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Implementation of Brand Journalism on Instagram in Building Samma Bakery's Marketing Communications

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Abstract

The development of social media in the current era has had a positive impact as a driver for local businesses to utilize digital communication strategies in building relationships with consumers. One example of this approach is brand journalism, which is a strategy to convey information about the business being run through content shared on social media, where the content is informative, narrative, and interactive. This study aims to analyze the implementation of brand journalism on Instagram in building marketing communications for a local business, namely Samma Bakery. The analysis of this study uses brand journalism theory and digital marketing communication theory. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with observation techniques on Samma Bakery's Instagram content and content analysis of captions, visual content, and audience interactions. The research subjects were Samma Bakery's Instagram posts containing product information, promotions, storytelling, and interactions with customers. Data analysis was carried out by identifying the forms of brand journalism implementation in digital marketing communication activities. The results of the study show that Samma Bakery implements brand journalism through product storytelling content, promotional information, product education, and interactive communication with audiences/consumers through the comments feature and Instagram Stories. This strategy is able to increase brand awareness, engagement, and emotional closeness with consumers. This study concludes that implementing brand journalism on Instagram plays a crucial role in building Samma Bakery's marketing communications through the delivery of informative and interactive content that strengthens the brand-audience relationship on social media.

Keywords: brand journalism, instagram, local business, marketing communications, social media

Introduction

Marketing communication patterns in the business world have changed since the advent of digital technology, particularly the use of social media as a marketing communication tool. Social media is not just a means of sharing information, but also a crucial communication tool for businesses in building relationships with consumers. In today's digital era, local businesses rely on social media to expand their market reach, strengthen their brand, and increase audience engagement through

interactive communication, ultimately leading to increased sales and product growth. One of the most widely used social media platforms for marketing communication activities is Instagram, thanks to its visual-based communication features that support fast and engaging information delivery. Through visual content, captions, reels, and other interactive features, businesses can build closer relationships with their audiences.

Brand journalism has emerged as a marketing communication strategy used by businesses to convey information to audiences through social media content. Brand journalism is a communication approach that combines journalistic storytelling principles with marketing communication activities to create informative, narrative, and audience-oriented content. Arrese & Pérez-Latre (2017) explain that brand journalism uses journalistic techniques in conveying brand stories so that the resulting content is not only promotional-oriented but also provides informational value to the audience. Brand journalism focuses on storytelling, audience engagement, and providing value through content relevant to consumer needs. This strategy allows businesses to build their brand more naturally and persuasively, so that audiences can feel closer emotionally to the brand being presented.

The concept of marketing communications explains that communication activities undertaken by businesses aim to provide information, persuade, and remind consumers about the products or services offered. According to Kotler & Keller (2016), marketing communications are a means used by companies to inform, persuade, and remind consumers about the products or brands they market. Digital marketing communications through social media are becoming increasingly important because audiences tend to consume information through digital platforms. In this context, Instagram provides opportunities for businesses to implement digital marketing communications through visual storytelling, interactive content, and audience engagement features.

The implementation of brand journalism can be seen through content that includes storytelling, product education, business information, customer experiences, and audience interaction. Through this approach, businesses focus not only on promotional activities but also on creating a positive communication experience for consumers. The use of storytelling in brand journalism allows businesses to build an emotional connection with audiences because consumers tend to be more attracted to content that contains stories, experiences, and values related to the brand. Yarnykh (2019) explains that brand journalism is part of an information communication model that can influence audiences through integrated content that is oriented towards consumer needs.

One local business actively utilizing Instagram as a marketing communication medium is Samma Bakery (@sammabakery). Samma Bakery uses Instagram to share various forms of content, such as product promotions, storytelling, customer interactions, and information related to the bakery products offered to consumers. Samma Bakery's use of Instagram demonstrates the implementation of brand journalism through the delivery of informative and interactive content. Samma Bakery also builds audience engagement through captions, comments, Instagram Stories, and visual content that showcases the business's identity and values. This communication strategy is crucial for enhancing its image or enhancing its branding.

