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Instagram Content Marketing Strategy to Increase Sales on the Shopee E-Commerce Platform (A Case Study on USU-Assisted MSME: Hael Beaute)

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji penggunaan strategi pemasaran konten Instagram untuk meningkatkan penjualan di platform e-commerce Shopee, dengan studi kasus pada Hael Beaute, sebuah UMKM binaan USU di sektor kecantikan Indonesia. Penelitian ini berfokus pada menurunnya keterlibatan pelanggan di Instagram. Masalah ini terus berlangsung meskipun Hael Beaute memiliki jumlah pengikut yang besar (lebih dari 25.000) dan kinerja penjualan yang tidak konsisten antara Oktober 2024 hingga Januari 2025. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis strategi pemasaran konten Instagram yang telah diterapkan, mengidentifikasi tantangannya, serta mengusulkan perbaikan optimal guna meningkatkan keterlibatan audiens dan mendorong konversi penjualan di Shopee. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, dengan metode wawancara mendalam bersama tim manajemen Hael Beaute dan analisis tematik untuk meninjau strategi konten yang berjalan saat ini. Kerangka kerja SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) digunakan untuk merumuskan rekomendasi strategis. Data transaksi penjualan dan metrik keterlibatan Instagram dianalisis secara triangulatif untuk memvalidasi temuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi pemasaran Instagram Hael Beaute sangat bergantung pada strategi organik dengan frekuensi unggahan yang terbatas. Tidak adanya penjadwalan konten yang konsisten turut menyebabkan penurunan keterlibatan sebesar 96% antara Desember 2024 hingga Februari 2025. Optimalisasi yang diusulkan meliputi penggunaan kalender konten yang terstruktur, format konten yang menarik seperti Reels dan Stories, peningkatan desain ajakan bertindak (*call-to-action*), kolaborasi dengan mikro-influencer, serta strategi promosi berbayar. Pemasaran konten Instagram yang sistematis dan disesuaikan dengan tujuan audiens yang spesifik dapat menjadikan Instagram sebagai saluran penjualan yang efektif bagi UMKM seperti Hael Beaute.

Kata kunci: pemasaran konten Instagram; penjualan e-commerce; keterlibatan pelanggan; Analisis SOAR; UMKM.

Abstract

This study examines use of Instagram content marketing strategies to increase sales on the Shopee e-commerce platform, with a case study of Hael Beaute, a USU-assisted MSME in Indonesia's beauty sector. The research focuses on declining customer engagement on Instagram. This issue persists despite Hael Beaute's large follower base (over 25,000) and inconsistent sales performance between October 2024 and January 2025. The purpose of this research is to analyze the existing Instagram content marketing strategy, identify its challenges, and propose optimal improvements to enhance engagement and drive conversion on Shopee. This research employs a qualitative case study approach, using in-depth interviews with Hael Beaute's management team and thematic analysis to examine current content strategies. The SOAR framework (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) was used to identify strategic recommendations. Data on sales transactions and Instagram engagement metrics were triangulated to validate findings. The results reveal that Hael Beaute's Instagram marketing relied heavily on organic strategies with limited posting frequency. It lacked consistent scheduling, which contributed to a 96% drop in engagement between December 2024 and February 2025. Proposed optimizations include structured content calendars, use of engaging formats like Reels and Stories, improved call-to-action design, collaboration with micro-influencers, and paid amplification strategies. Systematic Instagram content marketing, when tailored to specific audience goals, can transform Instagram into an effective sales funnel for MSMEs like Hael Beaute.

Keywords: instagram content marketing; e-commerce sales; customer engagement; SOAR Analysis; MSMEs

1. Introduction

Digital marketing in Indonesia has seen significant growth in recent years, driven by increasing internet penetration and smartphone adoption (Tien et al., 2020). Social media platforms such as Instagram have become essential channels for businesses to engage consumers through visual content, interactive storytelling, and influencer collaborations. According to Data Reports

Instagram's ad reach in Indonesia grew by over 12 million users between January 2023 and January 2024, signaling a shift toward more visually driven and experience-based marketing strategies (DataReportal, 2024). Despite this trend, many micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) continue to struggle with digital adoption. Nationally, only 25–30 million of over 60 million MSMEs have successfully digitized, leaving 30–50 million unprepared for online competition (GoodStats, 2024).

