

INSTAGRAM DIGITAL MARKETING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: A CASE STUDY AT THE VOCATIONAL AND PRODUCTIVITY TRAINING CENTER SIDOARJO

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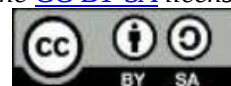
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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation has changed the marketing paradigm in the public sector, including vocational training institutions. This study aims to identify the digital marketing strategy of the Sidoarjo Vocational and Productivity Training Center (BPVP) through Instagram, evaluate the effectiveness of various types of content, measure their impact on increasing training program enrollment, and provide strategic recommendations for future optimization. Using a qualitative approach with a single case study design, data were collected through systematic observation of the official Instagram account, in-depth interviews with purposively selected informants, and analysis of institutional documents. These were then analyzed using a qualitative analysis model with triangulation and member checking to ensure validity. The results show that an educational value-based content strategy generates superior organic engagement compared to direct promotion, where short educational video content serves as a catalyst for attention and interest through algorithmic amplification, while alumni testimonials activate a social proof mechanism that reduces uncertainty for potential participants at the desire stage. However, optimal utilization of Instagram is hampered by bureaucratic structural limitations including limited human resources, budget, a multi-tiered content approval process, and difficulties in measuring return on investment. The conclusion confirms that Instagram is an effective digital marketing instrument for increasing public awareness and interest in vocational training programs, but its potential has not been fully realized due to institutional constraints, so optimization requires structural reforms in the form of appointing dedicated digital marketing personnel, streamlining content approval protocols, and integrated tracking infrastructure in addition to tactical optimization of content.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology has fundamentally transformed marketing paradigms across public and private sectors. Conventional marketing approaches are progressively being replaced by digital strategies that offer interactivity,

measurability, and cost-effectiveness (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). This digital transformation is particularly evident in social media marketing, where platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have become primary channels for organizational communication and audience engagement. Kotler et al. (2021), in their conceptualization of Marketing 5.0, emphasize that technology serves not merely as a channel replacement but as a catalyst for creating more personalized and relevant customer experiences. The proliferation of short-form video content has further revolutionized digital marketing, with empirical studies demonstrating that video-based content generates significantly higher engagement rates compared to static imagery (Belanche et al., 2021; Rietveld et al., 2020).

In the context of public service institutions, digital marketing has emerged as a critical instrument for enhancing service reach and program awareness. Government agencies worldwide have increasingly adopted social media platforms to bridge communication gaps with citizens and improve service delivery transparency (Almansoori et al., 2024). Vocational training centers, as key players in workforce development, face the unique challenge of attracting participants despite offering quality programs with adequate facilities. In Indonesia, the Balai Pelatihan Vokasi dan Produktivitas (BPVP) Sidoarjo, operating under the Ministry of Manpower, represents a strategic government unit responsible for competency-based training programs serving the East Java region. With a capacity exceeding 2,000 trainees annually across diverse vocational streams including manufacturing technology, information technology, automotive, electrical engineering, and business management, BPVP Sidoarjo possesses substantial infrastructure yet confronts persistent challenges in public awareness and program visibility.

Instagram, with over 106 million active users in Indonesia in 2023, represents one of the most effective platforms for marketing communication (Voorveld et al., 2018). Its visual-centric characteristics, supported by interactive features such as Stories, Reels, IGTV, and Instagram Shopping, make it highly relevant for promoting vocational training programs. Recent empirical investigations reveal that Instagram's algorithmic distribution mechanisms prioritize short-form video content, enabling accounts to reach audiences beyond existing follower bases through dedicated discovery feeds (Narayanan, 2023). Research on content format effectiveness indicates that visual content types exhibit differential performance profiles: while single-image posts provide foundational brand presence, multi-image carousels and short-form videos demonstrate superior engagement characteristics in specific contexts (Belanche et al., 2021; Rietveld et al., 2020). These platform dynamics present both opportunities and strategic imperatives for public sector institutions seeking to maximize organic reach without substantial paid advertising budgets.