Previous research has discussed the role of social media in digital marketing communications and the implementation of brand journalism in building audience engagement. One such study, conducted by Serazio (2021), explains that brand journalism is a modern communication strategy used by companies to build emotional connections with audiences through more natural and relevant storytelling than conventional promotions. However, previous research has focused primarily on large companies or national brands, while research examining the implementation of brand journalism by local businesses on Instagram is still limited. Furthermore, research specifically examining how local culinary businesses implement brand journalism strategies in their marketing communications is still rare. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of brand journalism on Instagram in building Samma Bakery's marketing communications. The purpose of this communication study is to examine the implementation of brand journalism used by Samma Bakery on Instagram and to analyze the marketing communications strategies employed.

Theoretical Framework

Brand Journalism Theory

Arrese & Pérez-Latre (2017) explain that brand journalism uses journalistic techniques to construct brand stories, making communications more natural and engaging with the audience. In conveying information to audiences, brand journalism theory employs an approach that combines journalistic principles with marketing communication strategies. The focus is on informative and engaging storytelling. Thus, audiences not only receive the promotional effects of the message but also gain insight into the content being uploaded.

Brand journalism builds emotional connections with consumers through content that has informational value. Serazio (2021) states that brand journalism is a modern communication strategy used by companies to build rapport with audiences through storytelling that is more relevant than conventional promotions. In its implementation on social media, brand journalism can be seen through storytelling content, product education, customer experiences, business information, and audience interactions. Through this theory, researchers can analyze the implementation of brand journalism used by Samma Bakery in its digital marketing communication activities.

Marketing Communication Theory

According to Kotler & Keller (2016), marketing communication is a tool used by companies to inform, persuade, and remind consumers about the products and brands they market. Marketing communication is a communication activity carried out by businesses to convey information, persuade, and build relationships with consumers about the products or services they offer. In the digital era, marketing communication can be conducted practically and efficiently through social media, which enables direct interaction between businesses and consumers.

Social media enables businesses to build closer relationships with audiences through visual content, storytelling, and two-way communication. Feedback obtained from social media for marketing communications occurs effectively, quickly, and instantly. In the context of digital communication, Instagram is one of the most effective social media platforms used to build audience engagement through visual features such as photos, videos, reels, captions, and Instagram Stories. The use of social media in marketing communications can help businesses increase brand awareness, strengthen brand image, and create emotional connections with consumers.

Marketing communication theory is used in this study to analyze how Samma Bakery utilizes Instagram as a marketing communication medium with consumers through product information delivery, promotions, audience interaction, and branding activities. Through this theory, research can see how the marketing communication process is carried out digitally to build relationships between brands and audiences.

Instagram as a Digital Communication Medium

Instagram is a primarily visual social media platform that has become a key digital marketing communication channel for both large brands and SMEs globally (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The various features available on Instagram, including photo and video uploads, Reels, Stories, carousels, and comments sections, allow businesses to communicate through various content formats within a single platform (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Research shows that visual content on Instagram generates higher engagement rates compared to text-based content on other platforms, making it particularly effective for food and culinary businesses that rely on visual appeal to attract consumers (De Vries et al., 2012).

Chesaria & Sunaryo (2023) demonstrate that Instagram serves as an effective marketing medium for SMEs by enabling them to reach a wider audience, build brand awareness, and drive purchase intent through a consistent content strategy. Furthermore, Brodie et al. (2021) highlighted that sustained audience engagement on digital platforms is built through community-oriented content that encourages participation, such as interactive Stories, Q&A sessions, and user-generated content. These features align directly with the principles of brand journalism, making Instagram an ideal platform for local businesses to implement this communication strategy.

Material and Methodology

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to analyze and describe the implementation of brand journalism on Instagram in building marketing communications conducted by a local business, Samma Bakery. Qualitative methods were used because this study aims to understand marketing communications and brand journalism in depth through an analysis of social media content used by the research subjects. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meanings derived from social issues or communication phenomena occurring in society. The descriptive approach was chosen to systematically describe the implementation of brand journalism by Samma Bakery through Instagram as a digital marketing communication medium.

