



The art of digital influence: leveraging SWOT analysis for VPC-based WOM at Street's Fank's

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Digital transformation compels SMEs to translate physical authenticity into digital capital, yet inconsistencies often hinder this process. This study addresses the critical gap observed at Street's Fank's Coffee Shop, where strong, organic verbal Word-of-Mouth (WOM) fails to be leveraged effectively through Instagram Marketing. **Objective:** The research aims to analyze the disconnect between physical social capital and digital execution and proposes an integrated strategy to sustain digital WOM. **Methods:** Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through triangulation: non-participant observation, in-depth interviews with key informants (Owner and Social Media Admin), and documentation in Samarinda Seberang. **Data analysis** followed open, axial, and selective coding procedures. **Results:** The study reveals a fundamental 'disconnect' where the shop's most valuable asset—abundant User Generated Content (UGC) derived from authentic physical experiences—is systematically neglected. This occurs because the management views content creation as a burden, leading to digital inconsistency despite the availability of organic customer endorsements. **Conclusion:** To overcome this, the study proposes "The Authenticity Loop" strategy based on SWOT and VPC analysis. This approach advocates a philosophical shift from "content creation" to "content curation," positioning the Admin as a "Curator of Authenticity" to validate customer

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally altered the retail landscape, compelling businesses to transition from physical-only dependencies to integrated online communication patterns. This necessity aligns with findings by (Surahman et al., 2023), who emphasize that digital capability empowers Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to swiftly adapt to online platforms and optimize operations despite external restrictions. Furthermore, (Vitsentzatou et al., 2022) posit that the synergy between companies, customers, and technology has become the primary driver of this digital transformation. In the culinary industry, robust

content marketing serves as a critical differentiator, building stories and trust that resonate closer to consumers' daily lives than traditional advertising (Caiazza & Bigliardi, 2020). Specifically, visual narratives on platforms like Instagram play a pivotal role in sparking curiosity and triggering Word-of-Mouth (WOM) (Gao et al., 2023).

However, a critical research gap exists between these theoretical imperatives and the operational reality of MSMEs. While existing literature underscores the effectiveness of content marketing, it often overlooks the "operational disconnect" faced by resource-constrained businesses. These enterprises frequently struggle to sustain the high-volume content creation demanded by digital algorithms. Consequently, a paradox emerges where SMEs possess strong organic, physical WOM but fail to translate it into sustainable digital assets due to inconsistent execution. This study argues that the challenge is not merely about creating new content, but about the strategic failure to leverage existing tangible evidence provided by customers (Moran et al., 2020).

Street's Fank's Coffee Shop in Samarinda serves as a significant case study of this phenomenon. Empirical observations indicate that while the café enjoys high physical authenticity and abundant organic WOM, its digital presence remains inconsistent and reactive. The management faces a disconnect where the shop's most valuable asset—abundant User Generated Content (UGC)—is systematically neglected because digital marketing is perceived as a burdensome obligation to create new materials rather than an opportunity to curate existing ones. This represents a specific inefficiency in how local SMEs utilize digital platforms to amplify WOM.

To address this gap, this study aims to design a more integrated and resource-efficient digital marketing strategy. By employing SWOT analysis to diagnose internal capabilities and external threats, and the Value Proposition Canvas (VPC) to align customer pains with service solutions, this research proposes "The Authenticity Loop". This concept offers a novel contribution by shifting the strategic focus from content creation to content curation, thereby enabling SMEs to transform physical customer authenticity into a sustainable, competitive digital advantage in an increasingly crowded market.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive methodology. This choice was made not merely as a procedural formality, but as a deliberate effort to thoroughly explore and comprehend the dynamics of digital marketing employed by Street's Fank's Coffee Shop on Instagram. Instead of depending on quantitative data, our emphasis is placed on interpreting the foundational philosophies and strategic intentions behind the daily operational decisions made by the business owner. The primary objective is to provide a rich narrative description that is dense with context and meaning, derived directly from various field experiences (Barroga & Matanguihan, 2022). The study specifically focuses on Coffee Shop Street's Fank's, situated in the Samarinda Seberang area. This venue serves as the central point of investigation because it is where their digital strategies are authentically executed, assessed, and refined daily. It facilitates interactions among products, staff, and digital communication, which forms the crux of our examination into how Instagram content influences word-of-mouth (WOM) triggers (Qureshi, 2020).

