

Digital Communication Strategy and Personal Branding of NjombangNyel Instagram Account for Local MSME Promotion

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Local MSME promotion increasingly depends on digital intermediaries combining platform visibility with community familiarity. Yet research often centers on individual influencers rather than accounts curating multiple small businesses. This study examines how NjombangNyel uses Instagram to build an account identity and support MSME promotion in Jombang, Indonesia. A descriptive qualitative case study used interviews with the owner, administrator, and two followers, plus observation and documentation. Data were condensed, displayed, and interpreted through interactive analysis and source and technique triangulation. The strategy developed from a spontaneous video into a planned local-media practice combining a regular rhythm, Jombang-centered identity, local language, product-and-location narratives, and differentiated uses of Feed, Reels, Stories, and Highlights. Personal branding emerged through specialization, distinctiveness, visibility, persistence, and goodwill. Collaboration expanded visibility, while scheduling, field production, editing, and limited team capacity constrained consistency. NjombangNyel functions as a community-oriented intermediary whose brand combines local identity, platform affordances, and ethical promotion. The study documents perceived visibility and trust benefits but does not establish causal effects on sales or MSME growth.

Keywords—digital communication strategy; personal branding; Instagram; MSMEs; local digital marketing; Jombang

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I. INTRODUCTION

Digital platforms have changed the conditions under which people, organizations, and local businesses become visible to the public. Social media is no longer only a channel for interpersonal exchange or entertainment; it is also an environment in which identities are presented, reputations are negotiated, and economic relationships are initiated. Its user-generated, interactive, and networked character allows communicators to publish information without relying exclusively on traditional media gatekeepers, while audiences can respond, redistribute, and reinterpret messages in real time [1], [2]. For small businesses, this environment creates an opportunity to communicate directly with potential customers, but it also intensifies competition for attention.

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are particularly dependent on accessible forms of promotion because many operate with limited capital, small teams, and restricted access to professional marketing services. Digital communication can reduce the cost of reaching audiences and can make local products discoverable beyond the immediate neighborhood. However, being present on a platform does not automatically produce visibility. Businesses must decide what to say, how to represent products visually, when to publish, and how to develop trust through repeated interaction. Research on digital marketing therefore emphasizes the importance of content quality, audience relevance, responsiveness, and continuity rather than the mere existence of an account [9], [10], [11].

Instagram is a productive site for examining these processes because it combines visual storytelling, short-form video, temporary updates, profile archives, direct interaction, and algorithmic discovery. Feed posts can function as a curated record, Reels can reach users beyond an existing follower base, Stories can support immediate and informal contact, and Highlights can preserve selected information for later access. These affordances give communicators several ways to coordinate the same promotional purpose across different formats. Studies of Instagram and personal branding similarly show that the platform enables users to make identity visible through the systematic combination of images, captions, stylistic choices, and interaction [7], [14], [20].

Personal branding is relevant to this study because the object under examination is not an individual salesperson or a single product brand. NjombangNyel is a local Instagram account that curates and promotes multiple MSMEs, culinary products, places, and community activities in

Jombang. Its identity must therefore be recognizable across the different businesses it features. The account is required to retain a stable character while allowing the products and stories of participating businesses to remain visible. This creates an analytical problem that differs from conventional personal branding: the account presents a personal and local voice, but its communication work also serves as a collective promotional infrastructure.

Existing studies of personal branding in social media have largely focused on public figures, influencers, students, professionals, or content creators who use digital platforms to differentiate themselves and build career or commercial opportunities [4], [6], [13], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19], [20]. These studies are valuable for explaining consistency, authenticity, visibility, and differentiation. Nevertheless, they leave a gap concerning local curation accounts that build a recognizable identity by representing multiple small businesses. A curatorial account must manage a dual relationship: it speaks in its own voice, yet its credibility depends on the accuracy and fairness with which it represents other actors.

A second gap concerns the relation between communication strategy and agenda setting at the local level. Agenda-setting theory explains how media selection and repetition can increase the salience of particular issues in public attention [3], [23]. In a social-media context, a local account may perform a micro-level agenda-setting function by repeatedly selecting certain products, places, and community concerns for visibility. When an account consistently places local MSMEs in the foreground, it does not merely advertise individual businesses; it also communicates that local enterprise and consumption are worthy of public attention. This process can be examined without assuming that exposure automatically causes purchase behavior.