Previous studies have extensively examined digital marketing applications in the private sector, demonstrating significant impacts on brand awareness and consumer engagement (Chaffey et al., 2019; Voorveld et al., 2018). In the public sector context, Almansoori et al. (2024) revealed that government institutions utilizing social media experienced enhanced public satisfaction and trust. However, these studies primarily focused on general public services rather than vocational training program marketing. Research on Instagram marketing has predominantly concentrated on commercial enterprises, highlighting the effectiveness of visual content and influencer collaborations (De Veirman et al., 2017; Phua et al., 2017). While these findings provide valuable insights, their applicability to government training institutions remains limited due to differing organizational constraints, budget structures, and bureaucratic regulations.

The application of social media in higher and vocational education contexts has garnered increasing scholarly attention. Cilliers & Viljoen (2021) investigated Instagram usage by

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, revealing that visual platforms serve as effective tools for student engagement and institutional branding. Their findings indicate that educational institutions leveraging Instagram experience enhanced visibility among prospective students when content strategies align with platform-specific engagement mechanisms. Similarly, Rutter et al. (2016) and Salsabil & Manafe (2024) demonstrated that social media interaction significantly influences university brand perception and recruitment performance, establishing a direct linkage between digital engagement metrics and enrollment outcomes. In the context of vocational training, Bonilla-Quijada et al. (2021) examined social media engagement strategies employed by top-tier universities, identifying content creativity and emotional appeal as primary drivers of student interaction.

The emergence of short-form video platforms has introduced new theoretical considerations for digital marketing effectiveness. Belanche et al. (2021) empirically demonstrated that promoting positive emotions through creative Instagram content significantly enhances user engagement, with content originality serving as a critical mediator between brand messaging and audience interaction. Furthermore, Rietveld et al. (2020) established that message appeal strategies particularly those emphasizing utility and entertainment values exert differential effects on customer engagement across social media platforms. Despite these advances in understanding commercial applications, the AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action); a classical framework widely applied in marketing communications (Kotler et al., 2021; Manafe & Pramita, 2022) has not been empirically validated within Instagram-based vocational training promotion. Existing literature on content marketing emphasizes value-based approaches (Holliman & Rowley, 2014), yet empirical evidence regarding which specific content types most effectively drive engagement in vocational education contexts remains insufficient. Furthermore, while social proof theory has been extensively examined in consumer behavior research (Cialdini, 2009), its application to alumni testimonials as conversion drivers in government training programs has received limited scholarly attention.

This study makes several distinctive contributions to the existing body of knowledge. First, unlike previous research that predominantly examined commercial sectors or general higher education institutions, this study investigates Instagram marketing strategies within a government vocational training institution, addressing a significant gap in public sector digital marketing literature. Second, this research empirically evaluates the effectiveness of specific Instagram content types particularly educational short-form videos and alumni testimonials using engagement metrics, providing evidence-based insights for content strategy optimization in resource-constrained public institutions. Third, by applying the AIDA model within the context of vocational training promotion, this study extends the classical framework's applicability to social media marketing in the public education sector, offering a theoretically grounded analytical lens for understanding audience conversion pathways. Fourth, this research identifies and analyzes implementation barriers unique to bureaucratic environments, including human resource limitations, budget constraints, regulatory approval processes, and return-on-investment measurement difficulties, thereby contributing practical knowledge for similar institutions navigating digital transformation.

Despite the growing recognition of digital marketing's potential in public sector institutions, several critical questions remain unanswered regarding optimal strategy formulation and execution. How do government vocational training centers strategically utilize Instagram for digital marketing within existing bureaucratic constraints? What content elements prove most effective in attracting potential training participants, and how do engagement rates vary across different content formats? To what extent does Instagram marketing contribute to increased program registration, and what mechanisms facilitate conversion from awareness to action?

What implementation challenges hinder optimal digital marketing execution in bureaucratic environments, and how can these barriers be systematically addressed?

Accordingly, this study aims to: (1) identify and analyze the digital marketing strategies employed by BPVP Sidoarjo through Instagram; (2) evaluate the effectiveness of various content types in enhancing public engagement and interest; (3) measure the impact of Instagram digital marketing on training program registration increases; and (4) provide strategic recommendations for optimizing BPVP Sidoarjo's future digital marketing initiatives.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach with a single-case study design to investigate Instagram marketing strategies at BPVP Sidoarjo, a government vocational training institution in East Java, Indonesia (Yin, 2017). Data were collected over three months through systematic observation of the official Instagram account (@bpvp_sidoarjo), semi-structured in-depth interviews with eight purposively selected informants (three social media administrators, two marketing officials, and three alumni), and analysis of institutional documents including social media performance reports and registration statistics. Engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares, saves) were recorded and calculated as engagement rates per content category, while interview data were transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis.

