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Instagram as a Medium for Shaping MSME Image: The Case of @Mp_Jewelry

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Abstract. This study aims to examine the use of Instagram as a medium for shaping the image of the MSME @Mp_Jewelry in Rama Agung Village, North Bengkulu Regency. The research used a descriptive qualitative method. The main theoretical framework was Luttrell's Circular Model of Social Media, consisting of share, optimize, manage, and engage, supported by Frank Jeffkins' image theory. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation involving the owner who manages the Instagram account and two consumers who purchased products online and offline. The findings show that Instagram supports image formation through product photos, reels, short videos, stories, captions, testimonials, direct messages, and audience interactions. In the share stage, Instagram introduces product information and creates initial audience awareness. In the optimize stage, visual consistency, aesthetic feeds, clear product photos, and informative captions strengthen product identity. In the manage stage, fast, friendly, and informative responses build consumer trust. In the engage stage, likes, comments, reposted stories, DMs, and testimonials create emotional closeness with consumers. Overall, Instagram functions not only as a promotional channel but also as a strategic medium for building a creative, aesthetic, modern, trustworthy, and consumer-oriented MSME image.

Keywords: *Instagram; Social Media; MSME Image; Circular Model of SoMe; Mp_Jewelry.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has changed how micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) communicate with consumers. In the past, small businesses often depended on word-of-mouth promotion, printed media, and direct selling. In the digital era, however, MSMEs can introduce products, communicate with audiences, and form business images through social media platforms. Digital communication allows business owners to deliver product information quickly, maintain interaction with consumers, and build a recognizable identity in a more flexible and cost-efficient way (Hasirah et al., 2024; Kusuma & Wulandari, 2023). For MSMEs in the creative economy sector, social media is not only a channel for selling products. It is also a space for telling stories about local identity, product uniqueness, and the values behind a brand. Consumers increasingly evaluate products not only from price and function but also from visual appeal, authenticity, service quality, and the emotional impression created by digital content. This makes image formation an important communication process for local MSMEs that want to be known beyond their immediate community (Pratama & Wibowo, 2022; Nurdin & Rahman, 2021).

Instagram is particularly relevant for MSMEs because it is built around visual communication. Through feed posts, reels, stories, highlights, captions, direct messages, comments, and testimonials, a business can present its products in an aesthetic and persuasive way. Visual content is especially important for businesses selling accessories, crafts, fashion

products, and handmade items because consumers need to see design, color, texture, and usage examples before deciding to purchase (Ramadhan, Nurdin, & Maulana, 2022).

Mp_Jawelry is an MSME located in Rama Agung Village, Arga Makmur, North Bengkulu Regency. The business focuses on accessories such as beaded bracelets and tridatu bracelets. It was started by the owner, Made Priska Nauli, from a personal hobby of making bracelets and uploading them to Instagram. The positive response from viewers encouraged the owner to develop the activity into a business. The Instagram account @Mp_Jawelry was created in 2022 and began more active promotional activities in 2023. Initially, the account had around 500 followers, mostly from Rama Agung and North Bengkulu. After student assistance and promotional activities, the follower base increased and audiences began to come not only from the local village but also from outside the area.

Figure 1. Instagram account of UMKM @Mp_Jawelry



The case of Mp_Jawelry is important because the business represents a local creative MSME that uses Instagram to form its business image. The account displays product photos, short videos, testimonials, and interaction with consumers. These activities do not merely promote products; they also construct a perception that Mp_Jawelry is creative, aesthetic, modern, responsive, and trustworthy. For a relatively new business, this image is essential because it helps consumers recognize the brand and differentiate it from other accessory sellers.

