
BRAND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCE STUDY PROGRAM MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SIDOARJO IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

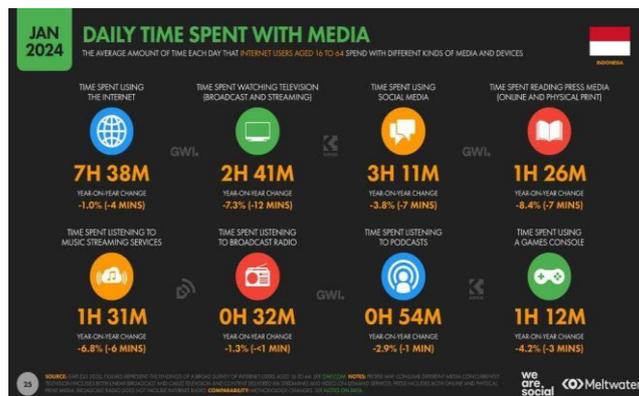
Social media has become an integral part of Indonesian society, as the majority of Indonesians are now active users of social media. With an average daily usage time of 3 hours and 11 minutes, platforms such as Instagram have become a strategic tool for brand communication. This study aims to analyze the Brand Communication Strategy implemented by the Communication Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo through its official Instagram account @ikomumsida.official, with a focus on aspects such as target audience identification, media selection, creation of relevant messages, time and budget management, as well as brand visualization and brand activation to ensure that brand communication achieves its desired objectives. This study employs a qualitative approach using the Miles and Huberman analysis method. Data was collected through structured interviews with three internal sources, namely the Head of the Communication Science Study Program and two social media administrators and graphic designers @ikomumsida.official, as well as supported by secondary data from literature studies and internet reviews, particularly on the Instagram activities of the Communication Science Study Program at Muhammadiyah University Sidoarjo. The research findings, based on analysis through Instagram, indicate that the Communication Science Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo involves four main elements: identifying the target audience, selecting the media, creating relevant messages, and managing time and budget, as well as aspects of brand visualization and brand activation.

Keywords: Brand communication strategy, New media, Instagram.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an important part of Indonesian life, with 167 million people or 60.4% of the total population actively using it by 2024, averaging 3 hours and 11 minutes per day (Social, 2024). The role of social media is getting stronger as a means of communication and interaction, supported by various features that make it easier for users to interact (Alhabash, Saleem, Juan Mundel, 2017). Based on a Hootsuite survey (We Are Social) (Social, 2024), The three platforms with the most users in Indonesia are WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, which are not only used to communicate but also build connections and communication strategies. Instagram stands out with 85.3% of Indonesian internet users accessing it, driven by innovative features such as Instastory, Feeds, Reels, and Instagram Promote that make it relevant for

business promotion media as well as effective as a brand communication medium in the competitive digital era.



Picture 1. Datareportal.com Data “Digital 2024 Indonesia”

With ever-increasing users, social media has changed the way brands interact with consumers. No longer limited to traditional media such as television and print media, companies are now utilizing New Media to reach a wider and more specific audience. In the book *New Media: A Critical Introduction Second Edition* (Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, and Kelly), it is explained that new media has six main characteristics, namely Digital, Interactive, Hypertextual, Virtual, Networked, and Simulated. In the context of new media theory, the Digital element refers to various types of data transformed into various cultural forms such as writing, images, and photos, videos, and others. Interactive is one of the key elements of new media. While conventional media offers an experience that tends to be passive, new media provides opportunities for more active interaction and involves users directly. By utilizing the internet, communication becomes easier and more participatory. Hypertextual characteristics include integrating data from old media into new media, adapted to modern formats. Virtual relates to the creation of virtual worlds that resemble reality through computer graphics and digital video. Networked characteristics aim to expand the connectivity of users, allowing them to establish relationships and collaboration with others. New media facilitates wider and more integrated networks. Lastly, Simulated refers to the representation of an event, object or anything else that helps users understand it without having to experience it firsthand (Lister, M., Dovey, J., Giddings, S., Grant, I., dan Kelly, 2009).

Companies are now utilizing social media to build direct, personal, and interactive relationships with their audiences, meaning that brands are able to reach a wider audience with a budget that tends to be more affordable than conventional media. Thus, the use of social media for brand communication strategy is undeniable. Brand communication strategy is a structured and integrated plan to deliver brand messages to target audiences with the aim of building an image, increasing awareness, and encouraging loyalty and trust in the brand. This strategy includes various elements such as identifying target audiences, selecting media, creating relevant messages, and managing time and budget so that brand communication can achieve the desired goals (Panda, 2004). Brand Communication in social media is defined as any form of brand related communication disseminated through social media, allowing internet users to access, share, interact, and collaborate in creating content (Sääksjärvi, M. and Samiee, 2011).