The case of NjombangNyel is useful because the account emerged from an apparently spontaneous act of content production and then developed into a more organized communication practice. The thesis documents the account as a Jombang-centered Instagram presence with approximately 31,500 followers during the research period. Its content focuses on local food, product reviews, recommendations, and information about MSMEs. The account's name itself combines the local geographical identity of Jombang with a recognizable verbal style, making locality a core component of its positioning. The account therefore offers a case through which local identity, personal branding, and MSME promotion can be studied together.

The research is guided by three related concepts. First, digital communication strategy is understood as a planned relationship among objectives, audiences, messages, channels, timing,

interaction, and evaluation. A strategy is not reduced to posting frequency; it includes the decisions through which a communicator makes messages relevant and actionable. Second, agenda setting is used to interpret how the account selects and repeats MSME-related themes so that they become more salient to followers. Third, the eight dimensions of personal branding associated with Montoya - specialization, leadership, personality, distinctiveness, visibility, unity, persistence, and goodwill - are used as sensitizing concepts for analyzing the account's identity [5].

The central research problem is therefore how a local Instagram account turns platform activity into a coherent identity and a useful promotional relationship with MSMEs. The study asks: (1) how is the digital communication strategy of NjombangNyel planned and implemented; (2) how are local language, visual style, platform features, and content themes used to construct the account's personal brand; and (3) how does the account's communication support the visibility of local MSMEs, and what constraints limit the strategy? These questions shift attention from numerical engagement alone to the meanings, routines, and relationships through which visibility is produced.

This article contributes in three ways. Empirically, it documents a local curation account that operates between a content creator, an information source, and an MSME promotion intermediary. Conceptually, it proposes that the case can be understood as curatorial personal branding: a recognizable account identity is built not by representing only the self, but by repeatedly selecting, packaging, and connecting the stories of local enterprises. Practically, it identifies a platform-specific communication pattern in which a regular schedule, vernacular expression, natural visual presentation, and differentiated feature use work together. Local digital-communication studies likewise show the importance of planned content and contextual platform use [22], [29], [30]. The article also maintains a methodological distinction between perceived visibility and demonstrated economic impact, since the study did not collect standardized sales or longitudinal performance data.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research design and analytical orientation

This study used a descriptive qualitative design with a case-study orientation. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the research concerned how a digital communication strategy was understood and enacted by the people who managed the account, how content

decisions were made, and how followers interpreted the account's identity. The objective was not to estimate the causal effect of Instagram promotion on MSME sales, but to reconstruct a communication process in its natural setting. The case-study orientation enabled the analysis to connect the account's content, management routines, and audience perceptions rather than treating them as isolated variables [31], [32], [33].

The case was bounded by one Instagram account, NjombangNyel, and by its role in promoting local MSMEs and related places in Jombang. The account was treated as both a communication actor and an object of branding. This distinction matters because the account does not simply transmit messages supplied by a separate organization. It selects businesses, decides how to frame them, uses its own voice and visual style, and maintains a relationship with followers. The analysis therefore examined planning, message construction, platform use, interaction, collaboration, and perceived outcomes as connected elements of a digital strategy.

B. Research setting and participants

The research setting was the digital communication environment of NjombangNyel and the local MSME ecosystem of Jombang, East Java. The account was established and managed by a content creator identified in the thesis as Elma Pristika, with support from a social-media administrator. Two followers were included to provide an audience perspective on content clarity, local relevance, consistency, and promotional usefulness. The article uses role-based labels rather than reproducing personal biodata in order to keep the focus on the communication process and minimize unnecessary personal exposure.

Table 1. Data sources and participant roles

<i>Code</i>	<i>Role in the case</i>	<i>Evidence contributed</i>	<i>Analytical relevance</i>
C-1	Account owner and creator	Origin of the account, objectives, content decisions, distinctive style, MSME collaboration	Strategic intention and identity construction
C-2	Social-media administrator	Scheduling, production workflow, feature use, audience interaction, operational constraints	Implementation and coordination
A-1	Follower	Perceptions of clarity, attractiveness, local identity, and content continuity	Audience interpretation
A-2	Follower	Experience of discovering and responding to promoted MSME content	Perceived promotional relevance

C. Data collection

Three complementary techniques were used. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the account owner, the administrator, and two followers. Questions addressed the origin and purpose of NjombangNyel, content planning, target audiences, language and visual choices, use of Instagram features, collaboration with MSMEs, audience response, and constraints. The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions when participants described practices that were not anticipated in the initial guide.