Despite these opportunities, local MSMEs often face challenges in managing digital communication. Limited digital literacy, lack of content planning, inconsistency in posting, and difficulty creating attractive visuals can reduce the effectiveness of social media use. In the case of Mp_Jawelry, the owner also faced challenges in creating consistent content that matched the character of the beaded bracelet products. Therefore, the use of Instagram needs to be understood not only as a technical promotional activity but also as a strategic image-building process. Based on this background, this study analyzes how Instagram is used as a medium for shaping the image of UMKM @Mp_Jawelry in Rama Agung Village, North Bengkulu Regency. The study uses Luttrell's Circular Model of Social Media, consisting of share, optimize, manage, and engage, to examine social media management practices. Frank Jefkins' image theory is used to interpret the image formed through these digital communication activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media and MSME communication

Social media is an interactive digital platform that enables users to create, share, and respond to information through online communities. For MSMEs, social media provides an accessible communication space where business owners can introduce products, observe

consumer responses, and maintain relationships with customers. In marketing communication, social media helps MSMEs reduce promotional barriers because content can be produced and distributed without the high costs associated with conventional advertising (Trisilia & Pebriana, 2023; Rahman & Faisal, 2023).

Instagram as a visual image-building platform

Instagram is a visual-based social media platform that allows users to upload photos, videos, reels, stories, and highlights. Its visual orientation makes it suitable for businesses that depend on product appearance and aesthetic presentation. For a handmade accessory business such as Mp_Jawelry, Instagram helps consumers see the details of products, understand their style, and imagine their usage. Captions, hashtags, and direct messages also support communication between seller and consumer, making Instagram both a promotional and relational medium.

The Circular Model of Social Media

Luttrell's Circular Model of Social Media explains social media communication through four connected stages: share, optimize, manage, and engage. Share refers to distributing content and selecting the appropriate platform to reach audiences. Optimize focuses on improving message quality, visual presentation, timing, and feature use. Manage concerns monitoring, responding, and maintaining digital communication. Engage emphasizes audience involvement, interaction, and relationship building. The model is circular because social media communication does not stop after publication; it continues through feedback, adjustment, and renewed interaction (Luttrell, 2023).

Image formation and Frank Jefkins' image theory

Image refers to the impression, perception, or mental picture formed by the public toward an organization, brand, or business. According to Frank Jefkins, image is formed through information and experience received by audiences. In the context of this study, the relevant form is corporate image or business image, namely how consumers perceive Mp_Jawelry as a business. A positive image can increase trust, strengthen loyalty, and encourage purchasing decisions. Instagram contributes to this process because every post, caption, testimonial, and response becomes a sign that shapes public perception.

MSMEs and the creative economy

MSMEs are productive business units that play a strategic role in local economic development. In the creative economy, MSMEs are supported by creativity, innovation, local resources, and cultural identity. Mp_Jawelry belongs to this category because it produces accessories with handmade and aesthetic value. The use of Instagram allows the business to present these values visually and emotionally, making local products more visible to wider audiences.

METHODS

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach. The approach was selected because the research aims to understand how Instagram is used as a medium for shaping the image of Mp_Jawelry rather than measuring social media performance statistically. Qualitative research enables the researcher to interpret meanings, interactions, experiences, and perceptions related to digital communication activities.

The research object was the Instagram account @Mp_Jawelry and the digital communication practices of the MSME. The study involved the owner and account manager as the key informant, supported by two consumers who had direct experiences with Mp_Jawelry

through Instagram. The informants were selected through purposive sampling because they were directly related to the research focus.

Table 1. Research Informants

No.	Name	Status	Role in the Study
1	Made Nauli Priska	Owner and Instagram account manager	Provided information about product content, promotion, account management, consumer interaction, and the intended image of Mp_Jawelry.
2	Dewi Latipah	Online consumer and follower	Provided information about purchasing through direct message and perceptions of Mp_Jawelry based on Instagram content.
3	Chella Wati Kusuma	Offline consumer and follower	Provided information about interest in products after seeing Instagram posts and purchasing directly at the business location.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted by examining the Instagram account, including product photos, reels, captions, stories, testimonials, comments, and direct-message interaction. Interviews were used to explore the owner's communication strategy and the consumers' perceptions. Documentation included screenshots of Instagram posts, product displays, direct messages, and customer testimonials. The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification.