According to Rao (Su, M. and Rao, 2010), one of the objectives of brand communication is to introduce a brand to consumers. Brand communication is a key element that plays an important role in establishing and managing relationships between brands and various parties, such as customers, employees, distributors, media, government, and the wider community. These aspects influence other elements that determine brand suitability as well as the relationship between various brand associations stored in consumers' memories, thus helping to create a positive image (Sääksjärvi, M. and Samiee, 2011). Brand communication has an important role in increasing awareness and strengthening consumer memory, which in turn encourages them to choose brands that are able to provide maximum satisfaction (Prihatiningsih, 2017).

In building a brand, a Brand Communication Strategy is needed. According to Schultz and Barnes (Schultz, D.C., and Barnes, 1999), Brand Communication Strategy can be interpreted as a brand management process that includes various activities in organizing the elements that make up the brand identity. Gelder in his book entitled "Global Brand Strategy" explains that this strategy can be realized through two main approaches, namely Brand Visualization which focuses on the visual aspects of the brand and Brand Activation which aims to bring to life and strengthen brand interaction with the audience (Gelder, 2005).

According to Hermawan Kartajaya, Brand Visualization is a way for a brand to communicate with the audience through visual elements, such as logos or icons, which function as corporate identity. With this visualization, customers can recognize and remember the brand more easily and quickly (Kertajaya, 2009). In addition to applying brand visualization, brand communication strategies also need to be optimized through Brand Activation which is carried out in a directed manner in accordance with the target audience. Brand Activation is a form of interaction between marketers, consumers, and brands, where consumers can better understand the brand and consider it as part of their daily lives (Shehzad, 2011). The implementation of brand activation focuses on brand extension that is aligned with the initial strategic guidelines and the intended target audience. There are various strategies in brand activation that aim to maximize brand communication, including: Direct Marketing Activation, which is a form of activation where brands interact directly with consumers to create a closer experience. Social Media Activation, which is an effort to build consumer engagement through various activities carried out on social media platforms. Promotions Activation, which is an activation strategy that utilizes special promotions in certain moments, which are tailored to the company's products or services. Marketing Event Activation, which is an activation method carried out through organizing various events, both internal to the company and in collaboration with external parties. Sponsorship Activation, which is a strategy in which a company supports or sponsors an activity that is aligned with the brand's vision and mission, while introducing its products to a wide audience (Rashid, 2015).

Related to the topic above, the high number of social media users is considered to have great potential in driving digital growth and progress in Indonesia. Therefore, it is not surprising that every company and institution seeks to utilize social media optimally. One of the educational institutions in Indonesia that uses social media as a means of brand communication is the Communication Science Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo through its Instagram account @ikomumsida.official.



Picture 2. Instagram Profile of Communication Science Study Program University of Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo

As an educational institution, in order to introduce the brand of the Communication Science Study Program to the target audience, interesting concepts and content are needed to be shared on social media so that people can find out more about the Communication Science Study Program of Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University itself. By presenting informative, interactive and interesting content, such as highlights of campus activities, student testimonials, and achievements. In 2024 Instagram @ikomumsida.official became the most active Instagram in Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University by consistently uploading content every day. In other words, the Communication Science Study Program at Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University can use Instagram as a medium to create a positive impression and increase public trust. Based on the background description that has been submitted, the author is interested in examining how the brand communication strategy used by the Communication Science Study Program of Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University on social media, especially Instagram.

One of the studies that become the author's reference is the work of Nabila Azwida Faradisa (2019) entitled “The Effect of Brand Communication, Brand Image, and Brand Trust Through Online Media on Brand Loyalty in E-Commerce (Case Study on e-Commerce Users at FE UII)”. The study concluded that brand communication, brand image, and brand trust have a positive influence on consumer loyalty to the brand. In other words, the better the brand communication received by consumers, the higher the level of consumer confidence in the brand (Faradisa, 2019).