To ensure the most authentic and relevant narrative acquisition, we use a targeted informant selection approach (purposive sampling), which we define as the determination of Key Informants. The criteria used very strictly of the chosen informants are those who are directly responsible, involved in the formulation, and are the executors of the Instagram strategy from start to finish. Our main source of knowledge includes two key roles such as the Owner or Operations Manager, who is responsible for the vision and strategic decision-making and the Staff in Direct Control of the Instagram Account (Social Media Admin), who is the day-to-day tactical executor and the party who best understands the interaction of the content with the audience (Pahwa et al.,

2023). We ensure that the data collected is comprehensive and layered by approaching the object of study from three mutually reinforcing data collection techniques, known as triangulation. Our first approach was non-participant observation. We positioned ourselves in the shop to simply observe, carefully noting how their marketing strategies played out in real life. We watched how staff interacted with customers and reviewed their Instagram activity, using observation guides and cameras to document everything. The second technique is In-Depth Interviews, we conduct a semi-structured face-to-face dialogue with several speakers. Even though we had a framework of questions prepared, we allowed the conversation to flow freely. This approach helped us uncover the real reasons behind their decisions, their specific Instagram tactics, and their honest internal evaluations. We used flexible interview guides and voice recorders to ensure we captured every detail. The last technique is Documentation, we obtained physical and digital evidence, including relevant location documentation as a means to verify the findings referred to (Jarrahi, 2025).

We approached this study in clearly defined phases. The first step was the Preparatory Phase, which combined a deep dive into digital marketing theory with an initial site visit to Street's Fank's Coffee Shop to set the context. Followed by the Execution Phase, after the research permit was obtained, we immediately carried out systematic field observations and digital searches, followed by an in-depth interview session, where each piece of information was recorded and documented in detail. The last phase is the Reflection Phase, which is a shifting focus to data processing, including transcription of interviews, simplification of data into key themes, preparation of findings presentation, and drawing final conclusions (Isangula et al., 2024). The collected data is analyzed using an interactive approach, which means the process of analysis and data collection runs in parallel, creating an ongoing dialogue between researchers and field data. This method aims to find significant themes, categories, and patterns that emerge from narrative data. This process includes three main actions namely Data Reduction, we sort and filter raw data (field notes, transcripts) to focus only on crucial issues related to digital marketing and tactics to attract customers via Instagram. Presentation The findings of the data that have been reduced are then presented, not only in the form of text, but also in in-depth descriptive narratives, comparison tables, or thematic charts, so that the common thread of the research is clearly visible. The final stage is Validation and Closing the initial conclusions are retested by performing cross-verification (Triangulation) using data from various field sources. This verification and reflection process continues to be carried out until a credible final interpretation is achieved and is able to fully answer all research questions (Raj et al., 2022).

Each unit of meaning is labeled or coded that is descriptive, reflecting the recorded action, interaction, or emotion. For example, a phrase from an Instagram admin about "an internal debate over post hours" might be coded as "Internal Discussion of Post Tactics." This process is done carefully and without assumptions, so that all the nuances of field data can be captured (Pratama & Putra, 2024). With thousands of codes produced in the open phase, we shifted our focus to Data Reassembly. This is a conceptualization step, where the scattered codes begin to be regrouped based on similarities and relatedness. We look for cause-and-effect relationships, interaction patterns, or conditions that trigger a phenomenon. We focused on synthesizing specific data points into main categories. We achieved transferability through 'thick description,' thoroughly documenting the physical and social context of the coffee shop in Samarinda Seberang. This allows others to determine if these findings fit their own reality. Furthermore, we upheld Dependability and Confirmability by establishing a transparent audit trail that tracks every step of our analysis. We keep all field notes, dated interview transcripts, observation guides, and coding logs. If needed, an external party (peer debriefer or editor) can review all of this data to ensure that the research process, from collection to conclusion, is carried out systematically and logically. We believe that methodological transparency is a pillar of neutrality, suggesting that the resulting interpretation comes from the data itself, not just the researcher's subjective projections (Mustafa, 2021).