Data were analyzed using the qualitative analysis model of Miles et al. (2013), comprising data condensation through open coding, data display via thematic matrices, and conclusion drawing with verification through member checking and negative case analysis. Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, prolonged engagement, and maintenance of an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Strategy effectiveness was measured through engagement rate differentials across content types, follower growth patterns, direct message inquiry volumes, and trainee self-reported Instagram attribution.

RESULTS

The analysis of Instagram marketing strategies at BPVP Sidoarjo reveals four principal scientific findings that extend theoretical understanding of digital marketing in public sector vocational institutions.

Value-Based Content Strategy Outperforms Direct Promotion in Engagement Generation

The first scientific finding indicates that content strategies emphasizing educational value generate superior organic engagement compared to direct promotional approaches. Observational data demonstrate that educational skill content (Reels) achieved the highest average engagement rate at 8.1%, followed by alumni testimonials at 6.2%, while direct program information posts recorded merely 4.8%. This finding aligns with the theoretical proposition of inbound marketing, wherein audiences voluntarily engage with content that delivers perceived utility rather than explicit commercial appeals (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). The scientific explanation for this phenomenon resides in the self-determination theory of motivation: when content satisfies intrinsic needs for competence and knowledge acquisition, audiences exhibit higher autonomous engagement behaviors (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Belanche et al. (2021) empirically confirmed that promoting positive emotions through creative content significantly enhances user engagement, with content originality serving as a critical mediator. In the context of BPVP Sidoarjo, Reels demonstrating technical skill demonstrations and workshop facility tours activate curiosity-driven attention mechanisms, triggering the interest

phase of the AIDA model more effectively than static program announcements. This finding contradicts conventional bureaucratic communication practices that prioritize information dissemination over audience value creation, suggesting that public sector institutions must reconceptualize their content philosophy from transactional to relational paradigms.

Instagram Reels Function as Attention-Interest Catalysts Through Algorithmic Amplification

The second scientific finding establishes that Instagram Reels operate as dual-function instruments: algorithmic reach expanders and engagement depth generators. The data reveal that Reels content achieved the highest engagement rate (8.1%) despite representing only 14% of total content volume, indicating disproportionate effectiveness relative to resource allocation. This phenomenon is scientifically explained through the platform's recommendation architecture, which employs collaborative filtering and content-based filtering to distribute short-form video beyond existing follower networks (Narayanan, 2023). The algorithmic prioritization of Reels creates a positive feedback loop: higher initial engagement signals trigger expanded distribution, which generates additional engagement, further reinforcing algorithmic promotion. Rietveld et al. (2020) demonstrated that message appeals emphasizing entertainment and utility values exert differential effects on customer engagement, with video formats amplifying both dimensions simultaneously. In BPVP Sidoarjo's case, Reels depicting technical skill demonstrations activate both utilitarian processing (prospective trainees evaluating training quality) and hedonic processing (viewers experiencing satisfaction from watching competent performance), thereby satisfying dual-route persuasion pathways (Petty & Cacioppo, 2012). However, the finding also reveals a strategic tension: while Reels maximize reach, carousels and static posts may better serve the desire and action phases of AIDA by providing detailed program information and clear call-to-action mechanisms. This suggests that optimal Instagram marketing requires format-specific role allocation rather than uniform content strategies.

Social Proof Mechanisms Through Alumni Testimonials Drive Conversion Intentions

The third scientific finding demonstrates that alumni testimonial content generates engagement rates (6.2%) significantly exceeding direct promotional content (4.8%), confirming the operation of social proof mechanisms in vocational training contexts. This finding is scientifically grounded in Cialdini (2009) principle of social proof, which posits that individuals determine appropriate behavior by observing others' actions, particularly under conditions of uncertainty. In the vocational training decision context, prospective trainees face high perceived risk regarding training outcomes and employment prospects; alumni testimonials function as uncertainty reduction instruments by providing vicarious experience of successful training trajectories. De Veirman et al. (2017) established that Instagram influencer marketing effectiveness depends on perceived similarity between influencer and audience; analogously, alumni testimonials from comparable socioeconomic backgrounds enhance perceived relevance and credibility. The scientific mechanism involves observational learning (Bandura, 1977): when prospective trainees observe alumni achieving employment or entrepreneurship success, they form outcome expectancies that increase enrollment intentions. This finding extends prior research by demonstrating that social proof operates effectively even in non-commercial, government-funded contexts where traditional monetary risk is absent but opportunity cost and time investment risks remain salient. The testimonial content's position in the AIDA framework corresponds to the desire phase, transforming abstract program information into concrete, emotionally resonant outcome visualizations.

