enabled the systematic processing of large volumes of social media data to generate empirical insights into user behaviour, communication patterns, interaction levels, and audience preferences within a digital ecosystem (Dalmacio, 2023; Jain, 2023; Yohana et al., 2025). Unlike survey-based designs that rely on respondents' perceptions, SMA draws on users' actual on-platform behaviour, yielding evidence that is naturalistic, real-time, and behaviourally grounded, a property that motivated its use as the methodological backbone of this research.

2.2 Data collection

Data were collected using a web-scraping technique with the SocialX application and Instagram as the data source. Scraping was conducted on May 22, 2026, at 11:07 WIB, using the hashtag #sertifikasiprofesi as the primary search

keyword. The process retrieved a total of 2,000 posts. For each post, the following attributes were captured: caption text, hashtags used, number of likes, number of comments, publication timestamp, user account, and other metadata relevant to the research objectives. To ensure transparency and reproducibility, the keyword, collection date and time, scraping tool, and captured fields were documented explicitly so that the procedure can be replicated by other researchers under comparable conditions.

2.3 Data preparation

The collected data were first organised into a research database during the data acquisition stage, in which all posts that met the search criteria were identified and consolidated. The dataset was then subjected to data preparation, which involved cleaning the raw data, removing duplicate entries, filtering out irrelevant posts, normalising the text, and verifying data quality (Cima et al., 2023; Console & Lenzerini, 2023). This stage was conducted to ensure that the subsequent analyses were performed on a valid and reliable dataset.

2.4 Data analysis

The prepared dataset was analysed using five complementary procedures applied to the same body of posts.

First, word cloud analysis was conducted to identify the dominant terms in the conversations surrounding professional certification by mapping word frequency patterns, thereby providing an initial overview of the most prominent themes in the corpus.

Second, text network analysis was applied to move beyond frequency and reveal the relationships among the concepts appearing in the posts. By mapping how keywords co-occur and connect, this procedure identified the central terms, thematic clusters, and dominant narratives that structure certification discourse.

Third, emotion analysis was conducted to capture the emotional responses embedded in user-generated content. An Indonesian RoBERTa-based emotion-classification model was used to assign each post to a dominant emotional dimension, allowing the affective tone of the conversation to be examined beyond a simple positive–negative distinction.

Fourth, sentiment network analysis was performed by combining sentiment classification with social network analysis (SNA). The posts were first classified into positive, neutral, and negative sentiments, after which the interaction structure among accounts was mapped. Degree, betweenness, and closeness centrality were computed to identify the most influential accounts, and the overall network density was calculated to characterise the cohesiveness of the interaction structure. Each node was tagged with its dominant sentiment, producing a sentiment network that linked an account's structural position to its affective orientation and revealed the central actors driving exposure around professional certification.

Fifth, topic modelling was performed using BERTopic to uncover the latent thematic structure of the corpus. The procedure generated contextual document embeddings, reduced their dimensionality using UMAP, clustered the reduced embeddings using HDBSCAN, and derived interpretable topic representations through class-based term frequency–inverse document frequency (c-TF-IDF) weighting. This produced a set of distinct topics, each characterised by its most representative terms and document frequency, along with a low-dimensional document map and a topic-distribution profile; posts that did not fit any cluster were labelled as outliers (noise).

2.5 Strategic model development

Finally, the findings from all analytical stages were synthesised in the strategic model development stage to formulate an evidence-based Instagram marketing model for certification and training MSMEs. The resulting model articulated recommendations for content strategy, hashtag use, engagement management, publication timing, and effective digital communication patterns to strengthen brand awareness. The integration of behavioural social media data with this multi-layered analytical pipeline constitutes the methodological novelty of the study: rather than describing the marketing phenomenon alone, the procedure produces an applicable model that early stage MSMEs can adopt to reinforce their position in an increasingly competitive digital environment. The overall sequence of stages, from data acquisition to strategic model development, is illustrated in Figure 1.

