

From Feed to Fame: Analyzing the Influence of Instagram Marketing on Carasun's Brand Image

Zalfa Jihan Kinanti¹, Muhammad Thoyib Amali²

Ilmu Komunikasi, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesia^{1,2}

Email korespondensi: muhammad.amali@comm.uad.ac.id

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ABSTRACT: The rapid growth of internet users in Indonesia has encouraged businesses to expand their marketing activities through social media platforms. Among these, Instagram has emerged as one of the most popular tools for digital marketing communication. Its interactive features, such as comments and direct messages, enable companies to engage directly with consumers, making it an effective medium for brand promotion and image building. This study investigates the influence of Instagram marketing on the brand image of *Carasun*, a local sunscreen brand that recently gained viral attention due to its controversial marketing campaigns. Employing an explanatory quantitative approach, the research collected data from 396 respondents who are beauty enthusiasts and followers of *Carasun*'s official Instagram account. The data, measured using a Likert scale through an online questionnaire, were analyzed using simple linear regression. The findings reveal that Instagram marketing has a significant positive impact on *Carasun*'s brand image, with a contribution of 48.5% and a significance level of $p < 0.05$. Theoretically, this study enriches the understanding of how social media marketing activities influence brand perception. Practically, it offers valuable insights for marketers in designing content strategies that foster consumer engagement, strengthen purchase intentions, and sustain a positive brand image.

Keywords: brand image, carasun, instagram marketing, internet mediated communication.

ABSTRAK: Pertumbuhan pesat pengguna internet di Indonesia telah mendorong berbagai perusahaan untuk memperluas kegiatan pemasaran mereka melalui platform media sosial. Di antara berbagai media tersebut, Instagram menjadi salah satu alat komunikasi pemasaran digital yang paling populer. Fitur interaktifnya, seperti kolom komentar dan pesan langsung, memungkinkan perusahaan untuk berinteraksi secara langsung dengan konsumen, sehingga menjadi media yang efektif untuk promosi dan pembentukan citra merek. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh pemasaran melalui Instagram terhadap citra merek Carasun, sebuah merek tabir surya lokal yang sempat menjadi viral karena praktik pemasarannya yang kontroversial. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif eksplanatori, penelitian ini melibatkan 396 responden yang merupakan penggemar kecantikan dan pengikut akun Instagram resmi Carasun. Data diperoleh melalui kuesioner daring dengan skala Likert dan dianalisis menggunakan teknik regresi linier sederhana. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemasaran melalui Instagram berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap citra merek Carasun, dengan kontribusi sebesar 48,5% dan nilai signifikansi $p < 0,05$. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pemahaman tentang bagaimana aktivitas pemasaran di media sosial membentuk persepsi merek. Secara praktis, hasil penelitian ini memberikan wawasan bagi pemasar dalam merancang strategi konten yang dapat meningkatkan keterlibatan konsumen, memperkuat niat beli, serta membangun citra merek yang berkelanjutan.

Katakunci: carasun, citra merek, komunikasi melalui internet, pemasaran instagram.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's internet users have shown a consistent upward trend, significantly influencing the business landscape. As of January 2024, there were 185.6 million internet users in Indonesia, representing a penetration rate of 66.5% of the total population (Kemp, 2024). Social media platforms have played a significant role in this development, with 139 million active social media users recorded in the same period. These platforms serve diverse purposes for users, including passing the time, connecting with friends and family, staying updated on trends, and exploring product information (Pelletier et al., 2020). Among these platforms, Instagram has emerged as a dominant player in the realm of digital marketing due to its versatility, visual appeal, and interactive features (Cotter, 2019; Kusuma et al., 2024).

Initially launched as a platform for sharing personal photos and videos, Instagram has evolved into a robust and effective marketing tool for businesses of all sizes (Deslia et al., 2022). Its features, such as posts, stories, reels, live videos, and direct messaging, offer brands the ability to engage audiences creatively and strategically (Jusuf, 2022). The content shared on Instagram serves multiple purposes, from boosting product visibility and driving sales to enhancing audience engagement and marketing traffic (Supratman & Rachmansyah, 2020). These advantages make Instagram an essential platform for small businesses and established companies, such as Carasun, a local sunscreen brand that leverages Instagram for its marketing efforts.