Research Design and Approach

The research employs a netnographic approach combined with qualitative content analysis. Netnography, as developed by Kozinets (2019) and further elaborated by Bouvier & Rasmussen (2022), involves systematic observation and analysis of online communities and digital platforms to understand cultural and communicative practices. This approach is appropriate for studying Instagram-based communication because it allows researchers to examine content in its natural digital context without interfering with the communicative process. Qualitative content analysis was applied following Mayring (2021) framework, which involves systematic categorization of content according to pre-defined theoretical dimensions derived from brand journalism theory.

Research Object and Period

The research object is the official Instagram account of Samma Bakery (@sammabakery), a local bakery business operating in Bengkulu, Indonesia. The observation period covered February to April 2026 (three months), a timeframe selected to capture a representative sample of the account's content strategy during a period of consistent posting activity. This three-month observation window enables identification of content patterns, posting frequency, and audience engagement trends across different content categories.

Sampling Technique and Data Selection

The population of this study comprises all Instagram content published by Samma Bakery during the observation period. Purposive sampling was employed to select the research sample, with content selected based on its relevance to brand journalism indicators (Sugiyono, 2019). Specifically, posts were selected if they contained one or more of the following elements: (a) storytelling narratives related to the brand, products, or production process; (b) informative product content including promotions, pricing, and menu descriptions; (c) audience interaction elements such as responses to comments or Stories with interactive features; and (d) educational content about bakery products or baking techniques. Posts that were purely promotional without any informational or narrative value were included as contrast cases to identify the boundaries of brand journalism practice on the account.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection employed three complementary techniques: (1) systematic observation of the Instagram account, involving regular monitoring of all content posted during the observation period; (2) documentation, wherein visual content (photos, Reels, carousels), captions, comment interactions, and Story content were systematically recorded; and (3) content analysis, wherein the documented content was examined for the presence and characteristics of brand journalism elements. Primary data were derived directly from Samma Bakery's Instagram account, while secondary data were obtained from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and previous research related to brand journalism, digital marketing communication, and Instagram use by SMEs.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis followed Mayring (2021) qualitative content analysis procedure, which involves four stages: (1) material collection, systematic documentation of all relevant Instagram content; (2) descriptive analysis, identification and description of content characteristics for each post; (3) category

formation, classification of content according to brand journalism dimensions (storytelling, product information, audience interaction, product education, and engagement); and (4) interpretive analysis—linking the categorized content with brand journalism theory and digital marketing communication theory to draw meaningful conclusions about Samma Bakery's communication strategy. Credibility of the analysis was enhanced through triangulation of data sources (visual content, captions, and audience responses) and theoretical triangulation (applying both brand journalism theory and digital marketing communication theory to interpret the findings).

Research Variables and Indicators

The primary variable of this study is brand journalism implementation, operationalized through five indicators derived from the theoretical framework: (1) storytelling, the degree to which content conveys narrative elements about the brand, products, or people; (2) product information delivery, the extent to which content provides accurate, useful information about products; (3) audience interaction, the nature and frequency of two-way communication between the brand and its followers; (4) product education, the degree to which content teaches audiences about products, ingredients, or production processes; and (5) engagement metrics, audience responses including comments, views, and Story interactions, which serve as indicators of communication effectiveness.

Result and Discussion

This research was conducted through netnographic observation of content on the Samma Bakery Instagram account (@sammabakery) during the period of February–April 2026. Based on the observation results, the Instagram account was used as a digital marketing communication medium that utilizes product visuals, video reels, caption storytelling, and audience interaction as a form of brand journalism implementation.

Storytelling in Instagram Content

Observations show that Samma Bakery employs storytelling techniques in several Instagram posts through captions and visuals that showcase the bakery's production process. The content not only showcases the finished product but also shows the bread-making process, the kitchen environment, and behind-the-scenes activities. This strategy creates a closer connection with the brand because the content appears authentic and personal.