Researcher Reflexivity and Methodological Rigor: Balancing Subjectivity and Objectivity, This study approaches qualitative inquiry not merely as a technique, but as a commitment where the researcher acts as a reflective instrument. Acknowledging that personal background and emotions inevitably interact with data, we recognize my position as a consumer and social media user brings inherent assumptions about "good marketing" (Jamieson et al., 2023). However, to ensure this subjectivity contributes to a rich interpretation rather than bias, this study is grounded in rigorous data collection standards.

Participants and Data Collection To capture the marketing dynamics of Street's Fank's Coffee Shop beyond a rigid academic lens, data was collected from 25 February to 27 November. The study involved 2 key informants, consisting of 1 owner and 1 barista. Semi-structured interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes, ensuring depth of insight.

Observations were conducted according to a structured schedule, specifically designed to capture contrasting operational dynamics. Observation was focused on the peak customer hours, namely every monday, tuesday, and thursday after sunset hours, as well as the low-traffic periods on wednesday, friday, and saturday. This approach allowed us to witness the human reality of the job, providing an empathetic interpretation of the staff's workload, managing the intense dedication required to balance digital interactions with physical service. The raw data was processed using a manual coding method to ensure systematic organization. The analysis followed an inductive coding process.

For instance, raw data statements from the Admin, such as "an internal debate over post hours", were translated into the concrete code "Internal Discussion of Post Tactics." Another example, the owner's statement regarding the scarcity of resources and time typical of SMEs was coded as "SME Resource Constraints". These codes were then categorized under the critical theme "Digital Inconsistency and Time Deficit." To ensure reliability and minimize sole-researcher bias, inter-coder reliability checks were performed through cross-verification (Triangulation) using data from various field sources: in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation. Furthermore, Dependability and Confirmability were upheld by maintaining a transparent audit trail of all field notes and coding logs.

Beyond scientific rigor, the ethical aspect is the moral foundation that ensures this research is conducted with integrity and respect for all parties involved. Ethical principles are strictly applied before, during, and after data collection (Lobschat et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

At last we sat down, looking through the heap of spreadsheets and interview transcripts that had been building for weeks, and something struck me beside the numbers and statistics: an irony. For all those who have ever been put into the trenches of small business, this irony is so great, searing. Ahead of us is the story of Street's Fank's, one tiny little coffee shop in Samarinda Seberang, which happens to have the richest and most priceless asset – the soul of a retail for loyal visitors. Not simply as a hypothesis or theory, these are findings that we experienced immediately upon arriving there. Street's Fank's manages to deploy its natural context for attracting a friendly environment that creates organic WOM but does not have this 'warmth' in its digital storefront. The Instagram account reflects a 'visual anomaly,' where posts drop off schedule at random: professional-caliber posts are overshadowed by long pauses and content that feels forced or obligatory. This is an indication that, despite good intentions, the management views content creation as a burden. Consequently, valuable brand stories are lost due to a lack of sustainability, creating a clear discrepancy between the desire to be digitally relevant and the reactive nature of their daily operations. They post because they "have to", not because they "have something valuable to share today." This pattern is clearly not in line with the planning demands advocated by the academic literature, as emphasized by (Terho et al., 2022), which states that valuable content

must be relevant, consistent, and planned. The gap between ambitious strategic intentions ("we want to be known through Instagram") and makeshift tactical execution ("we only have time to Upload makeshift photos") This is the essential and crucial qualitative finding in this study. They knew where it was going, but its footsteps were too irregular to reach that goal.

