

Organic marketing communication strategy on the Instagram account @twntynine.str in increasing product sales

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Abstract

This study examines how small businesses can increase product sales on Instagram through organic marketing communication without relying on paid promotions. Many small businesses have limited budgets, which restricts their ability to use paid advertising. Therefore, they must find alternative ways to reach audiences, build brand awareness, and grow sales sustainably. The study focuses on the Instagram account @twntynine.str, which uses authentic content, customer interaction, and storytelling to promote its products organically. @twntynine.str Instagram account uses an organic approach based on personal closeness, consistency in the narrative of the business owner's journey, and the use of authentic testimonials as key social proof. This approach makes communication feel more natural and emotional, thereby building customer trust, while also creating a point of difference among competitors who prioritize paid promotional tactics, giveaways, or collaborations with Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs). It aims to understand how these strategies are implemented, which elements are most effective, and how they influence sales growth. A qualitative descriptive approach was used, including case studies and in-depth interviews with the owner, administrator, and customers. Data were collected through interviews, documentation, and content analysis. The findings show that @twntynine.str effectively applies an organic marketing strategy by emphasizing authentic content, fast responses, customer testimonials, and emotional engagement, resulting in significant sales growth without paid advertisements. The study concludes that organic marketing communication on Instagram is an effective, low-cost strategy for small businesses to build trust and loyalty and increase sales.

Keywords

Marketing communication, Organic marketing, Instagram, Sales growth, Customer engagement, Small business

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed marketing practices, establishing social media as a central platform through which businesses can engage

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with customers. Among these platforms, Instagram stands out due to its visually driven interface and its large and active user base in Indonesia. Instagram plays a critical role in enhancing brand awareness, shaping consumer interest, and influencing purchase decisions. Although paid promotions are widely used for their ability to quickly expand reach, many micro and small enterprises face budget constraints that limit their access to these strategies. This challenge underscores the need for cost-efficient, sustainable, and competitive marketing approaches, such as organic marketing communication [1].

Organic marketing is considered a more sustainable option for MSMEs as it does not require continuous advertising expenditure. Unlike paid promotions, which cease to generate visibility once the budget has been exhausted, organic strategies build long-term relational capital through consistent engagement, authentic storytelling, and customer-generated testimonials. These elements contribute to the formation of trust, customer loyalty, and repeat purchases, all of which are essential for financial and relational sustainability.

Furthermore, in highly competitive digital markets, organic marketing can provide a strategic competitive advantage. While many businesses depend on paid exposure, influencer endorsements, or promotional giveaways, small brands can differentiate themselves through authenticity and personalised interaction, fostering credibility and emotional closeness with customers. For MSMEs with limited resources, this relationship-based competitiveness may be more attainable and sustainable than competing based on costs.

Previous studies have highlighted the significant influence of social media on entrepreneurial activity and consumer behavior [2]. Instagram, in particular, affects purchasing decisions through visual content, interactive features, and user engagement [3]. Users perceived ease in using social media can encourage digital entrepreneurship, and influencer participation can expand brand networks [4]. However, most research has focused on paid promotions, influencer marketing, or the general impact of digital marketing, leaving a gap in our understanding of how small businesses implement organic strategies without paid support [5].

There is limited research on organic marketing for MSMEs, particularly regarding the use of authentic visual content, personal narratives, and Instagram features to drive engagement and sales. Understanding how these elements function in practice is critical for identifying low-cost, effective strategies for small businesses. This study addresses this gap by focusing on @twntynine.str, a sneaker reseller that increased sales without paid advertisements or celebrity endorsements [6].

The study examines how @twntynine.str builds trust and engagement by combining authentic content with a consistent use of Instagram features (feed, Reels, Stories, Highlights, and DMs), audience-appropriate communication, and social proof through customer testimonials. By analyzing these practices, the study provides insight into which elements most effectively contribute to sales growth and audience interaction. It

offers a practical example for MSMEs seeking to optimize their organic marketing strategies [7].

Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study collects data through in-depth interviews, content observation, and digital documentation to allow for a detailed understanding of how organic marketing strategies are applied in real-world contexts. This approach highlights effective practices and identifies potential challenges, offering comprehensive, empirical insights into Instagram's role as a platform for sustainable, low-cost digital marketing for MSMEs [8].

Unlike previous studies, which focused on paid advertising or influencer-based strategies, this research highlights a relational organic marketing model centred on personal closeness and consistent storytelling. The findings suggest that emotional proximity and narrative authenticity can serve as effective alternatives to influencer endorsements and promotional incentives. The study proposes that this approach could be a replicable model for MSMEs seeking sustainable growth without becoming financially dependent on paid digital promotion.