Instagram marketing is a specialized form of social media marketing that focuses on leveraging Instagram's features to build target markets, engage consumers, and drive e-commerce activities (Untari & Fajariana, 2018). The strategies include organic marketing via posts, stories, live sessions, and reels, in addition to paid approaches, such as Instagram ads, influencer collaborations, and giveaways (Vergano, 2023). Through these strategies, businesses can disseminate information widely and influence consumer behavior effectively. Numerous studies show a positive and significant link between social media marketing and brand image (Fazri & Evanita, 2025; Nurhadi et al., 2024; Yanti & Muzammil, 2023). Previous research has also found that Instagram marketing can shape a brand's image (Sugiarta et al., 2024; Zakaria, 2024). However, previous studies have also found that Instagram marketing, when implemented as a standalone digital marketing strategy, does not significantly influence either brand awareness or brand image (Arifin, 2022; Azhari & Amali, 2025). Furthermore, five indicators can be used to represent Instagram marketing based on the dimensions of social media marketing: online communities, interaction, sharing of content, accessibility, and credibility (As'ad & Alhadid, 2014; Utami & Saputri, 2020).

Brand image is defined as the set of perceptions and associations consumers hold about a brand (Amali & Putri, 2024). It is a vision and belief that is buried in consumers' minds, reflecting the associations that are stuck in their memories (Khasanah & Amali, 2023; Kotler & Armstrong, 2020). Brand image is a critical factor in influencing consumer trust, loyalty, and purchase decisions. In today's digital landscape, social media platforms like Instagram play a pivotal role in

shaping brand image, as they offer brands the opportunity to showcase their identity in an engaging and relatable way. Furthermore, brand image can be measured using three dimensions. If a product has all three, the company has succeeded in building its image in the community. These dimensions include corporate image, user image, and product image (Aaker, 2009; Musdalifa & Fajri, 2021).

By utilizing Instagram's visual and interactive features, companies can craft compelling narratives, build communities, and establish themselves as credible sources of information. The platform's visual focus and high engagement rates make it particularly valuable for industries like skincare, where aesthetics and trust play crucial roles (Singh, 2020). Features like stories, reels, and posts allow businesses to showcase product benefits, educate consumers, and humanize their brands through behind-the-scenes content and real-life reviews or testimonials, enhancing brand perception and image (Li & Bernoff, 2012; Priscilla & Aulia, 2024). Moreover, the concept of Instagram marketing aligns with the Internet Mediated Communication (IMC) theory, which suggests that digital platforms can act as intermediaries for synchronous and asynchronous communication, overcoming traditional physical and social barriers (Sosiawan & Wibowo, 2019). The IMC framework provides a theoretical foundation for understanding Instagram's role in marketing communication. It highlights how platforms like Instagram facilitate efficient data transfer and communication, which is crucial for ensuring smooth interactions between brands and consumers (Astuti & Putri, 2018; McKneely et al., 2020). For a company like Carasun, these advantages translate into greater accessibility and the ability to adapt quickly to consumer feedback.

Carasun, a local sunscreen brand, exemplifies the effective use of Instagram marketing in building brand visibility and consumer engagement. Launched in April 2021, Carasun quickly gained traction among beauty enthusiasts, partly due to its innovative communication strategy on digital platforms. Unlike many brands that rely on commercial advertisements, Carasun's marketing efforts have been predominantly organic, with beauty enthusiasts voluntarily promoting the brand on their personal social media accounts (Qolbi et al., 2024). However, Carasun was caught up in a case at the end of February 2022. The marketing team that handled all forms of promotion from the Carasun brand was strongly suspected of hiring buzzers to bring down skincare products from its competitor brand, Skin Game (Asih, 2022). On the social media page of the Skin Game Instagram account @skingame, there is uploaded content whose comments column is filled with buzzers who are suspected of being hired by Carasun (Lina, 2024).

