

The Impact of Digital Public Relations on the Instagram Account @Jajananhafiz on Brand Awareness for Jajanan Hafiz's SME Products

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Abstract. This quantitative research aims to empirically analyze the influence of Digital public relations activities focusing on the Instagram account @jajananhafiz on the level of Brand Awareness of the Jajanan Hafiz MSME products in Bengkulu City. The research approach is based on the framework of Social Media Marketing Theory to evaluate how digital communication dimensions affect consumer cognition. The data collection method was conducted through the distribution of structured questionnaires to a sample of 92 respondents drawn from a total population of 1,074 followers using probability sampling with a simple random sampling technique based on the Slovin Formula. Statistical data analysis in this study uses the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method with the assistance of SmartPLS 4 software. The structural model evaluation (inner model) shows a coefficient of determination (R-Square) value of 0.714, meaning that the variability of Brand Awareness can be explained by Digital public relations activities by 71.4% (strong influence category). The hypothesis testing results show a path coefficient (beta) value of 0.845 with a TStatistic achievement of 14.235 (> 1.96) and an empirical significance P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). These results absolutely prove that Digital public relations has a positive and significant effect on the Brand Awareness of Jajanan Hafiz MSME products. The implications of this research emphasize the importance for MSME actors to optimize interactivity and digital content quality to solidify brand position in the local culinary market.

Keywords: *Digital Public Relations, Brand Awareness, Social Media Marketing, Smartpls 4, MSMEs.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology in the contemporary era has disrupted the global business landscape, particularly within the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector. Indonesia's culinary industry is currently required to adopt digital platforms in order to maintain market relevance and respond to increasingly intense competition (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2021). This transformation compels business actors to focus not only on the quality of physical products, but also on the management of online brand communication. Interactive communication strategies have become a vital instrument for MSMEs to reach dynamic, digitally connected urban market segments (Sari & Wijaya, 2022).

Amid this shift in marketing communication paradigms, conventional public relations functions have evolved into digital public relations. This digital approach enables organizations to build strategic, two-way relationships with audiences through the optimization of social media (Hapsari & Pratama, 2023). For MSME actors, digital public relations offers an efficient marketing solution with broad reach without requiring large-scale corporate budget allocations. Structured communication via social media has proven effective in reducing geographic and psychological barriers between local culinary producers and their potential target consumers (Wardani, 2024).

Jajanan Hafiz MSME is one of the culinary business entities in Bengkulu City that actively utilizes Instagram as its primary public communication channel under the official account name @jajananhafiz. Based on preliminary observations, this account has accumulated a significant follower base, reaching more than 1,074 followers. Nevertheless, a high number of followers does not theoretically guarantee a linear increase in the depth of brand recognition if it is not supported by credible and consistent digital public relations communication management on the Instagram account (Gunawan & Lestari, 2025). Therefore, empirical testing is required to measure the extent to which the operationalization of social media contributes to audience cognition. One of the fundamental outcomes of a successful digital public relations strategy is the formation of brand awareness in the minds of audiences. Brand awareness plays a crucial role as the initial stage in the consumer adoption hierarchy before purchase decisions are made (Keller & Swaminathan, 2021). Many local MSMEs experience stagnation due to their inability to build strong brand recognition in the digital sphere, causing their visual identities and product messages to be submerged amid the dense flow of online information.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of digital public relations represents an extension of traditional public relations functions by leveraging internet-based media and digital applications to manage reputation and maintain positive relationships between organizations and their publics (Hapsari & Pratama, 2023). These activities no longer rely on conventional mass media, but instead shift toward owned media channels such as websites and official corporate social media accounts. Within the context of modern public relations, the success of digital public relations is determined by practitioners' ability to produce communicative messages that are interactive, informative, and responsive (Sari & Wijaya, 2022).

Brand awareness reflects the ability of prospective buyers or consumers to recognize a brand (brand recognition) or to recall it (brand recall) as part of a specific product category (Keller & Swaminathan, 2021). This level of brand awareness serves as a fundamental foundation in the formation of brand equity, as consumers tend to choose products whose visual identity or brand name is already familiar to them. In a highly competitive digital environment, achieving the highest level of brand awareness—namely, top of mind—requires consistent and sustained exposure of brand information messages to audiences (Wardani, 2024).

Instagram content is defined as visual and textual communication materials—including photos, short videos (reels), and stories—produced and uploaded by account owners to convey specific messages to their followers (Lamberton & Stephen, 2022). Within the digital marketing landscape, the characteristics of uploaded content must embody aesthetic value, informational relevance, and uniqueness in order to capture audience attention amid the abundance of digital information flows. The strategic management of graphic elements and narratives on an Instagram feed serves as an essential external stimulus in professionally representing a product's visual image (Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun, 2023).