The research gap addressed in this study lies in the under-explored area of Instagram content marketing strategies for MSMEs in Indonesia's beauty sector. While past research emphasizes the benefits of social media marketing for customer engagement and brand awareness (Pasaribu & Suyanto, 2022; Jin & Ryu, 2020), there is limited empirical analysis of MSMEs' real-world strategies and their effectiveness in driving sales conversion on e-commerce platforms such as Shopee. Specifically, although Hael Beaute has a sizeable Instagram following of over 25,000, it is experiencing a sharp decline in engagement with a 96% drop between December 2024 and February 2025. This, along with inconsistent sales trends, indicates the need for a deeper and more context-sensitive investigation. To address this gap, the research is guided by three questions:

1. How has Hael Beaute implemented Instagram content marketing to increase Shopee sales?
2. What challenges does Hael Beaute face in its Instagram marketing strategy?
3. How can the strategy be optimized to improve engagement and sales conversion?

Accordingly, this study aims to:

- (1) Analyze Hael Beaute's existing Instagram content marketing approach
- (2) Identify practical challenges and barriers
- (3) Propose an optimized strategy to strengthen audience engagement and drive Shopee transactions.

This research offers a theoretical contribution by broadening the understanding of MSME digital marketing strategies in emerging markets, with a particular focus on Instagram-based sales funnel design. Practically, it offers evidence-based recommendations for MSMEs to leverage Instagram not merely for engagement but as an integrated conversion channel supporting e-commerce growth.

This study employed a case study approach, utilizing in-depth interviews and thematic analysis. The findings revealed Hael Beaute's overreliance on organic, unscheduled content with weak calls to action. Results suggest adopting a structured content calendar, using more dynamic formats such as Reels, and collaborating with micro-influencers can improve engagement and support consistent sales growth.

2. Literature Review

Digital marketing has become an essential strategy for businesses to reach consumers in the era of widespread internet and smartphone use (Tien et al., 2020). As part of this broader strategy, social media marketing (SMM) leverages platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to enable direct engagement and personalized messaging (Li, Larimo, & Leonidou, 2021). In Indonesia, Instagram has grown significantly in popularity due to its highly visual format and strong user engagement trends with ad reach increasing by over 12 million users from January 2023 to January 2024 (DataReportal, 2024).

Empirical research increasingly underscores the pivotal role of content marketing in not only building brand awareness but also influencing consumer purchase behavior, especially across visual-first platforms like Instagram (Jin & Ryu, 2020; Tien et al., 2020). Content marketing is defined as a strategic approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a explicitly defined audience (Pranata et al., 2024). This approach is particularly critical for MSMEs seeking to build trust and engagement without large advertising budgets (Sembiring et al., 2022).

Instagram Content Marketing Strategy requires structured planning, audience segmentation, storytelling, content scheduling, and measurement (Väkelä, 2022). Key indicators include goal setting, audience mapping, content ideation and planning, creation, distribution, amplification, evaluation, and continuous improvement (Arrosi, Pasaribu, & Indahwati, 2025). These steps ensure not only audience reach but also effective conversion into sales.

Empirical studies on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the beauty sector reveal that content marketing especially on visual platforms like Instagram has a significant impact on customer engagement and purchase intention (Tien et al., 2020; Pasaribu & Suyanto, 2022). Pasaribu and Suyanto (2022) found that explicit, interactive, and visually appealing content increases consumer interaction, loyalty, and purchase frequency. Jin and Ryu (2020) emphasize the role of storytelling, influencer marketing, and call-to-action strategies in driving consumer decisions.