Bureaucratic Constraints Create Structural-Agency Tensions in Digital Marketing Implementation

The fourth scientific finding identifies a fundamental paradox: while Instagram offers low-cost, high-reach marketing potential, bureaucratic institutional structures systematically constrain optimal utilization. Interview data reveal four interconnected constraints: human resource limitations (absence of dedicated digital marketing personnel), budget restrictions (prohibition on paid advertising expenditure), regulatory approval delays (multi-layered content authorization processes), and ROI measurement difficulties (absence of tracking infrastructure linking Instagram activity to enrollment outcomes). This finding is scientifically interpreted through structuration theory (Giddens, 1986), which posits that social structures both enable and constrain agentic action. The institutional structure of government vocational training centers characterized by civil service employment frameworks, annual budget cycles, and hierarchical accountability mechanisms creates path dependencies that resist rapid adaptation to digital marketing exigencies. Almansoori et al. (2024) documented similar constraints in Indonesian government social media adoption, noting that institutional inertia and risk aversion impede innovative communication practices. However, the present finding extends this understanding by identifying specific mechanisms through which bureaucratic structures undermine digital marketing effectiveness: temporal misalignment between viral trend windows and approval timelines, competency gaps between civil service position requirements and digital marketing skill demands, and accountability frameworks that prioritize procedural compliance over outcome optimization. This suggests that digital marketing success in public sector institutions requires not merely tactical content optimization but structural reforms including dedicated digital marketing positions, streamlined approval protocols, and integrated customer relationship management systems.

Synthesis and Theoretical Implications

The integration of these findings reveals a theoretically significant pattern: effective Instagram marketing in government vocational institutions requires simultaneous optimization across three analytical levels. At the content level, value-based strategies leveraging Reels and testimonials outperform direct promotion by activating intrinsic motivation and social proof mechanisms. At the platform level, algorithmic distribution dynamics necessitate format-specific strategic role allocation, with Reels serving attention-interest functions and static formats serving desire-action functions. At the institutional level, bureaucratic constraints create implementation barriers that cannot be resolved through content tactics alone but require structural adaptations. This multi-level framework extends the AIDA model by embedding it within institutional context, suggesting that the classical linear progression (Attention → Interest → Desire → Action) is mediated by organizational capacity variables that determine whether platform-level potential translates into enrollment outcomes. The findings collectively demonstrate that digital marketing effectiveness in public sector vocational training is not merely a technical communication challenge but a complex socio-technical phenomenon requiring alignment between content strategy, platform affordances, and institutional structures.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that Instagram serves as an effective digital marketing instrument for BPVP Sidoarjo in enhancing public awareness and interest toward vocational training programs, albeit with significant institutional constraints. The research demonstrates that value-based content strategies particularly educational Reels and alumni testimonials generate superior organic engagement compared to direct promotional approaches, thereby validating

the application of self-determination theory and social proof mechanisms in public sector vocational contexts. The integration of these findings with the AIDA model reveals that optimal Instagram marketing requires format-specific strategic allocation: Reels function as attention-interest catalysts through algorithmic amplification, while testimonials activate desire-phase conversion through uncertainty reduction. However, the full potential of Instagram as a marketing channel remains constrained by structural limitations inherent to bureaucratic environments, including human resource deficiencies, budget restrictions, and procedural delays that create temporal misalignment with platform dynamics.

Future research should extend this framework through longitudinal designs tracking enrollment conversion rates with integrated tracking systems, as well as comparative case studies across multiple government vocational institutions to validate the generalizability of the structural-agency tension findings. For practice, BPVP Sidoarjo and similar institutions should prioritize structural reforms including dedicated digital marketing positions, streamlined content approval protocols, and UTM-parameter tracking infrastructure alongside tactical content optimization to achieve alignment between platform affordances and organizational capacities.

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