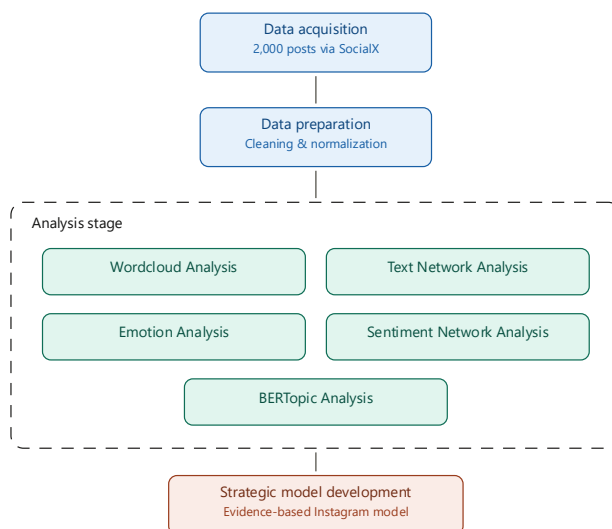


Figure 1. Social media analytics workflow for developing an Instagram marketing model

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

This study analyzed 2,000 Instagram posts collected through the SocialX application, using the hashtag #sertifikasiprofesi as the primary keyword. The data were gathered on May 22, 2026, and represent a variety of digital communication forms surrounding professional certification, ranging from competency training and human resource development to the promotion of certification services. Each post contained a caption, hashtags, publication time, engagement level, and a range of other metadata. This completeness enabled us to trace communication patterns, user-to-user interactions, and audience preferences within the professional certification ecosystem on Instagram.

In the initial stage, the research focused on identifying the general characteristics of conversations about professional certifications taking place on social media. To this end, a social media analytics approach was applied using seven complementary techniques: word cloud and text network analysis to read the topics and their interconnections, engagement and sentiment–emotion analysis to gauge audience responses, social network analysis to map influential actors, and trend analysis to observe the dynamics of the conversation over time. By combining these techniques, the study not only identified which topics were most widely discussed but was also able to discern how topics relate to one another, how audiences respond to certification content, which accounts drive the conversation, and which factors hold the potential to raise the brand awareness of certification and training institutions on Instagram.

3.1.1. Wordcloud

Figure X presents a word cloud generated from 2,000 Instagram posts carrying the hashtag #sertifikasiprofesi. Several terms stand out clearly from the rest: *sertifikasi*, *kompetensi*, *pelatihan*, *BNSP*, *profesional*, *LSP*, *kerja*, and *Indonesia*. Taken together, these keywords paint a fairly coherent picture: conversations about certification on Instagram revolve largely around competency development, professional recognition, workforce readiness, and participation in competency-based training. The visibility of institutional terms such as *BNSP* and *LSP* is particularly telling, as it ties much of the discourse to formal certification schemes and structured competency-assessment mechanisms rather than to informal or generic notions of “training.”

A second pattern also emerges from the visualisation. Users tend to frame certification in the language of career growth and professional advancement, with words such as *profesional*, *kerja*, *industri*, *kariyer*, and *investasi* appearing alongside the core certification terms. This framing suggests that audiences view certification less as an administrative formality and more as a strategic move to improve employability and stay competitive in the labour market. The recurring presence of training- and competency-related words likewise points to a discourse dominated

the hurdles, which suggests that these obstacles dampen but do not displace the overall sense that certification is worth pursuing.