This quantitative study fully adopts Social Media Marketing Theory as its primary conceptual framework for explaining the causal relationships among variables. Social Media Marketing Theory posits that the use of social networking media by business entities is centered on the creation of collective value through the dimensions of interactivity, collaboration, community, and intensive two-way communication between organizations and consumers (Tuten & Solomon, 2021). Through the lens of this theory, the digital public relations activities carried out on the @jajananhafiz account are analyzed as a practical application of the digital communication mix aimed at converting audience engagement into measurable brand awareness.

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative research design using a causal associative method to examine the cause-and-effect relationship between the independent variable (digital public relations) and the dependent variable (brand awareness). The population of this study comprises all active followers of the Instagram account @jajananhafiz, totaling 1,074 followers. The determination of the sample size was conducted rigorously by applying probability sampling through a simple random sampling technique to ensure that each member of the population had an equal and fair chance of being selected (Sugiyono, 2022).

To calculate an accurate and representative sample size from the total population of 1,074 followers, the researchers applied the Slovin formula with a margin of error of 5% (error = 0.05). The mathematical formulation of the Slovin formula is as follows: $n = N / (1 + N(\text{error})^2)$, where N represents the population size and n denotes the minimum sample size. Based on this calculation, the actual computation yielded: $n = 1074 / (1 + 1074 (0.05)^2) = 1074 / (1 + 1074 \times 0.0025) = 1074 / (1 + 2.685) = 1074 / 3.685 = 291.45$. Accordingly, the sample size determined and utilized in this quantitative study consisted of 92 respondents (Gunawan & Lestari, 2025).

The statistical data analysis process was carried out using variance-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the SmartPLS 4 software. The stages of data analysis encompassed two main tests, namely the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and the evaluation of the structural model (inner model). The outer model evaluation was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the research instruments, sequentially examining outer loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) for validity, followed by tests of Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (rho_c) for reliability (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2022). Subsequently, the structural model (inner model) assessment was applied to evaluate the coefficient of determination (R-square) and to test the hypotheses through the bootstrapping procedure.

RESULTS

Before interpreting the structural model to test the hypotheses, a comprehensive evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) was first conducted. This evaluation aimed to ensure that all indicator instruments used met the empirical criteria of validity and reliability. In accordance with the methodological sequence, validity testing was initiated by examining the outer loading values of each indicator.

Table 1. Results of Construct Validity Testing (Outer Loadings and AVE)

Latent Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	AVE
Digital public relations (X)	X.1	0.794	0.685
	X.2	0.812	
	X.3	0.841	
	X.4	0.827	
	X.5	0.863	
Brand Awareness (Y)	Y.1	0.789	0.690
	Y.2	0.845	
	Y.3	0.852	
	Y.4	0.836	

Table 2. Results of Construct Reliability Testing

Latent Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_c)
Digital public relations (X)	0.885	0.915
Brand Awareness (Y)	0.854	0.898

Table 3. Results of Structural Model Testing and Regression Coefficients (Summary of Coefficients)

Effect / Parameter	Path (Beta)	Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-value	R-Square (R ²)
Constant (a)	0.582		–	–	
Digital Public Relations (X) → Brand Awareness (Y)					

DISCUSSION

The results of the data analysis presented in Table 1 indicate that the outer loading values for the Digital Public Relations (X) variable are as follows: X.1 = 0.794, X.2 = 0.812, X.3 = 0.841, X.4 = 0.827, and X.5 = 0.863. Meanwhile, the outer loading values for the Brand Awareness (Y) variable are Y.1 = 0.789, Y.2 = 0.845, Y.3 = 0.852, and Y.4 = 0.836. All of these indicators exceed the minimum critical threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022). The validity testing stage was subsequently continued by examining the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values to ensure the convergent validity of the latent constructs. The actual calculated AVE values show figures of 0.685 for the Digital Public Relations (X) variable and 0.690 for the Brand Awareness (Y) variable. As both AVE values clearly surpass the minimum criterion standard of 0.50, all constructs are declared to possess strong and acceptable convergent validity (Hair et al., 2022). Finally, discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) parameter, which produced an inter-construct correlation value of 0.845. An HTMT index below the maximum threshold of 0.90 confirms that the two latent variables are empirically distinct and demonstrate adequate discriminant validity.

Based on the statistical calculations shown in Table 2, the observed reliability indicators include Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (rho_c). The statistical results indicate that Cronbach's alpha for the Digital Public Relations (X) variable is 0.885, while for the Brand Awareness (Y) variable it is 0.854, with both values meeting the ideal criterion above 0.60 (Sugiyono, 2022). In addition, the Composite Reliability (rho_c) values are recorded at 0.915 for the Digital Public Relations (X) variable and 0.898 for the Brand Awareness (Y) variable. As both rho_c values are well above the threshold of 0.70, the research instruments are proven to exhibit a very high and consistent level of reliability.