Carasun leverages Instagram (@carasun.id) to support the growing popularity of its skin protection campaigns through engaging posts and reels. Additionally, Carasun actively interacts with its audience by replying to and reposting content from Instagram users who tag their account. This approach has also allowed Carasun to build an online community of individuals with shared interests subtly. By doing so, the brand can better map consumer distribution and gain a deeper understanding of their needs. Within this context, it becomes

intriguing to analyze the Influence of Instagram Marketing on Carasun's Brand Image.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs an explanatory quantitative design, which is appropriate for examining causal relationships between variables. Quantitative research is characterized by the collection and analysis of numerical data using statistical procedures (Sugiyono, 2018). The explanatory approach seeks to identify and measure the extent to which independent variables influence dependent variables (Kriyantono, 2015). In this study, Instagram marketing serves as the independent variable, while brand image is the dependent variable. The explanatory quantitative design was chosen to enable statistical testing of hypotheses and to provide objective, measurable insights into how Instagram marketing affects Carasun's brand image.

The population in this study consists of beauty enthusiasts who follow the official Carasun Instagram account. A total of 396 respondents were selected as the sample, determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error to ensure representativeness (Morissan, 2016). This sampling approach allows for reliable generalization of findings to the broader population of Carasun's Instagram followers. Primary data were obtained through an online survey distributed to respondents. The survey instrument consisted of 23 statements measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), designed to capture respondents' perceptions of Instagram marketing and brand image. Secondary data were collected through a literature review, encompassing previous studies on Instagram marketing and brand image, as well as relevant media articles, statistical reports, and marketing references.

Prior to full-scale data collection, the questionnaire was pre-tested with 30 respondents to assess validity and reliability, ensuring that the items functioned as consistent and accurate measurement tools (Ghozali, 2019). Furthermore, the collected data were analyzed using simple linear regression to examine the effect of Instagram marketing on brand image. Hypothesis testing was conducted with the assistance of the SPSS software to determine the statistical significance of the relationship between variables. The use of regression analysis was deemed appropriate given the study's objective to identify and quantify causal relationships measurably.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze the influence of Instagram marketing on Carasun's brand image through hypothesis testing. Furthermore, to obtain representative data on the study's focus, a survey was conducted on 396 beauty enthusiasts who follow Carasun on Instagram to obtain representative data on the study's focus. The profile of these respondents provides valuable insight into the brand's reach and the characteristics of its Instagram followers, who are highly engaged with skincare trends and digital marketing content.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Attribute	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male	19.70%
	Female	80.30%
Ages	12-18 years	7.07%
	19-25 years	74.75%
	26-32 years	15.15%
	> 32 years	3.03%
Employment Status	Student	6.06%
	College Student	71.72%
	Civil Servant	14.14%
	Private Sector Employee	3.03%
	Entrepreneur	1.52%
	Other	3.54%
Region	DKI Jakarta	21.46%
	Banten	10.86%
	West Java	27.02%
	Central Java	8.08%
	East Java	15.15%
	DI Yogyakarta	12.12%
	Other	5.30%

Source: SPSS Data Processing (2024)

Based on Table 1, the respondents' data highlights the demographic profile of Carasun's Instagram followers, who predominantly consist of young female skincare enthusiasts. Most of the respondents are women, reflecting the general trend of skincare consumption being female-dominated. In terms of age distribution, the majority fall into the 19-25 age group, which confirms that Carasun's audience is primarily young adults, particularly Gen Z and millennials, who are highly active on social media platforms like Instagram. The employment status of respondents further underscores their demographic characteristics. A mix of students and early-career professionals indicates that Carasun's audience comprises individuals with a strong interest in skincare but likely with limited disposable income, aligning with the profile of price-sensitive yet enthusiastic consumers. On the other hand, the geographic spread suggests that Carasun's marketing efforts resonate most strongly in densely populated areas with better access to digital infrastructure and retail availability, making them key hubs for skincare consumption.