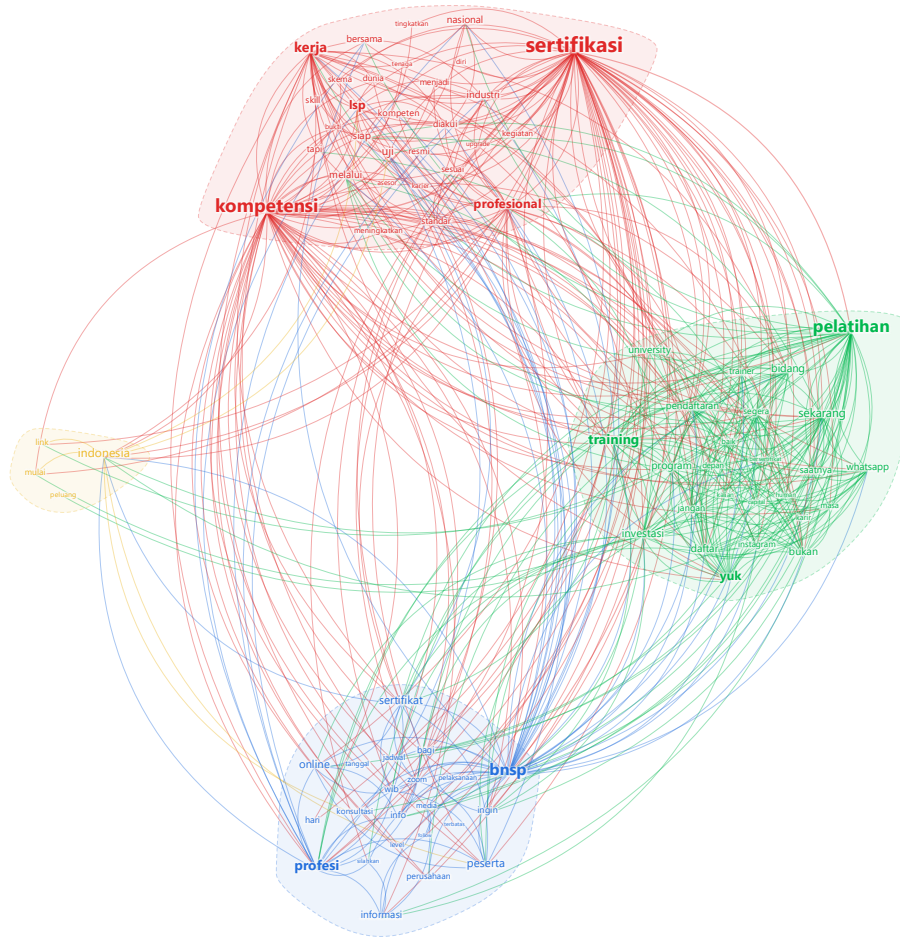


Figure 3. Text Network Analysis of #sertifikasiprofesi Discussions on Instagram

For providers, this emotional profile offers a fairly actionable cue. As positive feelings already drive the conversation, marketing communication is likely to resonate most when it leans into current foregrounding of success stories, competency milestones, professional recognition, and real career outcomes. Participant testimonials and concrete “what changed for me” narratives, in particular, are well suited to sparking the kind of emotional engagement that encourages audiences to interact. Reading together with the earlier analyses, the emotion findings reinforce the case for an evidence-based Instagram Marketing Model that draws on positive emotional appeals to build brand awareness, audience trust, and engagement across the certification and training ecosystem.

3.1.4. Sentiment Network Analysis

The emotion findings describe how individuals feel; the next step is to understand how those individuals connect to one another. SNA maps the interaction structure among Instagram users discussing professional certification and tags each actor with its dominant sentiment. As shown in Figure 5, the network comprises 288 nodes and 240 connections, with a density of only 0.6%, a notably sparse structure. In practical terms, the conversation is spread thinly across many accounts and small communities rather than concentrated in dense, highly interactive clusters. This shape is characteristic of information-sharing networks, where users tend to broadcast content outwards more than they engage in sustained back-and-forth exchanges.

Notably, the figures reported in Figure 5 capture two different units of analysis. Sentiment was classified across the full set of 582 users whose posts could be analysed, comprising 481 neutral, 99 positive, and only 2 negative users,

whereas the interaction network was built solely from accounts exhibiting at least one connection, which yielded 288 connected nodes. The overwhelming dominance of neutral sentiment indicates that the discourse is primarily informational rather than opinion-driven: most accounts use Instagram to circulate announcements, training details, certification schedules, and professional opportunities without attaching strong emotional judgments. The near-absence of negative sentiment is equally telling, suggesting that professional certification is widely regarded as a legitimate and worthwhile activity that generates little controversy, an interpretation that aligns closely with the positive-leaning tone observed in the emotion analysis.

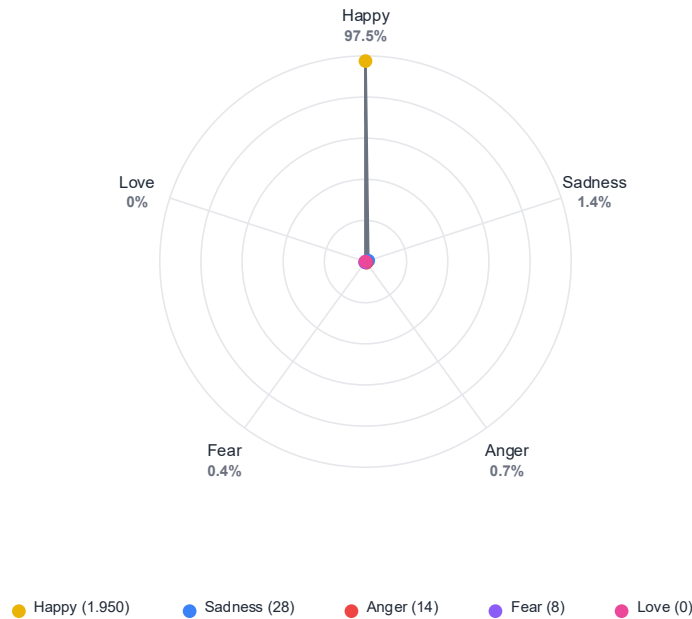


Figure 4. Emotion Distribution in Instagram Discussions Related to #sertifikasiprofesi