Research conducted by Renni Setyoningrum and Nur Maghfirah Aesthetika (2021) entitled “Instagram as a Promotional Media for Indah Bordir Shop”, this study aims to analyze and describe the use of Instagram features as promotional media at Indah Bordir Shop, Sidoarjo. The results showed that of the 17 available Instagram features, 12 features have been utilized for promotion, such as Profile, Feed, Follow, Uploading Photos or Videos, Caption, Comment, Hashtag, Highlight Stories, Snapgram, Live Broadcast, Direct Message, and Geotagging. Meanwhile, 5 other features such as Home Page, Like, Explore, Story Archive, and Instagram Savepost have not been used optimally in promotion. This study concludes that Instagram is an effective and efficient promotional media for businesses, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, because it is able to reduce promotional costs compared to traditional media such as television and print (Renni Setyoningrum, n.d.).

Research conducted by Nur Halimah Binti Abdul Aziz, Susanto, and Nonik Kusuma Ningrum (2021) entitled “The Effect of Brand Involvement, Brand Communication, and Brand Interactivity on Social Media Brand Attachment”, this study aims to analyze the effect of brand involvement, brand communication, and brand interactivity on brand attachment on Instagram social media for J.CO Donuts & Coffee customers. The results showed that brand involvement, brand communication, and brand interactivity had a positive and significant effect on brand attachment on social media, both partially and simultaneously. The brand engagement variable has the most dominant influence on brand attachment on social media. This research reinforces the concept that social media, especially Instagram, is an effective tool in building customer attachment to a brand (Nur Halimah Binti Abdul Aziz, Susanto, n.d.).

Research conducted by Erik Surya Rama and Yolanda Masnita Siagian in (2023) with the title “Online Brand Communication and Digital Content on Social Media in Increasing Brand Loyalty”. The results showed that Self-Brand Connection has a positive effect on Brand Experience and Digital Content. In addition, Brand Experience and digital content also have a positive influence on Brand Loyalty. Thus, this study confirms that an effective online brand communication strategy and digital content management can increase consumer loyalty to a brand (Erik Surya Rama, n.d.).

Research conducted by Luthfan Lazuardi in 2021 with the title “The Effect of Brand Communication and Brand Image on Brand Trust and Brand Loyalty in Online Transportation Users in Yogyakarta (Grab-Gojek)”. The results showed that brand communication has a positive and significant effect on brand loyalty, which is mediated by brand image and brand trust. Thus, strong communication and brand image can increase customer trust and loyalty to online transportation services (Lazuardi, n.d.).

This research presents a novelty compared to previous research, previous research has mostly examined brand communication in business (e-commerce, conventional stores, and Instagram features), this research specifically examines Brand Communication Strategy implemented through the Instagram platform. Some previous studies discuss the use of social media in general or compare several platforms. This research is more specific in exploring how Instagram is utilized as a brand communication tool in an academic context, including target audience identification, media selection, relevant message creation, and time and budget management in building the institution's image. With this novelty, this research provides a new perspective and can be a reference for other educational institutions to develop their Brand Communication Strategy by utilizing social media platforms creatively and strategically.

From the description above, the formulation of the problem of this research is “How is the brand communication strategy applied by the Communication Science Study Program of Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University on the Instagram platform?”. Thus, the purpose of this research is to examine the utilization of Instagram as a media brand communication strategy. In this research journal, the main focus in this research, namely on aspects of identifying target audiences, selecting media, creating relevant messages, and managing time and budget so that brand communication can achieve the desired goals.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with the Miles and Huberman analysis method which includes the stages of data collection, data presentation, data reduction, and conclusion making (Ardial, 2022). Qualitative research is research that is oriented towards an inductive

mindset, where researchers objectively and participatively observe a social phenomenon to understand the symptoms that arise in a particular context (Harahap, 2020). Qualitative research starts from real phenomena that occur in the social environment, not from certain samples or populations (Ardial, 2022). This research discusses the use of Instagram social media as a Brand Communication Strategy implemented by the Communication Science Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo between September 2024 - January 2025. Brand Communication Strategy includes various elements such as identifying target audiences, selecting media, creating relevant messages, and managing time and budget so that brand communication can achieve the desired goals.