The role of Influencer Marketing and User-Generated Content (UGC) is also well established. Influencers act as opinion leaders whose perceived authenticity enhances brand trust and drives engagement and purchase behavior (Pop et al., 2021, Galdón et al., 2024). UGC provides social proof, with customer reviews and shared experiences reducing perceived risk and improving purchase confidence (Ozuem et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, e-commerce in Indonesia has undergone rapid transformation. From early experiments in the 1990s to a digitally innovative sector integrating AI, VR, and metaverse features by 2024, e-commerce now enables highly personalized and interactive shopping experiences (Wardhana, 2024). Despite significant digital growth, many of Indonesia's MSMEs remain underserved. As of 2024, only 25–30 million out of 60 million MSMEs had successfully digitized their operations (GoodStats, 2024).

This context underlines the need for research on effective, scalable, and practical Instagram content marketing strategies for

MSMEs. Although the benefits of digital marketing and influencer strategies are widely acknowledged in global and regional studies, empirical research on real-world MSME implementations in Indonesia remains limited especially in the beauty sector, which seeks to convert social media engagement into e-commerce sales through platforms like Shopee.

3. Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach, grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, to examine and optimize the Instagram content marketing strategy of Hael Beaute an MSME mentored by Universitas Sumatera Utara (USU). The approach emphasized in-depth exploration of the company's existing practices, challenges, and opportunities to enhance customer engagement and sales conversion on Shopee.

3.1. Study Site and Period

This research was carried out in Medan, Indonesia, at Hael Beaute's physical location and through its online platforms, between January and May 2025.

3.2. Data Types and Sources

Primary data consisted of qualitative insights obtained through semi-structured interviews with key informants involved in Hael Beaute's Instagram marketing activities. Informants included the owner and social media manager. Additionally, data were gathered from customer interactions and platform analytics (Instagram Insights and Shopee transaction records). The secondary data included literature on digital marketing, strategies for social media, and the digital adoption of MSMEs.

3.3. Informants

Informants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure rich, relevant, and contextual understanding of Hael Beaute's marketing practices. This study is limited to five informants: the owner of Hael Beaute, the Instagram Account Manager of Hael Beaute, a potential customer, an existing customer, and a content creator with at least two years of experience. Informant selection was guided by the principle of data saturation, continuing interviews until no new themes emerged.

3.4. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using in-depth, semi-structured interviews. An interview guide was designed to explore:

1. Current Instagram content marketing strategies
2. Perceived challenges in executing marketing efforts
3. Audience engagement experiences
4. Recommendations for strategy improvement

Interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Additional data comprised Instagram post documentation, engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares, reach), and Shopee sales performance reports from October 2024 to January 2025.

3.5. Data Analysis Techniques

The research employed a thematic analysis approach to identify recurring patterns and themes from the interview transcripts and documentation. According to Creswell (2014), thematic analysis in qualitative research involves a systematic series of steps to ensure rigor and depth.

1. Data Organization and Preparation

Transcription of interviews, systematic compilation of field notes, and structured arrangement of all materials to facilitate efficient data management and retrieval.

2. Comprehensive Data Familiarization

A thorough reading of all transcripts and documents was conducted to build a holistic understanding of the data. During the process, preliminary reflections and analytic memos were recorded to capture early insights.

3. Systematic Coding

Identification and labeling of meaningful data segments with consistent, explicitly defined codes were followed by iterative refinement to ensure precision and avoid redundancy, culminating in the systematic application of finalized codes across the entire data corpus.

4. Theme Development

Grouping related codes into overarching themes that capture salient patterns and meanings within the data, while selecting representative participant quotations to substantiate and enrich the thematic interpretations.

5. Thematic Narrative Construction

Each theme and subtheme is precisely articulated, supported by diagrams, models, or tables that visually illustrate their interrelationships and structural patterns.

6. Interpretation and Theoretical Integration

This stage involves deriving broader meanings and implications from the identified themes, linking the findings to existing theories and literature to enhance scholarly relevance and contextual understanding, and exploring inter-theme relationships to inform the development of conceptual frameworks or theoretical models.

7. Validation and Credibility Assurance

Various validation strategies such as data triangulation, member checking, and audit trails were implemented to ensure methodological transparency. These strategies enhanced the reflexivity, credibility, and trustworthiness of the analysis. Additionally, a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) analysis framework was applied to synthesize strategic recommendations. This approach helped align Hael Beaute's internal strengths and market opportunities with practical, aspirational goals for Instagram marketing improvement.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to ethical principles including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Participants were informed about the study's objectives and how their data would be used. All personally identifiable information was anonymized during the analysis and reporting stages.