The influential-accounts ranking in Figure 5 also surfaces a set of actors occupying central positions within the communication structure, including @humancapital, @lsp_polri, @caraka_corp, @pariwisata.kotatangerang, and @bp3ip_jkt, each showing relatively high degree and centrality values that mark them as connectors linking otherwise loosely related user groups. One high-degree node corresponding to an email-derived handle was treated as a scraping artefact and excluded from this interpretation, as it does not represent a substantive actor in the certification ecosystem. From a marketing standpoint, these findings suggest that certification and training providers would benefit from collaborating with institutions and actors that already hold strong network positions, as such hubs can amplify information diffusion and audience reach far more efficiently than isolated, standalone promotions. Taken together with the prevailing neutral-to-positive tone, the results point toward a communication strategy that continues to emphasise educational, competency-based, and career-oriented content, sustaining public trust and engagement, and they provide an empirical basis for the evidence-based Instagram Marketing Model proposed in this study to strengthen brand awareness and digital visibility among certification and training SMEs.

3.1.5. BERTopic Analysis

Where the earlier analyses traced who talks and how they feel, topic modelling asks what the conversation is about once it is grouped into coherent themes. Using BERTopic on the 2,000 Instagram posts tagged #sertifikasiprofesi, the model distilled the discourse into a dominant topic, with leading terms sertifikasi, kemnaker, professional, project, institute, YouTube, and WhatsApp clustering around a recognisable core: competency certification programs, professional-development initiatives, training institutions, and the digital channels used to spread the word about them. The strong showing of institutional and certification terms reinforces a point that has run through the entire dataset: on Instagram, the platform serves less as a casual social space and more as a working channel for announcing certification opportunities and professional learning.

messaging—balancing standardised calls to action with more distinctive, story-driven content—may stand out in an otherwise formulaic feed. Seen alongside the preceding findings, the topic structure offers another layer of empirical grounding for the proposed Instagram marketing model, calibrated to the dominant interests and informational needs of prospective certification participants.



Fig 6. Dominant keywords of Topic 0 from the BERTopic model of #sertifikasiprofesi Instagram posts (n = 2,000)

3.2. Discussion

This study set out to understand how professional certification is communicated on Instagram and to translate that understanding into an evidence-based marketing model for early-stage certification and training MSMEs. Taken together, the seven analytical procedures converge on a coherent picture rather than a set of isolated findings. The discourse around #sertifikasiprofesi is dense with institutional and competency-oriented language, dominated by neutral-to-positive sentiment, organised into a large number of narrowly defined topics, and circulated through a sparse, broadcast-oriented network of accounts. Taken together, these patterns suggest that Instagram functions for this sector less as a space for conversation and more as a distribution channel for legitimacy and opportunity, an observation with direct consequences for how brand awareness can be built in this setting.

Content-level analyses reveal what audiences associate with certification. The word cloud and text network results show that terms such as *sertifikasi*, *kompetensi*, *pelatihan*, *BNSP*, and *LSP* are at the centre of the conversation and connect outwards to career-related concepts, such as *profesional*, *kerja*, and *karier*. BERTopic results further sharpen this: the leading topic is built from template-like promotional phrases that split into an institutional/channel cluster (*YouTube professional project*, *sertifikasiprofesi sertifikasi kemnaker*) and a benefit/call-to-action cluster (*tersertifikasi dapatkan peluang*, *takeaction saatnya tersertifikasi*). This dual structure indicates that effective certification content tends to pair *credibility cues* naming recognised schemes and institutions with *aspirational framing* that positions certification as a route to employability. For the social media marketing literature, this reinforces the argument that, in trust-dependent service sectors, brand awareness is constructed through demonstrated legitimacy, as much as through.