Second, non-participant observation was used to examine the account's publicly visible communication. The observation focused on content themes, visual presentation, caption style, local expressions, posting rhythm, platform features, and interaction with followers. The researcher also examined how the account moved between permanent and temporary formats: feed and Reels functioned as more durable public records, while Stories were used for timely updates, previews, field activity, and reminders. Observation was used to contextualize interview claims rather than to calculate a representative sample of all posts.

Third, documentation included publicly accessible Instagram material, field notes, interview records, and visual documentation of the account's content practices. The documented material covered MSME reviews, culinary and place recommendations, promotional messages, and examples of the account's distinctive presentation. The evidence was read as a connected set: interviews indicated why decisions were made, observation showed how they appeared in practice, and documentation provided traces of the public communication that resulted.

D. Data analysis and trustworthiness

Data analysis followed an interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification [31], [32]. During condensation, interview material, observation notes, and documentation were read repeatedly. Excerpts related to objectives, audience, message, timing, language, visual identity, feature use, collaboration, response, and constraints were retained. During display, evidence was organized into analytic matrices that compared the account owner's and administrator's perspectives with follower responses and mapped the data to the concepts of digital strategy, agenda setting, and personal branding.

The analysis combined deductive and inductive procedures. The deductive layer used planning, audience, message, channel, interaction, and evaluation as dimensions of digital communication strategy. Agenda setting sensitized the analysis to selection, repetition, and issue salience.

Montoya's eight dimensions provided a framework for examining the account's identity. The inductive layer captured themes that emerged from the case, including the account's spontaneous origin, Jombang-centered positioning, local jargon, the use of 17.00 as a preferred posting time, cross-feature sequencing, content stock, and the tension between planned consistency and unpredictable field conditions.

Trustworthiness was strengthened through source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation compared the accounts of the owner and administrator with the perceptions of followers. Technique triangulation compared interviews with observation and documentation. The researcher also used persistent observation and repeated checking of interpretations against the complete data set. Because the study did not collect standardized analytics for reach, impressions, conversion, or sales, claims about effectiveness are presented as observed or participant-perceived benefits rather than statistically verified effects.

E. Ethical considerations and scope

The study was conducted for academic purposes and analyzed public-facing Instagram communication together with interview accounts. This article identifies participants by role and does not reproduce private audience data, passwords, or confidential business records. The account and its public content are treated as a case, not as a basis for generalizing to all local promotional accounts. The findings describe communication practices and perceived visibility; they do not establish that the account caused increases in sales, revenue, or long-term MSME performance.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. From spontaneous visibility to a planned local-media identity

The account's origin was not described as the implementation of a formal marketing plan. The owner initially uploaded a video spontaneously and discovered that it attracted an unexpectedly high level of attention. The visibility of the first content was followed by invitations and requests for collaboration. This sequence is analytically important because it shows that the account's strategy developed through a process of learning from audience response. The account did not begin with a fully defined brand architecture; rather, early visibility created the conditions for the owner to recognize a communicative opportunity and organize it into a more stable practice.

The transition from spontaneity to planning occurred when the account began to receive repeated requests from local businesses and when the owner recognized that the account could

serve a wider promotional function. The name NjombangNyel became a geographical and cultural anchor. By focusing on Jombang and its surrounding local life, the account reduced the ambiguity that often affects general-interest accounts. Followers could anticipate that the account would provide information about local food, places, products, and businesses. In branding terms, locality became more than a background setting; it became a promise about relevance.

This development illustrates how digital identity may be stabilized through repeated choices. The account's identity was not produced by a single logo or an isolated campaign. It emerged from the accumulation of content themes, the continuity of the account name, a recognizable voice, and the repeated presentation of local enterprises. The process is consistent with research that treats social media as an environment in which users construct and negotiate identity through content and interaction [8], [12]. It also demonstrates why personal branding should be understood as an ongoing communicative process rather than a one-time design activity.