Referring to the statistical data in Table 3, the testing of the simple linear regression model begins with an evaluation of the coefficient of determination (R-square or R²) to assess the predictive capacity of the model. The R² value obtained for the Brand Awareness (Y) latent construct is 0.714. This empirical finding indicates that 71.4% of the variability or fluctuation in brand awareness levels for UMKM Jajanan Hafiz products can be explained by Digital Public Relations (X) activities, which is methodologically classified as a strong model. Meanwhile, the remaining 28.6% of variance is explained by other exogenous variables outside the linear model tested in this study, such as price perception, product quality, or other elements of the marketing mix. Furthermore, hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping algorithm to assess the significance of the path coefficient. The analysis results show a path coefficient (β) value of 0.845 with a T-statistic of 14.235. This value significantly exceeds the critical T-table threshold of 1.96 for a two-tailed test at a 5% significance level. In addition, the empirical probability value (p-value) obtained is 0.000, which is far below the significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. Based on these statistical parameters, the null hypothesis (H₀) is decisively rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. Thus, this study empirically proves that digital public relations has a positive and significant effect on the brand awareness of consumers or followers of the Instagram account @jajananhafiz. Mathematically, the direction and functional contribution between the variables can be converted into a simple linear regression equation, namely: Y =

$0.582 + 0.845X$. The constant value (a) of 0.582 represents the baseline or initial level of brand awareness that has been organically formed in consumers' minds, even when the Digital Public Relations variable is assumed to be constant or equal to zero. On the other hand, the positive regression coefficient (b) of 0.845 confirms the linear slope of the relationship; that is, each unit increase in the effectiveness of Digital Public Relations activities will consistently raise Brand Awareness by 0.845 units. Theoretically, this finding reinforces the relevance of digital marketing communication theory, in which the intensity of interactivity, digital opinion management, and public relations responsiveness on social media act as primary and effective stimuli in enhancing brand recall and brand recognition in the digital era.

From the perspective of Social Media Marketing Theory, the high path coefficient value ($\beta = 0.845$) provides strong theoretical confirmation that social interaction and digital public relations message management on Instagram function as key conceptual channels in embedding brand image in the public's mind (Tuten & Solomon, 2021). Interactive activities such as promptly responding to followers' comments and presenting educational content about culinary products are proven to be essential determinants in strengthening audience cognition. The success of UMKM Jajanan Hafiz in achieving a coefficient of determination of 71.4% demonstrates that professionally managed social media marketing is capable of converting digital audience attention into solid brand awareness, which in the long term stimulates local purchasing preferences.

CONCLUSION

Based on the entire sequence of statistical data analysis and theoretical discussion referring to variance-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) assisted by the SmartPLS 4 software, this quantitative study concludes that Digital Public Relations activities focused on the Instagram account @jajananhafiz have a positive and statistically significant empirical effect on the Brand Awareness of UMKM Jajanan Hafiz products in Bengkulu City. This conclusion is grounded in the obtained path coefficient (beta) value of 0.845, a T-statistic of 14.235 that exceeds the critical threshold of 1.96, and a significance value of $P = 0.000$, which is far below the alpha threshold of 0.05. The coefficient of determination test further demonstrates that the contribution capacity of Digital Public Relations in explaining variance in brand awareness reaches 71.4%, positioning it as a highly powerful predictive marketing instrument (Sari & Wijaya, 2022).

Viewed from the perspective of the Social Media Marketing Theory applied in this study, these findings conceptually confirm that the utilization of interactivity, community, and intensive two-way communication dimensions on social media is optimally converted into tangible brand awareness enhancement among local culinary consumers. Adaptive digital public relations activities function as the primary cognitive stimulus channel that transforms digital audience engagement into solid brand recognition in the marketplace (Tuten & Solomon, 2021)..

LIMITATION

As a practical recommendation for the management of UMKM Jajanan Hafiz, it is advised to consistently enhance two-way communication services, maintain administrative responsiveness, and design diversified educational and interactive content (such as Instagram Reels or question-and-answer sessions). These tactical steps are crucial for sustaining consumers' top-of-mind positioning and stimulating interest among potential new customers amid the intense competition of the online culinary industry in Bengkulu City (Hapsari & Pratama, 2023). For academics and future researchers, it is recommended to expand the scope of the structural model by exploring other exogenous variables, such as influencer marketing or service quality, to account for the remaining 28.6% of unexplained model variance.

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