Data sources are materials collected by researchers and then analyzed to get solutions to research problems (Salim, 2019). The data sources in this study were carried out using primary data through interview techniques and secondary data through literature and internet reviews, especially on the Instagram activities of the Communication Science Study Program at Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University. The first stage in data collection is done through interviews, where researchers directly ask questions to sources or key informants who are considered to have credibility in this study. The type of interview applied in this research is a structured interview. Meanwhile, the sources who became the focus were 3 internal sources from the Communication Science Study Program at Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University: First, the Head of Communication Science Study Program of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Second, two people as social media admin and Graphic Designer of Communication Science Study Program of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and Discussion contains analysis and evaluation of the research results in accordance with the methods used. Discussion of the results of analysis and evaluation can apply the comparison method, the use of equations, graphs, figures and tables. Interpretation of the analysis results to obtain answers, added value, and usefulness is related to the problems and research objectives.

RESULTS

In this section, the researcher discusses the findings in the study, namely on the aspect of Instagram utilization based on Brand Communication Strategy elements such as target audience identification, media selection, creation of relevant messages, and time and budget management. According to Schultz and Barnes, brand communication strategy can be defined as an effort to manage a brand that involves various activities in compiling and coordinating the elements that make up the brand's identity (Schultz, D.C., and Barnes, 1999).

1. Target Audience Identification

Target audience identification is the first step in Brand Communication Strategy. In the context of utilizing Instagram, brands must understand the demographic, psychographic, and preference characteristics of their audience. By knowing who the target audience is, brands can craft content that better suits their needs and interests. Data obtained from Instagram's analytics features, such as insights on age, gender, location, and user activity, can help in the audience segmentation process.

Based on the results of an interview with Nur Magfirah as the Head of the Umsida Communication Science Study Program, regarding strategies in identifying and understanding audience characteristics and needs, as follows:

"To understand the characteristics and needs of the audience, the first is to categorize the audience. For the Umsida Communication Science Study Program, I categorize the audience into three: First, high school/vocational/equivalent students or high school/vocational/equivalent graduates in the last three years who have not taken lectures. This category is taken because at this time students can determine for themselves which campus they will enter when they graduate from school. Second, parents and teachers or schools of SMA/SMK/equivalent students. This category is taken because parents, teachers, or schools can be trusted by students in choosing the intended campus. Third, the general public. This category was taken to strengthen the brand of the Umsida Communication Science Study Program in the community so that the level of public trust will increase." (Interview Nur Magfirah Head of Umsida Communication Science Study Program, March 9, 2025)

By conducting clear audience segmentation, the Umsida Communication Science Study Program can design a more effective and targeted communication strategy. Each audience group has different information needs, so the approach used must be adjusted to be more relevant and can increase attractiveness and trust in this study program. This systematic and segmentation-based approach not only supports the increase in the number of new student applicants, but also strengthens the image of the Umsida Communication Science Study Program as an excellent institution in the field of communication.

In addition to audience segmentation strategies, communication effectiveness is also determined by the visual design of social media used to reach the target audience. To adjust the visual design of Instagram with the target audience, as the results of the interview delivered by Fitri Retno as Admin & Graphic Designer Instagram @ikomumsida.official, as follows:

"We have to look at the audience and analyze on social media, if the largest audience is the younger generation, then the design that is widely used is a casual, retro design and a little meme in it because it can spark audience response". (Interview Fitri Retno Admin & Graphic Designer Instagram @ikomumsida.official, March 10, 2025)

Then in line with what Arsyah said, who is also the Graphic Designer of Instagram @ikomumsida.official:

"Colors, fonts, and visual elements are always adjusted to the identity of the Science Study Program, but still fresh and following trends". (Interview Arsyah Graphic Designer Instagram @ikomumsida.official, March 10, 2025)

For high school/vocational/equivalent students or graduates of the last three years, the delivery of interesting information about the lecture atmosphere, academic curriculum, student activities, and graduate prospects is also one of the main factors in attracting their interest in joining. In conveying related information, the Umsida Communication Science Study Program uses the Instagram Feeds, Reels, and Stories features to document these activities so that they can be known to their audience.



Picture 3. The atmosphere of lectures at the Umsida Communication Science Study Program

Meanwhile, parents, teachers, and schools need to be given an understanding of the career prospects of graduates, education costs, and student academic achievements so that they are more confident in supporting prospective students to choose the Umsida Communication Science Study Program. One of the ways used to provide understanding regarding the career prospects of its graduates, the Umsida Communication Science Study Program held a News Anchor competition through one of its courses, namely “Event Management” which was then documented through Instagram Reels.



Picture 4. Content about the prospects of Umsida Communication Science Study Program graduates

To provide information related to tuition fees and student admissions, the Umsida Communication Science Study Program collaborates with the Instagram account @admisiumsida, which is part of the University that regulates the process of admitting new students.