Figure 2. Research Framework Based On The Circular Model Of Some And Image Theory



RESULTS

The findings show that Instagram is used by Mp_Jawelry as a strategic medium for forming business image. The process can be explained through four stages of the Circular Model of Social Media: share, optimize, manage, and engage. Each stage contributes to the formation of a positive corporate image as understood through Frank Jefkins' image theory.

Share: distributing product information and creating initial awareness

At the share stage, Mp_Jawelry uses Instagram to distribute product information through product photos, reels, short videos, stories, and customer testimonials. These contents introduce product types, bracelet designs, colors, and visual details to audiences. The use of Instagram also expands the audience beyond Rama Agung Village because viewers outside the

local area can access product information and communicate with the seller through direct messages.

The shared content creates initial awareness and helps audiences recognize Mp_Jewelry as a local accessory business. The owner does not merely upload product images but also presents the products in ways that highlight aesthetic value. Testimonial content further strengthens early trust because potential consumers can see the experiences of previous buyers.

Optimize: improving visual identity and message quality

At the optimize stage, Mp_Jewelry improves its Instagram content through aesthetic feed arrangement, consistent colors, clear product photos, informative captions, and the use of Instagram features. The visual presentation makes the account appear more professional and attractive. Clear images help consumers evaluate the product, while captions explain product information and encourage further interaction.

Optimization also appears in the attempt to align content with the character of handmade beaded bracelets. Rather than presenting products randomly, the account curates visual content to create a consistent impression. This consistency helps shape the image of Mp_Jewelry as an MSME that is creative, modern, and attentive to visual quality.

Manage: maintaining communication and consumer trust

At the manage stage, Mp_Jewelry manages consumer communication through comments and direct messages. The owner responds to questions about product details, prices, availability, and purchasing procedures. Fast, friendly, and informative responses make consumers feel valued and increase their confidence in the business.

The findings indicate that interaction management is crucial in image formation. A visually attractive account may create initial interest, but responsive communication strengthens trust. When consumers receive helpful replies, they are more willing to continue the transaction and view the business as reliable. Thus, the management of Instagram interaction contributes directly to the formation of a trustworthy business image.

Engage: building audience involvement and emotional closeness

At the engage stage, audience involvement is seen through likes, comments, story reposts, direct messages, and testimonials. Consumers do not only view the content but also respond to it, ask questions, and share their purchase experiences. This interaction creates emotional closeness between Mp_Jewelry and its consumers.

Engagement also increases purchase intention. Consumers stated that they became interested after seeing aesthetic product posts and then contacted the account through direct messages or visited the location. This shows that Instagram involvement can move audiences from awareness to interaction and from interaction to purchase. The image formed through engagement is that Mp_Jewelry is close to consumers and open to communication.

Figure 3. Examples Of Product Display, Direct Message Interaction, And Consumer Response