Method

This study used a qualitative descriptive research method and a case study approach to examine the organic marketing communication strategies implemented by @twntynine.str. This approach is well-suited for delving into communication patterns, content strategies, and audience interactions, as it emphasizes understanding phenomena in their natural context and providing rich, contextualized descriptions rather than numerical generalizations. The case study approach allows for a detailed exploration of a specific social and organizational setting, showing how strategies are implemented and experienced by the business and its audience.

Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants, including Muhammad Zaky Aydin (owner of @twntynine.str), Daffa Gayano (Instagram administrator), and Rizal Permana (customer) [9]. The interviews focused on planning, implementation, and audience engagement strategies. Secondary data were obtained through observation of the Instagram account, including feed posts, Reels, Stories, Highlights, comments, and direct messages (DMs), as well as documentation such as screenshots, testimonials, and Instagram Insights analytics [10]. Data analysis was conducted in three stages: data reduction, categorization into key themes, and drawing conclusions. Integrating multiple data sources and presenting findings contextually provides an exploratory insight into how @twntynine.str manages organic marketing communication and fosters relationships with its audience [11].

Data triangulation was conducted by cross-checking interview findings with content observations and Instagram analytics documentation. Claims regarding high engagement through storytelling, for example, were verified by examining interaction metrics such as likes, comments and shares, as well as testimonial repost frequency.

Customer perceptions were compared with observed communication practices to ensure consistency between strategy and audience experience.

Results and discussion

Results

The findings of this study show that the organic marketing communication strategies employed by @twntynine.str are structured around four interconnected aspects, such as strategic planning, content implementation, building relationships with the audience, and overcoming the challenges of maintaining effective communication.

The organic marketing communication on @twntynine.str begins with a structured planning process. This process established a foundation for developing personalized and emotionally engaging communication with customers, as it enabled the business to tailor messages according to audience characteristics, preferences, and online behavior. By defining the target group early and selecting a communication style that resonates with them, the business created space for more meaningful interactions, stronger emotional connections, and a consistent brand narrative. This strategic groundwork ultimately supports long-term relationship building and enhances the overall effectiveness of the digital communication efforts.

“We want customers to feel connected to our story, and casual language helps make the communication feel sincere and relatable,” Muhammad Zaky Aydin (Interview, July 17, 2025).

The planning phase established a solid foundation for creating personalized, emotionally engaging communications with customers. By identifying the audience early on and crafting a resonant communication style, the business could tailor messages based on users’ characteristics, preferences, and online behavior. This strategy created opportunities for deeper interactions, stronger emotional connections, and a consistent brand narrative. Ultimately, it supported long-term relationship building and enhanced the effectiveness of digital communication efforts.

The implementation process involves the deliberate and coordinated optimization of five key Instagram features. Each feature serves a distinct role in strengthening communication and audience engagement. The feed operates as a visual catalog where products are displayed in a structured manner to maintain brand consistency and ensure that items are easily recognizable. Stories deliver real-time updates, behind-the-scenes content, and interactive elements, such as polls and question boxes. This results in more dynamic, two-way engagement. Reels broaden organic reach through short, fast-paced video formats favored by the Instagram algorithm.

Highlights serve as a repository for essential information, such as reviews, product details, and service procedures, allowing users to access important content without scrolling through the entire feed. Direct messages (DMs) function as the primary

communication hub, facilitating personalized conversations, responses to customer inquiries, and transactions in a direct and efficient manner. Using these features together makes implementation more comprehensive and effective in meeting audience needs and supporting communication objectives.

“We typically post three to four times a week, check prime times, look at insights, and plan the content flow accordingly,” said Daffa Gayano (Interview, July 20, 2025).

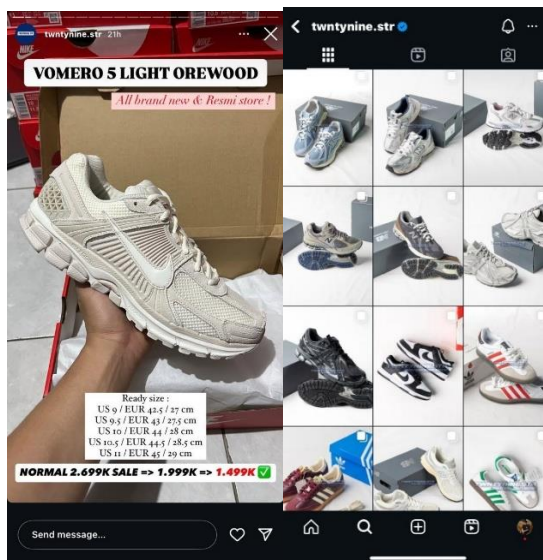


Figure 1. Posts and Instagram Stories from @twntynine.str (Research documentation, 2025)

Interacting with the audience is crucial for developing customer trust and maintaining a strong brand presence. Promptly responding to comments enables businesses to acknowledge user contributions and sustain active public dialogue. Sharing customer testimonials showcases genuine experiences and provides social proof, thereby strengthening credibility. Direct messages (DMs) provide an intimate channel for customers to ask questions, clarify product details, and receive assistance. These ongoing practices gradually cultivate a sense of closeness and dependability. Consistent visuals, genuine messaging, and authentic testimonials contribute to a positive, long-lasting brand image that resonates with followers.