From an agenda-setting perspective, the account's focus on MSMEs performs a local selection function. The account cannot display every business in Jombang, and its editorial choices inevitably privilege some products and places over others. By selecting local enterprises as recurring content subjects, it makes them more visible and helps position them as topics worthy of public attention. This is a micro-level form of agenda setting: the account does not control public opinion, but it organizes a stream of local information in ways that can influence what followers notice and remember [3], [23].

B. Planning, audience recognition, and publishing rhythm

The planning process involved several linked decisions: identifying an MSME or local place to feature, deciding the central message, arranging the visual material, choosing the most appropriate Instagram format, and determining when the content should be published. The account owner explained that content was often selected from active MSME activities, products that were attracting interest, recommendations from business owners, and topics that were currently popular among local users. This means that planning was responsive rather than entirely predetermined. The strategy balanced a stable thematic focus with flexibility about which enterprise or product would become the next subject.

The account also demonstrated a practical understanding of audience routines. Interviews indicated a preference for publishing around 17.00, when the team believed that many followers had finished school or work and were more likely to access their phones. The timing decision was not presented as a formal experiment, but as an experiential form of audience knowledge. It shows that digital strategy includes temporal coordination: content is not only designed for a particular audience but also released in a moment when that audience is believed to be available. Consistency in timing can create expectations and make the account appear active and dependable.

Stories were sometimes used as a preliminary signal before the main video was published. A short Story could announce an activity, provide a link or reminder, or show that a new review was forthcoming. This practice created a simple sequence of attention: the temporary format generated anticipation, and the longer-lived feed or Reel supplied the main information. The sequence illustrates how platform features can be coordinated rather than used in isolation. It also shows that a communication strategy may involve directing traffic between formats, not merely producing more content.

The audience was understood primarily through the content that attracted responses. The owner and administrator perceived students and young mothers as important groups for culinary and trending content. Followers from outside Jombang also asked for recommendations, indicating that the account's local identity did not necessarily restrict its reach. Instead, local specificity could become a reason for discovery. The account offered knowledge that was difficult to obtain from generic national content: where to go, what to try, and which small businesses were worth noticing.

The findings do not provide a demographic survey of followers, so these audience descriptions should be treated as participant perceptions rather than population estimates. Nevertheless, they reveal a strategic principle: the account's audience was not imagined as an abstract mass. It was understood through everyday practices, requests, comments, and reactions. This relational understanding supports the literature on digital communication that emphasizes responsiveness and audience participation as conditions for meaningful social-media use [1], [9].

C. Message architecture, local language, and authenticity

The message structure used in many promotional contents followed a clear sequence. The account introduced the MSME or location, presented the featured product or service, and ended

with practical information such as location, product details, or ordering instructions. This structure combined an informational purpose with a promotional one. Instead of presenting only a slogan or an attractive image, the content attempted to answer the questions a potential visitor or customer might have: what is being offered, where can it be found, and why might it be relevant?

Visual presentation was described as clear, bright, and close to the real setting of the MSME. The team preferred to show the atmosphere of the location and the appearance of products without making the presentation look excessively artificial. This choice supported an authenticity claim. In a crowded digital environment, natural presentation can help an account distinguish itself from promotional content that appears overly staged. The value of authenticity here is not that the images are free from mediation; all content is selected and edited. Rather, the account attempted to make its mediation appear credible by retaining recognizable details of the place and product.

Language was an equally important part of the message architecture. The account used a relaxed, communicative, and locally resonant style rather than a formal advertising register. Its recurring expressions and jargon, including a recognizable NjombangNyel greeting, created a verbal signature. Local language reduced social distance because it sounded like communication among people who shared a geographical context. It also provided a mnemonic device: followers could recognize the account before reading the full caption or identifying the visual source.

The local register did not mean that the messages were unstructured. The account combined informal expression with practical information. A conversational introduction could be followed by product details and a location, allowing promotional information to remain useful rather than purely entertaining. This balance is central to the account's credibility. Informality attracted attention and created familiarity, while factual details made the content actionable. Content marketing research similarly suggests that relevance and value are important when promotional messages are integrated into digital communication [25].