Audience-response analyses add an affective dimension to this picture. Both the emotion analysis and sentiment distribution point to a discourse that is overwhelmingly favourable and largely free of controversy: positive emotions cluster around achievement and recognition, while the dominant neutral sentiment reflects a stream of announcements and informational posts rather than opinionated debates. This matters for marketing strategy because it suggests two distinct levers. The prevailing neutrality indicates substantial room for providers to differentiate themselves through more emotionally resonant, story-driven content, participant testimonials, and concrete career outcomes rather than

relying on the informational broadcasting that already saturates the feed. Meanwhile, the near-absence of negative sentiment signals a generally trusting audience, whose goodwill providers should be careful to preserve.

Network analysis explains why reach, specifically, is difficult to achieve in this ecosystem. With 288 connected nodes, only 240 edges, and a density of only 0.6%, the conversation is highly fragmented; most accounts broadcast outwards with little interconnection. In such a structure, organic diffusion is weak, and visibility depends disproportionately on a small set of central actor accounts, such as @humancapital, @lsp_polri, @caraka_corp, and @pariwisata.kotatangerang, which occupy high-degree, high-centrality positions. The practical implication is that early-stage MSMEs are unlikely to build awareness through isolated posting alone; strategic collaboration with these institutional hubs offers a far more efficient path to amplification. This finding aligns with network-based perspectives on information diffusion, in which a few well-positioned nodes disproportionately shape exposure.

Synthesising these strands, the study's central contribution is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it extends social media marketing and brand awareness literature into an under-examined service context—professional certification and training—and demonstrates that a multi-method social media analytics pipeline can generate marketing insights directly from behavioural platform data rather than from self-reported perceptions, thereby addressing a methodological gap in prior survey-based work. Practically, the convergent findings provide the empirical foundation for the proposed evidence-based Instagram marketing model: content should foreground recognised certification schemes and tangible career benefits, balance standardised calls to action with distinctive storytelling, integrate complementary channels such as YouTube and WhatsApp, and deliberately leverage central network actors to overcome the low organic diffusion characteristics of this sparse ecosystem. In this way, the analysis moves beyond describing the phenomenon to specifying actionable design principles for early-stage MSMEs.

Several limitations should temper these conclusions and guide further work. The dataset was drawn from a single hashtag (#sertifikasiprofesi) captured at one point in time; therefore, the findings reflect a specific slice of the discourse rather than its full temporal dynamics; a longitudinal collection across multiple hashtags would strengthen generalisability. The automated scraping process also introduced artefacts, most notably an email-derived handle appearing as a high-degree node, which underscores the need for careful data cleaning before network interpretation. Sentiment and emotion classification, while based on an Indonesian language model, remains sensitive to the brevity and promotional tone of social media text. Finally, the proposed model has been derived from an analysis but has not yet been implemented or validated in practice; subsequent research should test it through the implementation and evaluation stages of the ADDIE framework, ideally with partner MSMEs, to confirm whether the recommended strategies measurably improve brand awareness and engagement.

4. Conclusion

This study analysed the existing state of Instagram marketing in the professional certification and training sector, identified the content, hashtag, engagement, and topic characteristics most relevant to building brand awareness, and formulated an evidence-based Instagram marketing model for early-stage certification and training MSMEs. Drawing on 2,000 Instagram posts examined through a multimethod social media analytics approach, the findings converge on a consistent picture: the discourse is anchored in competency- and institution-oriented language (notably recognised schemes such as BNSP and LSP), framed around tangible career benefits, expressed through overwhelmingly neutral-to-positive sentiment, and circulated within a sparse, broadcast-oriented network in which a small set of central accounts drives most of the exposure. These patterns indicate that, in this trust-dependent service sector, brand awareness is built less through the sheer volume of posting than through demonstrated legitimacy, aspirational framing, and strategic positioning within the network.

Accordingly, this study makes two main contributions. Empirically, it provides one of the first data-driven accounts of how professional certification is marketed on Instagram, derived directly from behavioural platform data rather than self-reported perceptions. Practically, it translates these findings into a proposed Instagram marketing model, the design principles of which foreground recognised credentials and concrete career outcomes, balance standardised calls to action with distinctive storytelling, integrate complementary channels such as YouTube and WhatsApp, and collaborate with influential institutional accounts to overcome low organic diffusion are grounded in observed audience behaviour. It is important to note that the model proposed here is analytically derived rather than empirically tested; assessing whether it measurably improves brand awareness lies beyond the scope of this study. Accordingly, future research should advance the model through the design, implementation, and evaluation stages of the ADDIE

framework, ideally in collaboration with partner MSMEs and across a broader, longitudinal sample, to validate its effectiveness in practice.

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