We observed that the main strength of the shop, the atmosphere that Homey and authentic products, automatically triggering WOM strong oral. This phenomenon is no longer a secret. It strengthens the premise (Miceli et al., 2021) who argue that the visual and emotional narratives inherent in the culinary experience have significant appeal. Honest products will always be told. This is where the second irony lies, a painful anomaly, which is the systematic failure to transform the precious oral WOM into a Digital Word-of-Mouth (Digital WOM) that is scalable, trackable, and sustainable. This confirms the existence of a fundamental 'disconnect' in what we call the Authenticity Loop. To validate this argument, our field observations identified concrete forms of UGC that are spontaneously produced by customers but systematically ignored. These manifest in three primary behaviors ranging from Atmosphere Documentation, where customers capture the shop's "homey" aesthetic and outdoor ambiance, to Product Rituals and direct Social Tagging that act as hyper-local endorsements. The intensity of this production is dynamic and correlates with the shop's atmosphere; during peak observation periods, we recorded an average of 5 to 8 spontaneous story mentions per month. Furthermore, depending on the crowd's energy, the location tag generates a fluctuation of approximately 1 to 4 feed posts per month. This volume represents a "free content factory" that operates. But owing to the scarcity of resources and time typical of SMEs, the administration either loses track of or fails to leverage these narratives. Rather than curating this existing, top-drawer content, the focus is diverted towards the production of entirely new and often contrived media. Instead of content, it signals a failure of execution. As a result, the strategy proposed, based on VPC and SWOT analysis, shifts beyond the technical metrics like how often you post to validating and amplifying the voice of the community. Their strategy should be more fundamental and philosophical: a shift from content creation to validation and amplification of customer narratives. This solution departs from the cutting-edge view carried out by (Vitsentatou et al., 2022), which emphasizes that the harmonious relationship between companies, customers, and technology is the main engine for digital transformation. For SMEs like Street's Fank's, technology, in this case, Instagram, should not function as a megaphone for advertising, but as a bridge that connects the customer's physical experience with emotional validation in the online space. The strategy that will work is one that is able to make Instagram a 'second home' for its community, not just a cold and distant digital billboard. We realize that Street's Fank's already has abundant social and emotional capital. The SWOT analysis also leads to the same conclusion: Their strength (S) is the Authenticity of the atmosphere and the product; The weakness (W) is digital inconsistency and failure to manage UGC; The (T) threat of a major competitor can only be countered with unique value (VPC) that cannot be bought, namely authentic community and emotional closeness (Sassanelli & Terzi, 2022).