3.7. Trustworthiness and Rigor

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of findings, the study applied several qualitative validation strategies:

- Triangulation of data sources (interviews, Instagram Insights, Shopee sales reports).
- Member checking with key informants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations.
- Thick description to provide detailed, contextualized accounts of Hael Beaute's marketing practices.
- Reflexive journaling by the researcher to acknowledge and mitigate potential bias.

3.8. Analytical Tools

Data were manually managed and coded using thematic tables. Instagram Insights metrics were then analyzed descriptively to contextualize audience engagement patterns in relation to posting schedules and formats.

4. Results and Analysis

This section presents the descriptive analysis and findings of the study, which were derived using thematic analysis and the SOAR framework. Data are also shown in tabular form to provide clarity on sales performance and Instagram engagement trends at Hael Beaute.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis of Hael Beaute

Hael Beaute is a micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) that specializes in producing and marketing beauty products, with a primary focus on body scrubs. It is a USU-coached enterprise that leverages Instagram as its central marketing platform to drive traffic to its Shopee e-commerce stores. However, sales data and Instagram insights indicate fluctuating performance, underscoring the need for optimized content marketing.

Table 1. Hael Beaute Sales Report

Month	Payment Methods	Quantity Sold	Unit Price	Total Sales
October 2024	Cash	12 pcs	Rp 30.000	Rp 360.000
November 2024	Cash, ShopeePAY, QRIS	41 pcs	Rp 50.000	Rp 2.050.00
December 2024	Cash	35 pcs	Rp 50.000	Rp 1.750.000
January 2025	Cash, QRIS	17 pcs	Rp 35.000	Rp 595.000

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Sales reached their peak in November 2024, followed by a sharp decline in December and January, suggesting a lack of sustained marketing effectiveness

4.2 Instagram Engagement Data

Instagram is the central channel for Hael Beaute's promotions. The analysis of post interactions reveals an initial surge in engagement, followed by a significant decline.

Table 2. Instagram Post Interaction Data

Data	Likes	Comments	Shares
11 August 2024	100	1	-
11 August 2024	277	29	2
11 August 2024	224	5	2
25 November 2024	136	8	3

Data	Likes	Comments	Shares
22 January 2025	11	-	-
22 January 2025	8	-	-
22 January 2025	9	-	-
30 January 2025	6	-	-
30 January 2025	7	-	-

Source: Instagram @HaelBeaute (2025)

Engagement levels were moderate to high in August and November, but declined sharply in January, suggesting a decrease in audience interest.

Table 3. Instagram Account Insight Comparison

Period	Accounts Reached	Change (%)	Accounts Engaged	Change (%)	Followers (k)
Nov-Dec 2024	603	+1,486%	440	+7,233%	25.6 K
Jan-Feb 2025	183	-69,5%	18	-96%	25.7K

Source: Instagram @HaelBeaute (2025)

Although Hael Beaute's follower count remained stable, its overall reach and engagement declined significantly after the December promotions ended. This trend highlights the inconsistency of the marketing strategy.

4.3 Thematic Analysis Results

Through interviews and document review, several recurring themes emerged in Hael Beaute's Instagram marketing:

- **Inconsistent Content Scheduling:** Only seven posts in six months with no explicit calendar, reducing follower expectations and engagement consistency.
- **Limited Content Variety:** Heavy reliance on static images with minimal use of Stories, Reels, or Carousel posts. Audience preferences for dynamic formats were unaddressed.
- **Weak Call-to-Action (CTA):** Posts lacked direct CTAs linking to Shopee, limiting conversion potential from Instagram awareness to e-commerce sales.
- **Audience Mapping Gaps:** No explicit segmentation of target personas, resulting in generic content less likely to resonate.
- **Lack of Influencer Partnerships:** No formal collaborations to amplify content and reach new audiences, despite industry norms showing strong ROI for micro-influencer marketing.