In agenda-setting terms, language also affects the way an issue is made salient. A message about supporting MSMEs could be framed as a distant economic policy, or it could be embedded in an everyday recommendation about a meal, a place, or a product. NjombangNyel generally chose the second route. By making local business visible through familiar language and ordinary

experiences, the account connected economic support to the routines of its audience. The strategy therefore translated a broad issue - the importance of local enterprise - into approachable content.

D. Platform affordances as a coordinated communication system

The use of Instagram features was not random. The account assigned different communicative functions to feed, Reels, Stories, and Highlights. The following table summarizes the relationship between the feature, its practical use in the case, and its contribution to personal branding and MSME promotion.

Table 2. Instagram features and strategic functions

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Observed use</i>	<i>Contribution to communication</i>	<i>Branding value</i>
Feed	Product information, reviews, location details, and curated visual records	Provides durable and searchable information	Creates a stable storefront and archive
Reels	Short reviews, product demonstrations, and dynamic field coverage	Extends discovery beyond existing followers	Increases visibility and reinforces an active identity
Stories	Teasers, daily activity, short updates, reposts, and direct interaction	Creates immediacy and a low-distance relationship	Expresses personality and local presence
Highlights	Saved recommendations and selected MSME information	Makes temporary material accessible later	Maintains continuity for new followers

Feed posts functioned as the account's more permanent public record. By placing product reviews, MSME profiles, and location information in the feed, the account created an archive that could be revisited by followers. The feed also acted as a visual storefront: the repeated presence of local products and places communicated what the account considered worthy of attention. This durable layer was important for identity because a new visitor could infer the account's specialization from the accumulated pattern of posts.

Reels were associated with wider reach and discovery. The account used short video to show products, activities, or reviews in a dynamic format. Participants perceived Reels as more likely to be viewed by users who did not yet follow the account. The format therefore served a dual purpose: it made the content more engaging for existing followers and functioned as an entry point for potential new audiences. The account's use of Reels reflects the broader shift toward short-form video in digital marketing, while its local subject matter prevented the format from becoming detached from the account's geographic identity [10], [21].

Stories were more immediate and relational. They were used for updates from the field, behind-the-scenes material, reminders, reposts, and short information about an MSME. Because Stories disappear after twenty-four hours unless saved, they allowed the account to communicate without the pressure of making every item part of its permanent profile. Stories also supported interaction through responses, questions, and other platform tools. In this way, the feature displayed the account's personality and ongoing activity rather than only its polished promotional output.

Highlights extended the life of selected Stories and helped organize information for people who encountered the account later. This function is especially useful for a curation account because the promotional value of a local MSME should not depend entirely on the moment of publication. Highlights can preserve recommendations and make the account more useful as a reference point. The combination of feed, Reels, Stories, and Highlights thus created a platform choreography: permanent information, discoverable video, immediate contact, and retained guidance worked together.

This arrangement supports the proposition that digital communication strategy is a system of coordinated affordances. The account did not use Instagram features only because they were available; it matched each feature to a communicative purpose. Feed and Highlights supported continuity, Reels supported reach, and Stories supported interaction. The combination contributed to personal branding because it allowed the account to appear simultaneously informative, active, familiar, and locally grounded.

E. Curatorial personal branding through Montoya's dimensions

The thesis analyzes NjombangNyel through the eight dimensions of personal branding proposed by Peter Montoya. In the present article, the dimensions are interpreted at the level of the account as a communicative persona. The account is not a person in the literal sense, but it presents a stable voice and character through the work of its owner and administrator. The evidence can therefore be used to examine how a personal brand is produced by a small, community-oriented communication team.

Table 3. Personal-branding dimensions in the NjombangNyel case

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Evidence in the case</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Specialization	Consistent focus on Jombang MSMEs, local food, products, and recommendations	The account occupies a recognizable local niche
Leadership	Selection and curation of businesses and products for public attention	The account acts as a local information gatekeeper
Personality	Relaxed, humorous, communicative, and audience-friendly tone	The account reduces distance and encourages familiarity
Distinctiveness	Jombang-centered name, local expressions, recognizable creator presentation	The account is differentiated from generic promotional pages
Visibility	Regular use of Feed, Reels, Stories, and Highlights	Repeated presence keeps the identity accessible
Unity	Content, language, visuals, and purpose remain aligned with local promotion	Different formats communicate one coherent identity
Persistence	Efforts to sustain posting despite scheduling and production problems	Brand identity is maintained through continuity
Goodwill	Explicit purpose of helping local MSMEs gain attention and access to audiences	Social usefulness becomes part of reputation

Specialization is the most visible dimension. NjombangNyel is not positioned as a general lifestyle account with occasional business content. Its repeated focus on Jombang-based MSMEs, food, products, and recommendations creates a clear niche. Specialization helps followers know what to expect and helps participating businesses identify the account as relevant to their promotional needs. It also provides the basis for credibility: repeated work in a field can lead audiences to attribute familiarity and competence to the account [5].