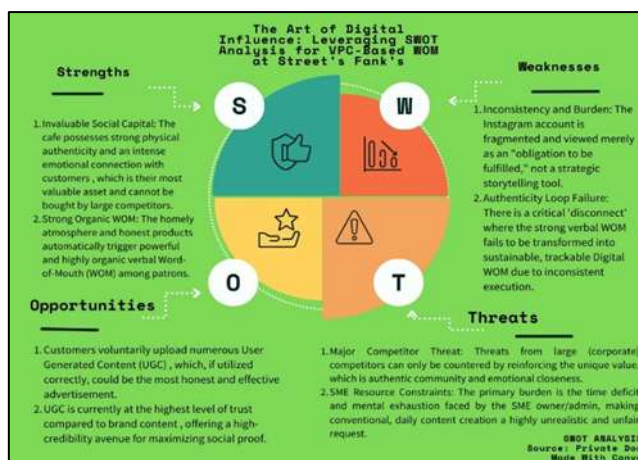


Figure 1. SWOT analysis

The solution should be as simple but as effective as that. The crux of the problem is changing their mindset. They need to shift focus: no longer thinking out loud, "Wow, what should we post tomorrow?", but rather, "How can we celebrate what our customers have posted today?" It's a shift from content creator to curator of celebration. The strategy that we have developed, and we name The Authenticity Loop, is essentially to make Instagram Admins the Official Curator of the Authenticity. Their new role is no longer a great photographer or caption writer, but rather a gold miner (UGC) and master of ceremony who leads the community celebration. Let the voice of the customer who is the main star of the Instagram feed, and the shop serve as the stage. New consistency is no longer measured by how often they create new photos that are forced, but how diligently, how quickly, and how warmly they repost customer stories. The Paradoxical Shift: Stop Advertising, Start Telling Stories This shift is a paradox. To win against greedy social media algorithms and huge capital from corporate competitors, Street's Fank's had to stop advertising, and start telling stories. And more importantly, they should tell the stories of others: the stories of customers who have fallen in love with their coffee, with their atmosphere, and with the communities they build. Every Repost is a twofold emotional validation: validation for customers who feel seen, and validation for potential customers who see honesty behind the scenes. This is the only way for authentic SMEs to not only survive, but also thrive. They already have a heart, an invaluable capital of authenticity; Now they just need a consistent, emotionally disciplined hand digitally to share it and make it a Loop The Uninterrupted (Maclean et al., 2021)

In the darkness of data, there is always the light of the narrative, and in Street's Fank's, that narrative is a connection. When we think about the implementation challenges, we realize that the main difficulty for SMEs is not a lack of tools or funds, but rather a time deficit and mental exhaustion. The admin or owner is often the same person who brews the coffee, washes the dishes, and takes care of the finances. Asking them to be genius content creators every day is an unrealistic and unfair request.

This is why the approach The Authenticity Loop is an elegant and sustainable solution. This strategy is essentially a delegation strategy, delegating the burden of content creation to an already emotionally motivated customer. The admin job goes from creating (which is difficult) to curating (which is much easier and faster). We estimate the time it takes to search, verify, and Repost a quality UGC, accompanied by Caption Warm and personal appreciation, only a fifth of the time it takes to create new original content, from concepts, photo shoots, to Editing (de Andrade-Matos et al., 2022).

In addition to operational efficiency, this approach responds to the challenges of digital authenticity and empowers User-Generated Content (UGC), having the inherent credibility not

shown by brand-created assets. With its focus on authentic elements, reposting customer content becomes a validation mechanism that helps build better loyalty, brand advocacy, and social proof. The approach imagines the Instagram feed serving not as a curated gallery, but a community reflection that reflects real-life in-store experiences, emphasizing consistency of appreciation over new content. Psychologically, this is an approach that taps into the customer's own membership and experience, UGC is considered a useful part of marketing rather than just being a passive benefit. Execution includes three discrete techniques: 1) to plan 15–20 minutes each day to curate and engage users with content; 2) use adaptable response templates to keep visitors engaged; 3) leverage the Instagram Highlights for UGC storage and archiving, as a means of preserving social proof. This creates a digital museum of customer loyalty (Saura et al., 2022).

The core message revolves around the establishment of a digital emotional connection. In a time when algorithms are advancing in sophistication and substantial financial resources inundate social media with impersonal paid advertisements, the unique advantage that an authentic small to medium-sized enterprise like Street's Fank possesses is its genuine warmth and compelling narrative. It is essential for them to recognize that consumers perceive customer testimonials as far more trustworthy than their own brand messaging. By designating Admins as Curators of Authenticity, Street's Fank effectively addresses issues related to digital inconsistencies while simultaneously reinforcing their most valuable asset: their committed community. This narrative illustrates that for heartfelt small businesses, achieving success in the digital landscape hinges not on monetary investment but rather on consistently honoring the affection shown by their community. They already have a solid foundation; now they simply need to apply consistent effort towards strengthening it further.