Validity and Reliability Test

It is vital to test the validity and reliability of the instrument before undertaking further research to determine whether it is acceptable or whether anything needs to be discarded because it is deemed improper. If $r_{\text{count}} > r_{\text{table}}$, the indicator passes the validity test. The investigation produced the following findings.

Table 2. Validity Test Result

Variable	Indicator	Item	r-count	r-table	i.e.
Instagram Marketing	Online Communities	X.1	0.685	0.361	Valid
		X.2	0.649	0.361	Valid
		X.3	0.652	0.361	Valid
	Interaction	X.4	0.641	0.361	Valid
		X.5	0.623	0.361	Valid
	Sharing of Content	X.6	0.647	0.361	Valid
		X.7	0.698	0.361	Valid
		X.8	0.559	0.361	Valid
	Accessibility	X.9	0.620	0.361	Valid
		X.10	0.672	0.361	Valid
		X.11	0.639	0.361	Valid
	Credibility	X.12	0.608	0.361	Valid
		X.13	0.630	0.361	Valid
		X.14	0.691	0.361	Valid
Brand Image	Corporate Image	Y.1	0.638	0.361	Valid
		Y.2	0.678	0.361	Valid
		Y.3	0.708	0.361	Valid
	User Image	Y.4	0.694	0.361	Valid
		Y.5	0.703	0.361	Valid
		Y.6	0.637	0.361	Valid
	Product Image	Y.7	0.599	0.361	Valid
		Y.8	0.746	0.361	Valid
		Y.9	0.685	0.361	Valid

Source: SPSS Data Processing (2024)

Based on the validity test results presented in Table 2, all questionnaire items were determined to be valid, as their r-count values exceeded the pilot test threshold of 0.361 for 30 respondents. This indicates that the instrument meets the criteria for validity. The validity test assesses the extent to which an instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure (Ghozali, 2019). Consequently, the researchers did not need to exclude any items and proceeded to the next phase of analysis, the reliability test. In the reliability test, a measuring instrument can be considered reliable when the Cronbach's alpha (α) value is ≥ 0.60 (Sugiyono, 2018). Based on the results of the calculations that have been carried out, the following results are found:

Table 2. Reliability Test Result

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	i.e.
Instagram Marketing	0.890	Reliable
Brand Image	0.851	Reliable

Source: SPSS Data Processing (2024)

As shown in Table 3, Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.60. indicating that the instrument is reliable and meets the required testing standards. Furthermore, this confirms that the instrument is both valid and reliable. Therefore, researchers can proceed to use the data for descriptive analysis and examine the relationships between variables.

Hypothesis Test

In this study, researchers use the t-test to assess the extent to which Instagram marketing (the independent variable) influences brand image (the dependent variable). A hypothesis is accepted if the significance value (sig.) is less than 0.05 and the t-count exceeds the t-table value (Ghozali, 2019). Based on the results of the calculations that have been carried out, the following results are found:

Table 4. Hypothesis Test Result

Functional Relationship	Hypothesis Testing		
	t-statistic	Significance	t-table
The Influence of Instagram Marketing on Carasun's Brand Image	6.494	0.000	1.649

Source: SPSS Data Processing (2024)

The t-test results in Table 4 indicate a significant relationship between Instagram marketing (independent variable) and brand image (dependent variable), with a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$ and a t-value of $6.494 > 1.649$. These findings meet the requirements for hypothesis testing. Thus, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. This suggests that Instagram marketing by @carasun.id positively influences their brand image. To determine the extent of this influence, further analysis using a simple linear regression test and a coefficient of determination test is required.