The account also displays a form of leadership. It selects which businesses and products are presented, decides what information is foregrounded, and packages the selected material for an audience. This is not leadership in the sense of formal authority. It is a communicative form of local agenda leadership. By curating content, the account influences which MSMEs become more visible in the digital neighborhood. This finding extends the use of agenda-setting theory from mass media to a small account whose influence is based on relevance and trust rather than institutional power.

Personality is expressed through a relaxed and communicative tone. The account does not sound like a government notice or a standardized advertisement. It uses everyday expressions, local nuance, and humor to create the impression of a friendly recommendation. This personality makes promotional messages less intrusive because the audience encounters them within a familiar communication style. Personal branding scholarship emphasizes that perceived personality and authenticity can support the formation of a meaningful relationship between account and audience [15], [17].

Distinctiveness comes from the combination of geography, language, and visual presentation. The account name immediately signals Jombang. The recurring local greeting and the creator's recognizable presentation, including the use of distinctive accessories in reviews, add a visual and verbal signature. These elements are not merely decorative. They provide cues through which the audience can recognize the account among similar promotional pages. Locality becomes a competitive asset because it is difficult for a generic account to reproduce the same combination of place-specific knowledge and familiar expression.

Visibility is produced through continuity across features rather than through one format alone. Regular publishing, Reels for discovery, Stories for activity, and Highlights for retention create repeated opportunities for the account to enter the audience's field of attention. The thesis reports a substantial follower base during the research period, but follower count alone cannot establish the quality of engagement or the effect on business outcomes. It is more accurate to say that repeated platform presence creates the conditions for visibility, while its value depends on content relevance and audience response.

Unity refers to the alignment between the account's identity and its messages. The content consistently connects the account with local MSMEs, culinary recommendations, and Jombang-centered information. The tone may vary slightly between a Reel, a Story, and a feed caption, but the underlying purpose remains recognizable. This is important for a curation account because it features many different businesses. Without unity, the account could become a collection of unrelated advertisements. With unity, the diversity of featured products is organized under a stable account identity.

Persistence is visible in the effort to maintain activity despite operational difficulties. Participants described delays caused by the schedules of MSME owners, unsuitable lighting, crowded locations, camera shyness, editing needs, and revisions. The team responded through

earlier coordination and the preparation of content stock. These practices show that persistence is not simply a personal quality; it is supported by small-scale workflow design. The account's identity is sustained when the team can continue communicating even when a planned field production is postponed.

Goodwill forms the normative foundation of the account's personal brand. The stated purpose is not only to attract followers or secure collaborations, but also to help local MSMEs become known. Followers interpreted the account as friendly, close to the community, and genuinely supportive of local enterprises. Such perceptions turn social usefulness into a reputational resource. Goodwill does not eliminate the commercial function of the content, but it frames promotion as a contribution to the local economic community rather than as a purely transactional advertisement.

F. Collaboration with MSMEs and local digital marketing

NjombangNyel's relationship with MSMEs was flexible. Some businesses contacted the account, while the account also approached businesses whose products or activities appeared suitable for its audience. Collaboration could involve a review, a product presentation, a location recommendation, or documentation of an activity. This flexibility allowed the account to combine planned content with opportunities that emerged from the local environment. It also meant that the account performed a mediating role: it translated the needs of businesses into stories that could be understood and appreciated by followers.

The promotional value of the account lies in more than the number of people who may see a post. A local MSME often has a product but lacks the time, skills, or network to create a sustained digital narrative. NjombangNyel contributed production, presentation, and distribution. It could show the product in context, describe where the business was located, and provide an account-level endorsement through its established style. This is consistent with research that identifies social media as a resource for small businesses to extend market communication and build relationships with customers [9], [11]. Research on influencer collaboration likewise suggests that visibility may become commercially useful when it is connected to audience trust and loyalty [26].