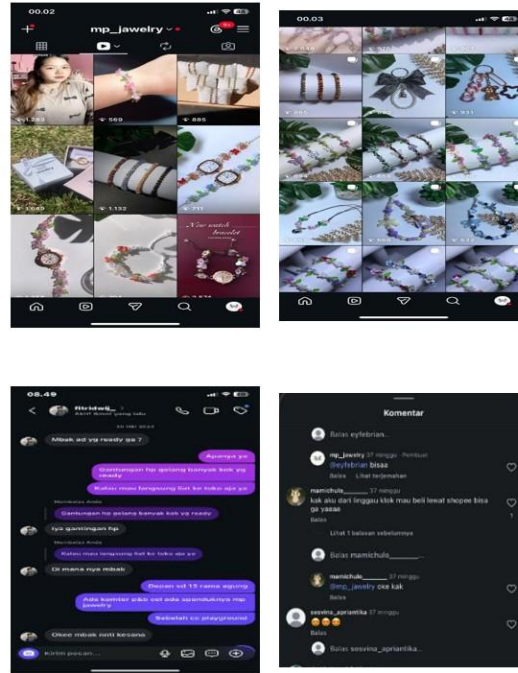


Table 2. Summary of Findings Based on the Circular Model of Social Media

Stage	Instagram Practice	Contribution to MSME Image
Share	Posting product photos, reels, stories, short videos, and customer testimonials.	Creates initial awareness and introduces Mp_Jewelry as a local creative accessory business.
Optimize	Using aesthetic feeds, consistent colors, clear photos, informative captions, and Instagram features.	Strengthens the image of a creative, modern, aesthetic, and professionally managed MSME.
Manage	Responding to comments and direct messages quickly, politely, and informatively.	Builds consumer comfort, trust, and confidence in online and offline transactions.
Engage	Encouraging likes, comments, reposts, testimonials, DMs, and purchase interaction.	Creates emotional closeness and positions Mp_Jewelry as a consumer-oriented business.

Image formation through Frank Jefkins' corporate image concept

Based on Frank Jefkins' image theory, the image of Mp_Jewelry is formed through information and experiences received by audiences. Instagram content gives consumers information about products, while communication through comments and direct messages gives them direct experience with the seller. The combination of visual consistency, product clarity, testimonials, and responsive communication shapes a positive corporate image.

The formed image can be described as creative, aesthetic, modern, trustworthy, professional, and close to consumers. This image is not created through one post only, but through repeated communication practices across different Instagram features. Therefore, Instagram functions as a medium that connects promotion, interaction, trust, and image formation.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that Instagram is more than a promotional medium for Mp_Jewelry. It becomes a space where the business constructs meaning, communicates identity, and forms consumer perception. This supports the idea that social media can strengthen MSME image when content is managed strategically and consistently.

The share and optimize stages are closely related to visual identity. Product photos, reels, stories, and captions create a first impression that affects how audiences view the business. In a visual platform such as Instagram, image formation begins with the appearance of content. An aesthetic and consistent account encourages audiences to perceive the business as serious, creative, and professional. The manage and engage stages show that business image is not formed only by visual content. It is also shaped by communication quality. Fast and friendly responses, willingness to answer questions, and the use of testimonials help consumers experience the business as trustworthy. In the context of a small local MSME, this trust is important because online buyers may have concerns about product quality, payment, and delivery.

The use of Instagram by Mp_Jewelry also reflects the broader role of digital communication in the creative economy. The business can present local handmade products to a wider audience without depending only on physical location. Instagram makes it possible for a village-based MSME to show product value, build identity, and create consumer relationships across geographic boundaries. From the perspective of Frank Jefkins' image theory, every digital message and consumer experience becomes part of the image-building process. The positive image of Mp_Jewelry emerges because audiences receive consistent information and positive interaction through Instagram. This explains why Instagram can be considered a medium for forming the corporate image of an MSME, not merely a tool for displaying products.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Instagram plays an important role as a medium for shaping the image of UMKM @Mp_Jewelry in Rama Agung Village, North Bengkulu Regency. Through the share stage, Instagram introduces product information and creates initial awareness among audiences. Through the optimize stage, aesthetic feeds, consistent colors, clear product photos, informative captions, and Instagram features strengthen the visual identity of the business. Through the manage stage, fast, friendly, and informative responses build trust and consumer comfort. Through the engage stage, likes, comments, direct messages, story reposts, and testimonials create interaction and emotional closeness with consumers.

Overall, Instagram forms the image of Mp_Jewelry as a creative, aesthetic, modern, trustworthy, professional, and consumer-oriented MSME. The findings show that image formation is produced through a combination of visual communication, product information, service responsiveness, and consumer interaction. Therefore, Instagram should be managed consistently so that local MSMEs can strengthen their identity, expand market reach, and maintain consumer trust.

LIMITATION

This study is limited to one MSME, namely Mp_Jewelry, and focuses on Instagram as the main communication medium. The research does not measure engagement statistically or compare Instagram with other platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, or WhatsApp Business. Future research may examine more MSMEs, compare several digital platforms, or combine qualitative analysis with quantitative social media metrics to obtain a broader understanding of MSME image formation.

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