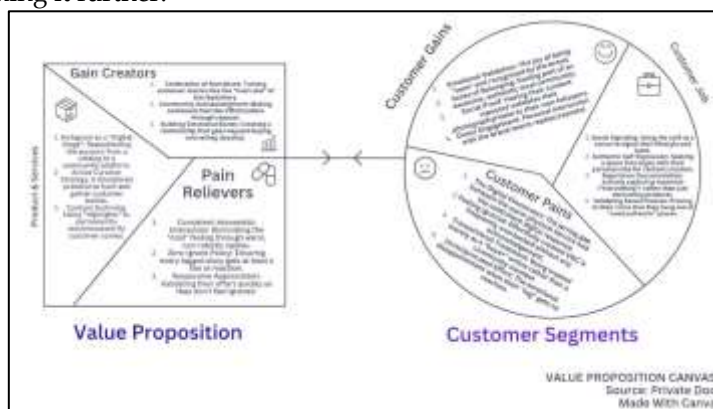


Figure 2. Value Proposition Canvas

Customer Segment Analysis

The analysis of the customer segment reveals that visitors to Street's Fank's are seeking more than just coffee products; they are actively looking for a venue for social signaling and authentic self-expression. Their primary "job" extends to validating their social choices through documenting experiences (storytelling) on social media. However, the most significant pain point identified is a critical "digital disconnect": the warmth of the physical service often clashes with indifference in the digital realm, where their voluntary User Generated Content (UGC) is frequently ignored without appreciation. This creates an urgent need for emotional validation and a sense of belonging, where customers desire to be recognized as part of a community rather than merely transactional objects.

Value Proposition Strategy

In response to these needs, Street's Fank's value map repositions the function of the Instagram account from a static catalog into a "Digital Stage" dedicated to community appreciation. The core value proposition is no longer centered on platform features, but rather on an "Active

"Curation" strategy, a proactive mechanism where administrators disciplinedly seek out and celebrate customer narratives. This approach acts as an effective pain reliever by eliminating the feeling of being ignored through consistent, humanistic interaction. By transforming customer narratives into primary assets through Content Archiving, this strategy generates gains in the form of high public trust (social proof) and an emotional bond that is difficult for corporate competitors to replicate.

CONCLUSION

Answering the Research Problem This study concludes that Street's Fank's Coffee Shop possesses a "resource-perception paradox." While the cafe holds abundant physical social capital, this passion is fragmented and fails to be utilized optimally in the digital realm (Fileri et al., 2023). The research identifies that the core problem is not a lack of content, but a disconnect where strong verbal Word-of-Mouth (WOM) is systematically neglected due to a mindset that views digital marketing as a burden of *creation*. By diagnosing this through SWOT and VPC analysis, the study successfully answers the research objective by designing "The Authenticity Loop." This strategy resolves the disconnect by shifting the administrative focus from creating new content to validating existing User Generated Content (UGC).

Scientific Contribution Theoretically, this research contributes to the SME Digital Marketing literature by challenging the "Content Creation" paradigm. We propose that for resource-constrained businesses, a "Content Curation" model is far more sustainable. The solution offers a total shift in focus from thinking about what to post, to how we celebrate what our customers are already posting (De Giovanni, 2022). This validates the concept of a circular economy in marketing, where customer outputs are recycled back into company inputs without depleting internal resources.

Implications for Practice and Policy For SME practitioners, this study recommends an "operational diet": allocate 15 minutes daily solely for reposting and engaging with tagged stories, rather than spending hours planning elaborate photoshoots. For supporting institutions (business incubators, agencies, and SME communities), this study implies a need to adjust training curricula. Instead of focusing heavily on technical hard skills (e.g., advanced graphic design or video editing) which often overwhelm SME owners, guidance should pivot towards "Community Management" and "Digital Listening." Policy-makers should encourage digital literacy programs that prioritize *responsiveness* to customers over the *esthetic perfection* of the feed.

Limitations and Future Research Despite these findings, this study has limitations. First, as a qualitative single case study in Samarinda Seberang, the findings are context-specific and may not be generalizable to other retail sectors or cultural demographics. Second, the study focuses solely on Instagram, ignoring other potential platforms. Future research should test the "Authenticity Loop" concept quantitatively to measure its direct impact on engagement rates or sales turnover. Researchers are also encouraged to apply this "Curator" model to non-culinary industries (e.g., fashion or services) to examine its effectiveness in sectors with different visual characteristics.

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