The account's local identity also made the promotional message more socially situated. A product was not presented as an abstract commodity detached from place. It was connected to a street, a neighborhood, a local taste, or an everyday recommendation. This can strengthen

relevance because followers interpret the information through shared geographical knowledge. The account thereby joined marketing communication with a form of local cultural representation. The promotion of MSMEs became part of telling a story about what could be found and valued in Jombang.

At the same time, the collaboration should not be described as proof of increased sales. The thesis records follower perceptions that content was informative and that some followers had tried products after seeing them, but it does not provide transaction data, sales comparisons, or a control group. The defensible conclusion is that the account increased informational visibility and created perceived promotional opportunities. Whether those opportunities became sustained economic benefits requires future research combining content analysis, platform analytics, customer surveys, and MSME sales records.

This distinction is important for scholarly and practical reasons. Digital marketing studies sometimes equate reach or engagement with business success. Yet visibility is an intermediate condition, not the final outcome. A post may be viewed without generating a visit; a visit may occur without a purchase; and a purchase may not be attributable to one post. NjombangNyel's contribution is best understood as building an accessible communication bridge between local enterprises and audiences. The bridge may support economic action, but its causal effect cannot be established from the qualitative evidence alone.

G. Ethical and community-oriented communication

The thesis also interprets the account through Islamic communication ethics, particularly truthfulness, transparency, fairness, and avoidance of excessive claims. These values are analytically relevant beyond a religious context because promotional communication depends on credibility. A local account that presents products inaccurately may gain short-term attention but lose the trust that makes its intermediary role valuable. The case therefore illustrates how ethical communication can function as a strategic asset rather than as an external restriction [27], [28].

The account's use of natural visuals and practical information was consistent with an effort to represent products as they appeared in the field. The description of product type, location, and ordering information reduced ambiguity for audiences. Participants and followers also described the content as clear, friendly, and not excessively exaggerated. These perceptions suggest that

the account's persuasive approach relied on familiarity and usefulness rather than on aggressive claims.

An ethical issue remains because curation necessarily involves selection. When an account decides which businesses to feature, it distributes attention unevenly. Goodwill therefore needs to be connected to transparent collaboration and responsible representation. The account can strengthen its legitimacy by clarifying promotional relationships where appropriate, distinguishing personal review from paid placement, and maintaining a consistent standard for factual product information. These steps would protect both followers and MSMEs while preserving the account's local voice.

The community-oriented character of the account is most visible in the way followers interpreted it as a recommendation from local residents rather than as a distant commercial channel. This perception is valuable but also fragile. It depends on the account retaining a degree of authenticity and not allowing commercial interests to overwhelm the informational and social purpose that made the account distinctive. Ethical consistency is therefore part of persistence: it helps the account maintain a stable relationship with the community over time.

H. Operational constraints and adaptive practices

The main operational constraint was the mismatch between the schedules of the content team and the schedules of MSME owners. Some businesses required quick coverage, while the team needed time to arrange travel, shooting, editing, and publication. The field environment introduced additional uncertainty: lighting could be inadequate, locations could be crowded, and business owners could feel uncomfortable in front of a camera. These conditions meant that the planned content calendar could not always be followed exactly.

Editing and revision created a second point of delay. A post might require adjustments after the material had been recorded, or the MSME might request changes before publication. Such revisions were not necessarily signs of poor planning; they were part of negotiating an accurate and acceptable representation. However, repeated changes could reduce the regularity of posting. Followers observed that long gaps between uploads made the account appear less frequently in their feeds and reduced the likelihood of immediate interaction.

The team responded by coordinating earlier and maintaining a stock of content. Content stock reduced dependence on a single field visit and allowed the account to continue publishing when production conditions were unfavorable. This adaptive practice shows that consistency is

supported by resource buffering. It also suggests that small digital teams need operational routines, not only creative ideas. Editorial calendars, content archives, task division, and simple approval procedures can protect the account's identity when everyday work becomes unpredictable.

A further constraint was the limited size of the team. The same people were involved in identifying MSMEs, producing images and video, writing captions, communicating with businesses, responding to followers, and managing publication. This concentration of tasks can create fatigue and makes the communication system vulnerable when one person is unavailable. The case demonstrates that personal branding is not purely symbolic; it is sustained by labor that may remain invisible to audiences.