Source : Instagram @sammabakery

Figure 1. Storytelling content about the production process on Instagram @sammabakery

This storytelling approach demonstrates that Samma Bakery applies the concept of brand journalism by using content as a means of conveying brand stories, not just product promotion. Visual content that shows the production process provides a sense of transparency and increases consumer confidence in the quality of the products offered.

This finding aligns with Arrese & Pérez-Latre (2017) conceptualization of brand journalism, wherein journalistic storytelling techniques are applied to construct brand narratives that resonate emotionally with audiences. By showing the production process rather than merely the finished product, Samma Bakery communicates authenticity and craftsmanship—qualities that strengthen consumer trust and brand loyalty (Serazio, 2021). Furthermore, Yarnykh (2019) integrated model of information influence suggests that such storytelling content operates on multiple cognitive and emotional levels, influencing audience perceptions of the brand beyond purely commercial dimensions.

From a digital marketing communication perspective (Kotler & Keller, 2016), storytelling content serves the function of building long-term brand equity by consistently communicating the brand's values and identity. This is particularly significant for local businesses like Samma Bakery, where the authentic, human dimension of a small enterprise can serve as a differentiating factor from larger, more impersonal competitors (Chesaria & Sunaryo, 2023).

Product Information Delivery

In addition to storytelling, Samma Bakery also uses Instagram to share information about the products available at the outlet through feeds, captions, and Instagram stories. This information includes product variants, promotions, prices, and menu recommendations. The information is delivered visually with an attractive and aesthetic design, making it easy for the audience to understand and engage with. Promotional content on Samma Bakery's Instagram shows that social media is used as an effective marketing communication tool because it is able to convey product information quickly and attractively through aesthetic food visuals.



Source : Instagram @sammabakery

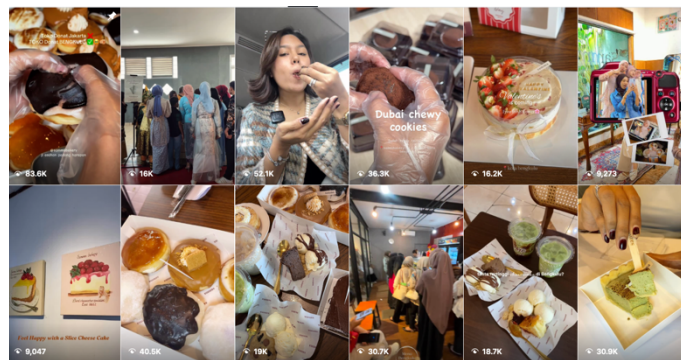
Figure 2. Promotional content and product information on Instagram @sammabakery

This dimension directly addresses the marketing communication function of informing consumers about products and services (Kotler & Keller, 2016). De Vries et al (2012) demonstrate that the informational quality and visual appeal of brand content on social media significantly influence its popularity and reach among followers. Samma Bakery's product information posts exhibit these characteristics through the use of clear, appetizing visuals combined with concise, informative captions that communicate key product details effectively.

In the context of brand journalism, product information delivery serves the 'editorial' function of keeping audiences informed about the brand's offerings in a manner that provides genuine value rather than appearing purely promotional (Serazio, 2021). When product information is communicated through well-crafted visual narratives rather than conventional advertisements, it is more likely to be received positively by audiences and shared organically that extending the brand's reach beyond its existing follower base (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

Audience Interaction and Engagement

Based on observations, the Samma Bakery Instagram account received a very positive audience response through the comments feature and had a high number of views on several reels and product content uploads during February–April 2026. This high number of viewers indicates that the visual content uploaded was able to attract audience attention and increase the reach of digital marketing communications.