Picture 5. New Student Admission Information

Students academic achievements are also important to improve the positive image of the institution, to provide this information to the target audience, the Umsida Communication Science Study Program uses Instagram Feeds to give appreciation to its students who get achievements, the content is designed in a format that is not monotonous with a contemporary design format according to the preferences of the target audience.



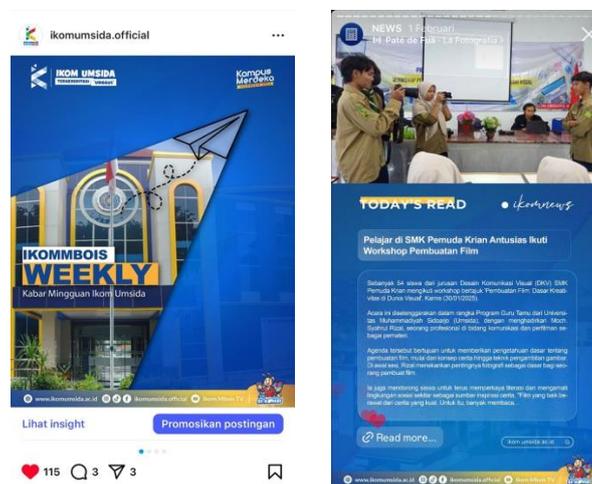
Picture 6. Student Achievement Content

To provide information about its contribution to social activities that can enhance a positive image, the Umsida Communication Science Study Program carries out various activities and programs including, among others, an internship program for its students in collaboration with one of the foundations engaged in the social sector, then seminars and workshop programs, these activities are then documented through Instagram Reels.



Picture 7. Content of various activities and programs of Umsida Communication Science Study Program

For documentation of activities or other information, the Umsida Communication Science Study Program creates an event news uploaded on the 'ikomumsida.ac.id' web portal which is then created as content to be reposted into Instagram Stories content with an interesting flash news format called "ikomtoday's" and Instagram Feeds content called "ikom weekly", this is done to attract the reading interest of followers and also to be able to find out more complete information related to these activities. This consistency in publication helps to create clear expectations for the audience and increase their level of engagement in each upload. With a regular upload schedule, the study program can maintain continuity of communication with its followers, while strengthening brand identity on social media.



Picture 8. Content of various activities and programs of Umsida Communication Science Study Program

The credibility of the teaching staff is also very important, to provide information related to this, one of the ways used by the Umsida Communication Science Study Program is by creating Instagram Feeds which contain content of appreciation for lecturers who have received their academic degrees.



Picture 9. Credibility of Umsida Communication Science Study Program teaching staff

Cooperation with external parties can also enhance the positive image of the institution, Instagram Reels and Feeds are features used by the Umsida Communication Science Study Program to provide information on which parties have collaborated.



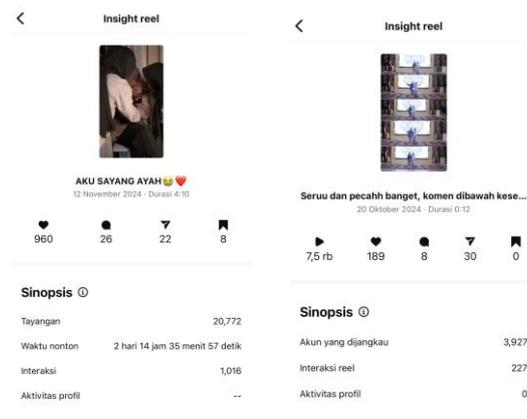
Picture 10. Content of cooperation with external parties

With the right communication strategy and based on audience segmentation, public trust in the Umsida Communication Science Study Program will be stronger, while expanding the reach of sustainable branding. Some of these things need to be considered to strengthen the brand of the Umsida Communication Science Study Program in the community, so that the level of public trust will increase. By understanding the characteristics and needs of each audience segment, the communication strategy implemented can be more effective and targeted.

2. Media Selection

Choosing the right media is very important in supporting the success of brand communication. Instagram as a visual platform provides various content formats, such as Feeds, Stories, and Reels that can be utilized in accordance with the communication objectives. Brands must choose the format that is most effective in reaching their target audience, taking into account the social media consumption habits of the audience.