4.4 SOAR Analysis

The SOAR analysis provides a structured lens to understand how Hael Beaute's Instagram content marketing aligns with its strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and expected results. This approach helps contextualize the findings from thematic analysis by organizing them into a strategic framework that highlights both internal capabilities and external possibilities. Through this framework, the company's future direction in digital marketing can be better articulated, offering practical insights into how Instagram can serve as a sustainable sales channel. The summary in Table 4 presents the consolidated SOAR matrix based on the study's findings.

Table 4. SOAR Matrix of Hael Beaute Instagram Content Marketing

Element	Findings
Strength	-High follower base (25.7K) -Product uniqueness (natural body scrub)
Opportunities	- Past engagement spikes during promos - Rising Instagram ad reach in Indonesia - Integration with Shopee links and checkout
Aspirations	- Collaborations with local micro-influencers - Becoming a trusted local skincare brand - Increasing Shopee sales via Instagram
Results	- Building an active, loyal digital community - Expected increase in engagement with scheduled, varied content - Higher conversion rates via explicit CTAs - Sustainable sales growth

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The analysis confirms that Hael Beaute's Instagram marketing strategy is underperforming due to inconsistent posting,

limited content variety, and weak conversion design. Despite having a substantial follower base, engagement is unsustainable outside of seasonal promotions. The findings support previous research advocating for structured content marketing, including goal setting, audience segmentation, and ongoing optimization (Väkelä, 2022, Arrosi, Pasaribu, & Indahwati, 2025).

The proposed recommendations underscore the importance of developing a systematically structured content calendar, diversifying content delivery formats including Reels, Stories, and Carousels enhancing the effectiveness of call-to-action (CTA) mechanisms integrated with the Shopee platform, and strategically leveraging partnerships with micro-influencers to expand digital reach and consumer engagement. By adopting these strategies, Hael Beaute can turn Instagram from a passive awareness channel into an active sales funnel, enhancing conversion to Shopee and achieving sustainable revenue growth.

5. Conclusion

This study analyzed Hael Beaute's Instagram content marketing strategy to increase sales on the Shopee platform, using a qualitative case-study approach with thematic and SOAR analysis. The findings demonstrate that while Hael Beaute has a substantial follower base and product uniqueness, its Instagram marketing has suffered from inconsistent posting schedules, limited content variety, weak Call to Action (CTAs), and minimal integration with Shopee links. Initial promotional efforts generated a temporary surge in engagement metrics, which declined significantly post-campaign, suggesting that the strategy was overly reliant on seasonal promotions and lacked long-term sustainability. The SOAR analysis revealed notable strengths in brand positioning and identified strategic opportunities in influencer collaborations and e-commerce integration. However, it also underscored a critical need for systematic content planning and comprehensive audience mapping.

This research provides critical practical contributions, particularly in guiding MSMEs toward more effective, resource-efficient digital marketing approaches. For Hael Beaute and similar MSMEs, adopting a structured Instagram content marketing strategy is essential to converting social media engagement into e-commerce sales. The recommendations focus on establishing a consistent content calendar, utilizing engaging formats such as Reels and Stories, deploying direct CTAs linked to Shopee, and engaging micro-influencers to expand reach and enhance consumer trust. These strategies align with broader trends in Indonesia's rapidly growing e-commerce sector and can help MSMEs compete more effectively by bridging the gap between digital engagement and sales conversion.

This study is not without limitations. Given that this research is based on a single case study of an MSME in North Sumatra, the generalizability of its findings to other industries or geographic regions with distinct consumer behaviors and market dynamics may be limited. Additionally, the research relied primarily on qualitative data without measuring return on investment (ROI) or conducting controlled experiments to test recommended strategies in practice.

Future research should expand this scope by conducting multi-case comparative studies across diverse MSMEs and regions, combining qualitative insights with quantitative metrics such as conversion rates and ROI analysis. Further studies are recommended to examine the long-term impact of influencer collaborations and paid advertising on MSME sales performance. This can help in developing more robust and scalable content marketing strategies tailored to Indonesia's dynamic digital marketplace.

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