Simple Linear Regression Test

A simple linear regression test was conducted to assess the effect of Instagram marketing (independent variable) on brand image (dependent variable). This test helps quantify the extent to which Instagram marketing influences the brand image (Sugiyono, 2018). Based on the results of the calculations that have been carried out, the following results are found:

Table 5. Simple Linear Regression Result

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients
	B	Standard Error	Beta
(Constant)	6.877	1.224	
The Influence of Instagram Marketing on Carasun's Brand Image	0.490	0.025	0.696

Source: SPSS Data Processing (2024)

Based on Table 5, the regression equation derived from this analysis is ($Y = 6.877 + 0.490X$). The constant value of 6.877 represents the baseline brand image (dependent variable) when the influence of Instagram marketing (independent variable) is zero. The coefficient of 0.490 indicates that for every unit increase in the Instagram marketing variable, the brand image variable increases by 0.490. This demonstrates a positive relationship between Instagram marketing and brand perception. As the Instagram marketing variable increases, its influence on the brand image variable grows accordingly.

Determination Coefficient Test

After determining the effect between variables through simple linear regression, the coefficient of determination must be looked up to see the quantity of influence given between variables simultaneously (Sugiyono, 2018). Based on the calculation findings, the following results are found:

Table 6. Simple Linear Regression Result

Relationship Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
The Influence of Instagram Marketing on Carasun's Brand Image	0,696 ^a	0,485	0,484

Source: SPSS Data Processing (2024)

Based on Table 6, the analysis revealed that Instagram marketing by @carasun.id accounts for 48.5% (0.485) of the influence on the brand image, placing it in the moderate (adequate) category. The remaining 51.5% of the brand image influence is attributed to other variables outside the scope of this study. This indicates that Instagram marketing is reasonably effective in shaping Carasun's brand image.

The Influence of Instagram Marketing on Carasun's Brand Image

The Internet Mediated Communication (IMC) theory provides a framework for understanding how digital platforms function as intermediaries in communication processes. Building on the principles of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), IMC emphasizes the role of internet-based media in facilitating interactions that are not constrained by physical or temporal barriers (Ali & Allan, 2017; Sosiawan & Wibowo, 2019). Unlike traditional face-to-face communication, IMC allows for both synchronous and asynchronous interactions, making it particularly relevant in today's digital landscape. By leveraging cyberspace and communication applications, IMC ensures smooth data transfer and efficient communication between communicators and communicants, emphasizing reciprocity as a critical element for effective interaction (Bromme & Hesse, 2005; Chapuzet & Bawono, 2021).

This theoretical lens aligns well with Instagram marketing, a form of social media marketing that uses Instagram as a platform to foster interaction and engagement between businesses and consumers. As a promotional tool, Instagram exposure can play a significant role in enhancing customer interest

(Amalia, 2020; Pudrianisa & Amali, 2025). Beyond serving as a platform for promotion, it also facilitates consumer participation and interaction with companies (Utami & Saputri, 2020). For instance, Carasun utilizes Instagram to execute skin protection campaigns, combining consistent posting with active consumer engagement to build awareness and foster community interaction. Social media marketing empowers individuals within an online community to amplify brand messaging, creating a larger influence network (Rizal, 2019).

Furthermore, Carasun's innovative use of Instagram and other social media platforms illustrates how IMC principles can be effectively applied to marketing communication strategies. The brand's campaigns are driven by consumer testimonials and user-generated content, which beauty enthusiasts have warmly received. This approach has significantly contributed to the brand's reputation, as evidenced by the "Winner of Sociolla Award 2022," awarded based on numerous high-rated reviews on the SOCO website (Lintang, 2022). Such recognition demonstrates the brand's ability to establish a positive image among its audience while achieving public relations goals, such as brand awareness and credibility. However, to achieve the basic goals of public relations, techniques are needed to create a brand image in the minds of the public (Cutlip et al., 2009).