As stated by Nur Maghfirah Head of the Umsida Communication Study Program, Instagram was chosen as one of the main media because it is the platform most widely used by young generation, which is the main target audience of the Umsida Communication Study Program, then from the results of an interview with Fitri Retno, who is one of the Admin & Graphic Designer Instagram @ikomumsida.official, through the results of insight analysis, the most effective feature in reaching audiences is Reels, because it has a wider reach than Feeds and Stories which are only limited to followers. This is evidenced by the results of insight analysis which shows that Instagram Reels engagement is greater than other features on the @ikomumsida.official Instagram account.



Picture 11. Insight content Reels Instagram @ikomumsida.official

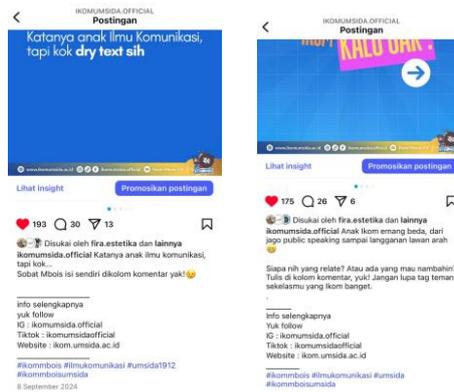
Apart from utilizing features such as Feeds, Stories, and Reels, the @ikomumsida.official Instagram account has not optimally utilized the Instagram Live feature as part of their communication strategy. In fact, the Instagram Live feature has great potential in building real-time interactions with audiences. Instagram Live allows followers to participate directly through comments and questions during the broadcast, which can create a more personalized impression with its audience. The use of Live can be utilized for question and answer sessions about study programs, casual talks with lecturers or outstanding students, to live coverage of campus activities. In addition to increasing engagement, this feature also helps build trust and emotional closeness with prospective students and other stakeholders because it shows the humanist and transparent side of the Umsida Communication Science Study Program directly and without editing process.

3. Relevant Message Generation

The messages delivered in brand communication should be relevant to the audience and reflect the brand identity. Creating content that is interesting, informative, and on-trend can increase user interaction and engagement. In the use of Instagram, attractive visuals, the use of

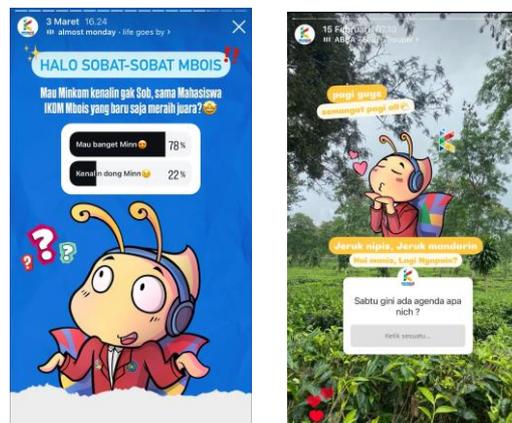
persuasive captions, and the utilization of interactive features such as Polls or Question Boxes can help strengthen audience attachment to the brand. Consistency in message delivery also plays a role in building a strong perception in the minds of the audience.

Umsida Communication Science Study Program consistently implements an interactive communication strategy in every Instagram post. One of the ways used is by composing interesting captions and inviting user participation, such as asking questions, inviting discussion, or using a language style that is close to the audience. This strategy has proven effective in increasing user engagement, which can be seen from the high number of likes, comments and shares on several posts on their official account.



Picture 12. Form of Instagram content caption @ikomumsida.official

Polls and Question Box features are also often used to build strong perceptions in the minds of the audience with the aim that Instagram users feel closer to the Umsida Communication Science Study Program.



Picture 13. Form of Poll content and Question Box Instagram @ikomumsida.official

Based on the results of an interview with Nur Magfirah as the Head of the Umsida Communication Science Study Program, the main message to be conveyed through the @ikomumsida.official Instagram account is the branding of the Umsida Communication Science Study Program as the best choice for prospective students with superior accreditation status, interesting lecture activities, and proud student achievements. To maintain consistency in

delivering messages that are in accordance with the vision and mission of the institution, this is done by harmonizing content with the University's social media and implementing policies that prohibit content that contains SARA or is contrary to academic values.

4. Time And Budget Management

The success of a brand communication strategy also depends on proper time and budget management. Scheduling content uploads at optimal times, based on audience activity analysis, can increase engagement and message reach to the audience. In addition, budget allocation for paid promotions, such as Instagram Ads, must be done strategically to achieve maximum results and periodic evaluation of content insights is also needed to adjust strategies and improve the efficiency of resource use.