“I trusted the shop because the testimonials looked real. They repost them consistently, so it feels convincing,” said Rizal Permana (Interview, July 24, 2025).

The study also identifies several constraints affecting the performance of @twntynine.str, particularly with regard to content development and communication flow. One notable challenge is the limited diversity of educational content, resulting in repetitive messaging and restricting the brand’s ability to deliver broader value to its audience. This lack of variety limits the ability to maintain long-term engagement, particularly as followers increasingly seek informative and interactive content. Another challenge is the brand’s dependence on a single social media platform, which makes it vulnerable in terms of reach and audience segmentation. By relying solely on Instagram, the account misses opportunities to engage with different user groups or benefit from the features offered by other platforms. Additionally, content performance is evaluated

manually, which makes the monitoring process time-consuming and imprecise. Without automated or data-driven tools, the brand struggles to identify trends, optimise content strategies and make quick adjustments based on audience behaviour. Together, these challenges hinder growth, restrict strategic adaptability, and diminish the effectiveness of communication efforts.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the effectiveness of @twntyne.str's organic strategy can be better understood through the concepts of social proof and parasocial interaction. In the sneaker reseller market, where concerns about product authenticity are rife, the repeated reposting of customer testimonials acts as social validation, reducing perceived risk. This aligns with the concept of social proof, whereby individuals rely on the experiences of others to inform their purchasing decisions. Furthermore, the use of casual language and responsive direct messaging fosters a sense of relational closeness, creating parasocial interactions on a micro level between the brand administrator and followers. These mechanisms demonstrate why authenticity is more persuasive than promotional messaging alone.

Beyond reinforcing existing digital marketing principles, this study proposes a relational organic marketing model in which personal closeness and narrative storytelling function as strategic substitutes for influencer endorsements and promotional giveaways. Rather than competing through financial capital in paid exposure, @twntyne.str competes through relational capital built on consistency, responsiveness, and testimonial credibility. This model demonstrates that MSMEs can shift their competitive advantage from advertising expenditure to trust-based engagement, offering a practical and replicable approach for small businesses operating under financial constraints [13].

However, several strategic limitations must be considered. The heavy reliance on a single social media platform exposes the business to risks associated with algorithm changes and fluctuations in organic reach. Additionally, maintaining personalized interaction through direct messaging may become increasingly challenging as the follower base grows, raising concerns about scalability. While relational organic strategies are effective in early growth stages, their long-term sustainability may depend on diversification across platforms and the integration of data-driven performance monitoring [14].

Overall, the findings highlight that organic marketing is not merely a cost-saving alternative but a relational strategy rooted in authenticity, social validation, and emotional engagement. When implemented consistently, this approach can provide MSMEs with sustainable competitive positioning in highly competitive digital markets.

Conclusion

This study examined how the Instagram account @twntynine.str implements organic marketing strategies to increase product sales. The findings show that the account effectively uses audience-appropriate communication, consistently uses Instagram features, and engages in personalized, two-way interactions to strengthen consumer trust and encourage purchases. Notably, @twntynine.str achieved high engagement and product trust entirely through organic strategies, demonstrating a practical, cost-effective approach for MSMEs that is rarely documented in previous studies.

The success of these strategies was driven by key elements such as authentic content, consistent visual presentation, and responsive administration. These elements fostered strong emotional connections and reinforced product credibility.

The study also emphasized the importance of using Instagram features strategically: Reels for broad outreach, Stories for interactive engagement, Highlights for archiving important information, and Direct Messages (DMs) for personalized communication. These features are critical tools for executing organic marketing effectively. These practices demonstrate a systematic, real-world application of Instagram for sustainable audience engagement, a distinctive contribution of this research.

The study also identified several challenges that limit the effectiveness of organic marketing. These challenges include limited content variation, reliance on a single social media platform, and a lack of data-driven performance monitoring. These factors may constrain audience growth and long-term engagement. Addressing these challenges could optimize organic marketing strategies further. Future research comparing organic practices across multiple platforms, employing quantitative analytics to measure content effectiveness, and exploring hybrid strategies combining organic and paid marketing is recommended to achieve broader reach and enhanced engagement outcomes.

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