Branding differentiates products or services that fulfill similar needs by creating a unique identity (Kotler & Keller, 2021). This distinction is achieved by crafting specific attributes, emotional connections, and perceptions that resonate with consumers, beyond just the product's functional benefits. Branding transforms a product or service from a simple commodity into a meaningful consumer experience, fostering differentiation in competitive markets (McQuiston, 2004). For Carasun, Instagram marketing serves as both a branding and engagement tool, where consistent interactions through posts and stories strengthen the connection with its target audience. This strategy not only positions the brand as top-of-mind for skincare enthusiasts but also helps in effectively segmenting its market (Taan et al., 2021).

Moreover, adopting Instagram marketing offers several advantages for businesses like Carasun. It provides a cost-effective solution for gathering consumer insights (Killian & McManus, 2015), eliminating the need for extensive user satisfaction surveys. Social media also allows brands to continuously engage with their audiences, as users frequently monitor platforms daily (Kietzmann et al., 2011). This creates an opportunity for businesses to maintain top-of-mind awareness and reinforce their brand identity through regular interaction and tailored content. Many brands have adopted Instagram as a key component of their marketing communication strategies, leveraging its diverse features that support visual and interactive promotions (Deslia et al., 2022; Singh, 2020). As a result, Instagram marketing has become an essential digital tool for building and strengthening brand image among consumers (Salsabila & Amali, 2025; Zakaria, 2024).

As a social media platform, Instagram serves not only as a tool for brand building but also as a medium that influences the consumer decision-making process (Amali & Pudrianisa, 2024; Amali & Wardhana, 2025). Research has shown

that social media platforms like Instagram offer faster and more efficient marketing opportunities than traditional methods (Evelina & Handayani, 2018; Hanan & Putit, 2013). Carasun demonstrates how social media can effectively enhance brand visibility and build customer loyalty with minimal costs by engaging followers and maintaining consistent content. However, a dedicated team is essential to successfully managing these platforms to handle content creation, audience interaction, and performance analysis. This ensures that communication stays relevant and impactful, ultimately increasing consumer acceptance of marketing messages (Rehman et al., 2022; Tarabieh, 2022).

While the benefits of social media marketing are undeniable, the socio-emotional impact on users must also be considered. Social media fosters a close connection with users, integrating itself into their daily routines from waking up to falling asleep. This creates a unique opportunity for businesses to engage with consumers personally (Fatima & Ali, 2023). However, the constant exposure to brand messaging can influence user behavior, fostering socioemotional attachment to certain brands (Oliveira et al., 2022; Yuan & Lou, 2020). For Carasun, this translates into a loyal consumer base that feels emotionally connected to the brand's mission and values, further enhancing the effectiveness of its Instagram marketing campaigns.

The integration of IMC theory into Instagram marketing highlights the transformative potential of digital platforms in overcoming traditional communication barriers. For brands like Carasun, Instagram marketing is a powerful tool for fostering engagement, building brand image, and driving consumer trust. By leveraging the principles of IMC and combining them with strategic social media management, businesses can optimize their marketing efforts and establish themselves as leaders in their respective industries.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research demonstrate that the use of Instagram marketing through @carasun.id has a positive and significant impact on Carasun's brand image. This is supported by the hypothesis test results, which reveal a simultaneous effect with a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05). Furthermore, Instagram marketing contributes 48.5% to the formation of Carasun's brand image, with the remaining 51.5% attributed to other factors outside the scope of this research model. These results underscore the effectiveness of social media marketing in shaping a company's or product's brand image, particularly when leveraging interactive and visually appealing platforms like Instagram.

This research highlights the strategic potential of social media marketing for businesses. For companies like Carasun, there is an opportunity to enhance the content-sharing dimension of Instagram marketing to improve the dissemination of information and campaigns. This can help drive higher consumer engagement and purchase rates, ultimately strengthening Carasun's brand image. Future studies are encouraged to explore additional variables and perspectives, utilizing frameworks such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) to deepen the understanding of how digital marketing influences consumer attitudes and

behaviors. Moreover, adopting advanced analytical tools like PLS (Partial Least Squares) or AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structures) could provide more robust and comprehensive insights into the dynamics of social media marketing and its impact on brand development.

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