From the results of an interview with Nur Maghfirah as the Head of the Umsida Communication Science Study Program, said that Instagram content management is carried out by a special team called "MinKom", which is tasked with creating, uploading, and analyzing content based on social media algorithms:

"There is a special team called MinKom (admin ikom) whose job is to create content, upload, analyze engagement and communicate through social media accounts". (Interview Nur Magfirah Head of Umsida Communication Science Department, March 9, 2025)

Although there is no specific budget for paid promotion such as Instagram Ads, but the strategy is still optimized through organic traffic, evaluation is still carried out regularly every month. This evaluation involves an in-depth analysis of the Insight and Traffic of each content that has been uploaded, including engagement performance, audience reach, and the effectiveness of the message conveyed. The data obtained from the evaluation is then used as the basis for developing a more strategic content plan that is in line with the trends and preferences of the target audience. With this approach, brand communication strategies can still be optimized efficiently, so that they remain relevant and impactful in increasing interaction and visibility on the Instagram platform.

However, it should be highlighted that the @ikomumsida.official Instagram account has not utilized paid features such as Instagram Ads which actually have great potential to increase audience reach beyond organic followers. Instagram Ads allow content to be displayed in a targeted manner based on location, age, interests, and user behavior, so that it can be more efficient in reaching potential students from various regions. Without the use of this feature, information dissemination is still limited to existing followers and relies on the platform's algorithm. Therefore, in the future, allocating budget for paid promotion can be a strategic step that strengthens brand visibility and supports faster and measurable audience growth.

DISCUSSION

In this section, researchers discuss the findings in the study, namely the Brand Visualization and Brand Activation aspects in the Brand Communication Strategy of the Umsida Communication Science Study Program on Instagram @ikomumsida.official. Brand Visualization focuses on how the Umsida Communication Science Study Program builds a strong and consistent visual identity. Consistency in these visual elements aims to create a professional, attractive, and easily recognizable image for the audience, especially prospective students and other

stakeholders. Brand Activation relates to the study program's efforts to increase audience engagement through various interactive strategies. These two aspects support each other in building the image and increasing the attractiveness of the study program on social media. With a consistent visual strategy and effective brand activation, Umsida Communication Science Study Program can strengthen its competitiveness and attract more prospective students who are interested in the world of digital communication.

1. Brand Visualization

Umsida Communication Science Study Program implements a Brand Visualization strategy to create a distinctive, attractive, and easily recognizable visual identity for audiences on Instagram. This visual identity is very important in building a brand image that is professional, credible, and different from other study programs.

Based on the results of the interview, the Brand Visualization strategy implemented includes several main aspects, namely color selection, typography, design layout, and graphic elements that are in accordance with the identity of the study program. The main colors used in Instagram content design are blue and yellow, which are taken from the official logo of the Umsida Communication Science Study Program. This color selection is not without reason, because color has a psychological meaning that can give a professional, innovative, and dynamic impression. As explained by Fitri Retno, Admin & Graphic Designer Instagram @ikomumsida.official as follows:

“Color can present psychological power, while layout helps create a clear hierarchy and attract the audience's attention.” (Interview Fitri Retno Admin & Graphic Designer Instagram @ikomumsida.official, March 10, 2025)



Picture 14. Logo of the Umsida Communication Science Study Program

In addition to color, typography is also carefully considered to ensure that it remains attractive yet easy to read. The font type used is “Sans Serif” which was specifically chosen to suit the characteristics of the audience, namely students and prospective students who tend to prefer casual, retro, and slightly meme designs. Consistency in font and color selection is very important to strengthen the visual identity of each Instagram post.

The design used in Instagram posts is made in accordance with the tastes of the audience, especially the younger generation who are the main target. Therefore, the visual approach used is more casual, creative, and follows the latest social media trends. As Nur Magfirah Head of the

Umsida Communication Science Study Program, explained as follows: “The design is made according to the tastes of the target audience,” which means that each content is tailored to the preferences and digital media consumption habits of the audience.

To ensure consistency, every content that will be uploaded must go through an approval process first from the Head of the Umsida Communication Science Study Program. This aims to maintain the visual identity and not get out of the predetermined branding concept. In addition, the Umsida Communication Science Study Program also uses a special design template that reflects the distinctive character of the study program. In the interview, it was mentioned that “The design template is not much different from the vision and mission of the study program which raises the jargon ‘Ikom Mbois, Los Gak Rewel’,” which means that the design still reflects a casual, cool (mbois), and attractive character.