These constraints also qualify the claim of consistency. The account aimed to publish regularly and sometimes used a preferred time, but its practice was not perfectly uniform. A credible analysis should not turn an intention into a stable outcome. The findings show a strategy of consistency under conditions of limitation. The account's identity was preserved not because the workflow was frictionless, but because the team adjusted its plans through coordination, content stock, and selective use of platform features.

I. Theoretical implications: toward curatorial personal branding

The case supports and extends existing personal-branding research in three respects. First, it confirms the importance of specialization, distinctiveness, visibility, persistence, and goodwill. NjombangNyel becomes recognizable because it repeatedly communicates a local purpose through a stable style. Second, it shows that the object of personal branding need not be an isolated individual. A small account managed by a creator and an administrator can present a coherent persona that is collectively produced through routines, platform choices, and audience relationships.

Third, the case suggests the value of the concept curatorial personal branding. This refers to the construction of an account identity through the repeated selection, interpretation, and distribution of other actors' products and stories. The account's brand is personal because it has a recognizable voice and style; it is curatorial because its content gives visibility to multiple MSMEs. The concept helps bridge literature on personal branding, digital marketing, and local media. It also highlights a tension: the account gains value from being selective, but its social legitimacy depends on representing featured businesses responsibly.

The findings also refine the application of agenda-setting theory to social media. NjombangNyel does not operate like a national news organization, and its influence should not be exaggerated. Nevertheless, it selects local enterprises, repeats a thematic focus, and organizes information across features. Through these practices, it can make local MSMEs more salient to its followers. Agenda setting in this context is relational and community-based. Salience is produced through a combination of relevance, familiarity, platform visibility, and perceived trust rather than through institutional authority alone [3], [23], [24].

Finally, the study shows that a digital communication strategy is an infrastructure of meaning and coordination. Timing, language, visuals, feature selection, collaboration, and ethical boundaries are not separate technical decisions. Together, they determine what the account is understood to be. For NjombangNyel, the strategy produces an identity that is local, informative, approachable, and supportive of MSMEs. This identity can create promotional value precisely because it is not reduced to promotion; it gives commercial messages a recognizable social context.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study examined how the Instagram account NjombangNyel organizes digital communication and builds a personal brand to support local MSME promotion in Jombang. The findings show that the account developed from an initially spontaneous video into a planned local-media practice. Its strategy includes a regular publishing rhythm, audience-sensitive timing, a clear geographical position, a relaxed local language, structured product-and-location narratives, and coordinated use of Feed, Reels, Stories, and Highlights.

The account's personal branding is expressed through specialization in local MSME curation, leadership in selecting businesses for public attention, a familiar personality, distinctive local language and presentation, repeated visibility, unity across formats, persistence under operational pressure, and goodwill toward local enterprises. These dimensions make NjombangNyel more than a neutral advertising channel. It functions as a community-oriented intermediary that translates local business activity into accessible digital stories.

The article contributes the concept of curatorial personal branding to explain how an account can build a recognizable identity while promoting multiple other actors. It also shows how micro-level agenda setting can make local MSMEs more salient through repetition and platform-specific packaging. For practice, the account should strengthen content scheduling, maintain a

transparent standard for promotional relationships, preserve accurate product information, and use simple performance indicators beyond follower count, including referrals, audience questions, visits, and MSME feedback. Because this study did not measure sales or longitudinal business outcomes, future research should combine qualitative analysis with platform analytics, customer research, and MSME performance data.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Zahra Aulia Kartika Subiyakto: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review and Editing, and Project Administration. Pardianto: Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Review and Editing.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The Instagram materials discussed in this article were publicly accessible during observation. Interview records and field notes are not publicly posted because they contain participant statements and contextual information. An anonymized coding framework and selected non-identifying excerpts may be requested from the corresponding author, subject to participant privacy.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The study involved interviews and observation of public-facing social-media content for academic purposes. Participants are identified by role in this article, and no private audience data or account credentials were collected.

INFORMED CONSENT

Participation in the interviews was voluntary, and the article uses role-based identification to reduce unnecessary exposure of personal information.

ANIMAL SUBJECTS

There were no animal subjects.

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