Source : Instagram @sammabakery

Gambar 3. Viewers on the instagram post @sammabakery

This finding directly responds to the research problem regarding how brand journalism contributes to building effective marketing communications. The presence of two-way communication rather than one-directional promotional messaging is a defining characteristic of brand journalism's audience-centered approach (Arrese & Pérez-Latre, 2017). Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) emphasize that social media's unique value for marketing communication lies precisely in its capacity to enable direct, real-time interaction between brands and consumers, creating a dialogue that strengthens relational bonds.

Brodie et al. (2021) demonstrate that consistent engagement in digital brand communities leads to increased customer loyalty and brand advocacy, as engaged consumers are more likely to recommend the brand to others within their social networks. In the case of Samma Bakery, the audience interaction observed through comments and Story features indicates the successful cultivation of an engaged digital community as a key outcome of effective brand journalism implementation. Moreover, high Reel view counts suggest that Samma Bakery's audiovisual content successfully captures audience attention in the competitive Instagram feed environment, consistent with Ashley & Tuten (2015) finding that creative content formats drive higher engagement rates on social media.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that brand journalism was implemented on Samma Bakery's Instagram account through visual storytelling, product information delivery, and digital interactions with audiences during February–April 2026. This communication strategy aligns with the concept of digital marketing communications, which emphasizes the importance of interactive and experience-based communication. According to Kotler & Keller (2016), marketing communications are a means for companies to inform, persuade, and remind consumers about the products or services they market. In this study, Samma Bakery uses Instagram not only for product promotion but also to build emotional experiences through storytelling content.

Reels showing the bread production process, bright and engaging visuals showing fresh from-the oven products, and behind-the-scenes activities demonstrate that Samma Bakery implements a brand journalism approach by conveying the brand story visually, authentically, and aesthetically. This strategy encourages audiences to view the product not only as a consumer good but also as part of the brand experience and identity.

Furthermore, the use of the comment feature and Instagram Stories demonstrates two-way communication between Samma Bakery and its audience. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) explain that social media allows companies to build direct interactions with consumers more quickly and openly. In the context of this research, digital interactions help increase consumer engagement and brand loyalty.

This study also found that the use of reels is an effective form of visual communication in capturing audience attention. Short, engaging audiovisual content can increase engagement because it is easier for Instagram users to understand and share. This finding aligns with research by Ashley & Tuten (2015), which states that the creativity of social media content influences audience engagement. These findings directly address the research question of how brand journalism is implemented to build marketing communications. Evidence suggests that Samma Bakery uses Instagram not only as a promotional billboard but as a dynamic communication platform through which they build relationships, communicate value, and provide value to their audience. This approach aligns with Kotler & Keller (2016) integrated marketing communications framework, where various communication tools and messages are coordinated to deliver a consistent brand experience across multiple touchpoints.

The novelty of this research lies in its analysis of the implementation of brand journalism by local businesses using Instagram as a digital marketing communication medium. This research demonstrates that the concept of brand journalism is not only applied by large companies but can also be used by local businesses like Samma Bakery to build engagement and emotional connections with consumers through visual storytelling on social media.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, the implementation of brand journalism on Samma Bakery's Instagram social media platform demonstrates that social media can be used as a digital marketing communication strategy through the disclosure of engaging visuals, products, and reel content. Results obtained from the analysis of content uploaded during February–April 2026 indicate that Samma Bakery utilizes Instagram not only as a product promotion medium but also as a means of building brand awareness and audience engagement through product visuals, production processes, and behind-the-scenes footage. The high number of viewers and audience responses to several posts indicate that the use of audiovisual content can increase social media users' interest in local brands.

The novelty of this research lies in the analysis of the implementation of brand journalism in a local bakery business through Instagram as a digital marketing communication medium. This research provides a theoretical contribution to the development of digital communication and brand journalism studies by demonstrating that the concept of brand journalism is not only applied to large companies or corporate media but can also be utilized by local businesses to build brand identity and audience engagement through visual storytelling. Furthermore, this research provides practical benefits for digital marketing communication practitioners in utilizing Instagram as a more creative, interactive, and experience-based communication medium for audiences.

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