As a complement to the visual identity, the Umsida Communication Science Study Program also has a mascot named “Si Kombi”, which is a distinctive symbol of the study program. This mascot is often used in several uploads to strengthen brand identity and create memory for the audience.



Picture 15. Mascot Si Kombi

Consistency in brand visualization is also an important factor. To ensure that each post remains in accordance with the brand identity, Umsida Communication Science Study Program applies design guidelines that include the selection of graphic elements, content types, and color tones. That way, every post on Instagram reflects the distinctive characteristics of Umsida Communication Science Study Program and gives a uniform impression to the audience.

2. Brand Activation

In the aspect of Brand Activation, Umsida Communication Science Study Program seeks to increase audience engagement through various interactive strategies. Based on the results of an interview with Fitri Retno as Admin & Graphic Designer Instagram @ikomumsida.official revealed that Instagram is utilized by utilizing interaction features on Instagram social media such as emojis, question boxes, and voting stories. Interaction through this feature allows the audience to be more involved in the activities organized by the study program, thus increasing the closeness between the institution and its followers.

In addition to interactive features, various digital campaigns have been carried out to encourage further audience participation. One of the strategies used by the Umsida Communication Science Study Program is collaboration with influencers. Collaboration with

influencers is an effective strategy to increase reach and attract the attention of prospective new students, because influencers can help introduce the Communication Science Study Program to a wider audience.



Picture 16. Content Reels @ikomumsida.official collaboration with Influencer @cho_ichoad

By consistently applying the elements of Brand Visualization and Brand Activation, Umsida Communication Science Study Program is able to build a strong brand image and create a visual identity that is easily recognizable by the audience. The use of distinctive colors, appropriate typography, and attractive designs that are in line with social media trends help strengthen the appeal and credibility of the study program in the eyes of prospective students, parents, and the wider community.

This consistency in brand visualization and activation is a strategic step in strengthening the competitiveness of the study program, especially in the midst of competition between universities in attracting prospective students. By continuously adapting to digital trends, utilizing technology in brand communication, and presenting interactive experiences that are relevant to the audience, the Umsida Communication Science Study Program can increase public trust and expand their communication reach, thus becoming increasingly recognized as a quality educational institution in the field of communication science.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research that has been conducted, the brand communication strategy implemented by the Communication Science Study Program of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo on Instagram social media involves four main elements, namely target audience identification, media selection, relevant message creation, and time and budget management.

First, in identifying the target audience, the Umsida Communication Science Study Program divides the audience into three main categories: prospective students (high school/vocational/equivalent students), parents and teachers are groups that play a role as recommenders in making student education decisions, and the general public is a strategic target in building the image and credibility of the study program. With this segmentation, communication strategies can be more targeted according to the information needs of each group.

Second, the selection of the right media is a key factor in the success of this strategy. Instagram was chosen because it is one of the most widely used platforms by young people, especially prospective students. Various Instagram features were utilized to convey information

in a visual and interesting way. Insight analysis shows that the Instagram Reels feature has a wider reach compared to Feeds and Stories, making it more effective in attracting the attention of new audiences.

Third, in creating relevant messages, the Umsida Communication Science Study Program ensures that every content created is in accordance with the brand identity and appeals to the audience. Consistency in the selection of colors, fonts, and design elements strengthens the visual identity of the study program. In addition, interaction with the audience is also enhanced through the use of persuasive captions, interactive features such as polls and question boxes, and collaboration with influencers to expand the reach of brand communication.

Fourth, time and budget management are also important aspects of this strategy. Instagram content management is carried out by a special team called "MinKom", which is tasked with creating, uploading, and analyzing content based on social media algorithms. Although there is no specific budget for managing Brand Communication Strategy on Instagram such as Instagram Ads, regular evaluations are carried out every month to optimize the strategy based on the results of insight and engagement from each content.

In addition, aspects of Brand Visualization and Brand Activation in the Brand Communication Strategy of the Umsida Communication Science Study Program on Instagram @ikomumsida.official are also applied to strengthen the image of the Umsida Communication Science Study Program. Brand Visualization is carried out with design consistency, the use of distinctive blue and yellow colors, and the application of attractive and easily recognizable typography. The mascot "Si Kombi" is also used as a unique symbol that strengthens brand identity. Brand Activation, on the other hand, is carried out through active interaction with audiences, digital campaigns, and collaboration with influencers to increase engagement.

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