



Awareness and Engagement Gap in Instagram Content Strategy: Analysis of Social Media Interactivity in Book and Lifestyle Retail

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Article History

Received:
20th April 2026

Accepted:
30th April 2026

Published:
30th April 2026

Abstract

The transformation from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 has fundamentally shifted organizational communication from a one-way model to an interactive ecosystem that enables dialogue, collaboration, and user engagement. In the context of book and lifestyle retail, Instagram functions as a strategic platform for building visual identity, emotional connections, and social capital with audiences. This study aims to analyze how book retailers utilize Instagram as a two-way communication tool and evaluate the effectiveness of content in converting awareness into engagement. This research applies a quantitative descriptive content analysis of 308 Instagram posts from the @gramediabigmall_samarinda account November-December 2025 (30-day observation period). The analysis includes performance metrics such as impressions (181,800), total interactions (959), follower growth (192), and content characteristics in terms of theme and format. The findings reveal that promotional content dominates the overall posting strategy, primarily through photos and discount announcements, while educational video content contributes significantly to reach. Despite the high posting intensity, the engagement rate is only 0.52%, far below the general benchmark of 2–5%. This indicates a substantial gap between awareness and engagement, driven by the limited use of interactive features and a tendency toward unidirectional communication. The study concludes that social media effectiveness is not determined solely by content reach or frequency, but by the ability to stimulate active audience participation. Low interactivity reflects missed strategic opportunities to strengthen engagement and build long-term social capital.

Keywords: Interactive communication, social media engagement, digital content analysis, retail marketing strategy, audience participation

JEL: M31

1. Introduction

The development of internet technology has marked a fundamental transition from the unidirectional communication model of the Web 1.0 era to the Web 2.0 era, in which social media

has become a primary instrument of communication. Social media no longer functions merely as a channel for disseminating information, but as an interactive ecosystem that encourages collaboration, participation, and the creation of user-generated content. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) assert that platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are built upon the ideology and technology of Web 2.0, enabling organizations to develop and maintain relationships with audiences on an unprecedented scale. In today's digital landscape, an organization's ability to leverage these interactions has become crucial for competitiveness and the development of social capital. In the retail sector, particularly the book and lifestyle industries, Instagram has transformed into a strategic communication channel. Book retailers sell not only physical products but also educational, hobby, and lifestyle experiences. Therefore, retail brands need a strong visual platform to build an image and emotional connection with customers.

Although social media offers substantial interaction potential, a critical issue remains regarding the limited use of interactive features by organizations. A landmark study by Jha and Verma (2024), analyzing social media use among Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), found that uploaded content was largely dominated by organizational promotion. This pattern keeps organizational communication largely unidirectional, preventing organizations from fully utilizing the platform's interactive potential. Such findings indicate missed opportunities to transform passive audiences into active participants, a dilemma that may occur across sectors utilizing social media.

In a commercial context, effective communication strategy requires organizations to critically evaluate whether, through which channels, and how social media tools should be utilized. Organizations must ensure that investments in social media generate maximum strategic value. Given resource constraints faced by many organizations, decisions regarding social media use must be made carefully, as poorly managed or outdated digital channels may damage brand reputation.

Previous studies have highlighted the dynamics of organizational social media use, particularly in digital communication contexts. Dwivedi et al. (2021), through conceptual analysis of Web 2.0, argued that social media enables organizations to build relationships with broad audiences, although its effectiveness depends on how platform characteristics are understood and strategically utilized. Vedel et al. (2020), through content analysis, found that organizational communication remains largely one-way and dominated by promotional content. Similarly, Rabbani et al. (2024) demonstrated that many global brands produce more informative and promotional content than dialogic content, even though creative and interactive content has been shown to generate stronger audience responses. Quantitative survey studies also indicate that Instagram, as a visual-based platform, generates higher engagement than Facebook and Twitter, particularly for lifestyle-oriented brands. Furthermore, Frau et al. (2020), using SEM analysis, found that interactivity in social media strongly correlates with increased brand engagement, brand love, and customer loyalty, making two-way interaction a crucial element in building social capital.

Despite these contributions, several research gaps remain. Most prior studies focus on social media use in general and have not specifically examined how book and lifestyle retailers utilize Instagram as a visual communication channel associated with educational value, interests, and lifestyle identity. Preliminary observation of the Instagram account @gramediabigmall_samarinda also indicates relatively high posting intensity and audience reach, yet comparatively low interaction levels, suggesting a gap between awareness and engagement. Additionally, content tends to be predominantly promotional, while interactive features are minimally utilized. These conditions make the account relevant as a research object.

Moreover, while previous studies emphasize low interactivity in organizational content, they have not linked this phenomenon to missed strategic opportunities, particularly in commercial contexts characterized by resource constraints and reputational risk when digital channels are not effectively managed. Existing research has also rarely examined how Instagram content interactivity can be converted into social capital and long-term consumer relationships, especially in the hobby and lifestyle retail sector.

To fill this gap, this study seeks to specifically analyze how book and lifestyle retailers utilize Instagram as a two-way communication tool and how the level of content interactivity contributes to engagement and the formation of social capital. Furthermore, this study aims to provide strategic insight into the effectiveness of social media use under resource-constrained conditions, particularly for brands that must choose the most relevant channels to achieve their communication goals. Thus, the main direction of this research is to produce a more comprehensive understanding of the role of social media interactivity in building emotional connections, brand image, and strategic value for book and lifestyle retailers in an increasingly competitive digital landscape.

2. Literature Review

This literature review discusses the evolution of organizational communication in the digital era, the crucial role of social media in building engagement, and analyzes content usage patterns by both commercial and non-profit organizations, which serve as a theoretical basis for the analysis of awareness and engagement gaps.

2.1 The Concept of Web 2.0 and the Need for Engagement

The most significant digital transformation for mass communication has been the shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. Web 1.0 represented a static internet, where organizations and companies were the primary content producers, and users were passive, receiving information in a one-way communication flow. The concept of Web 2.0, which underpins social media, radically changed this paradigm. Social media—defined by (Wiegand & Imschloss, 2021) as applications based on Web 2.0 technologies and ideologies—enables the creation and exchange of user-generated content.

In the context of Web 2.0, an organization's success is measured not only by how much information they disseminate, but also by how effectively they drive engagement. Engagement is an active action taken by the audience in response to content, such as liking, commenting, sharing, or saving. For retail entities like Gramedia, high engagement correlates with brand loyalty, the creation of social capital, and the potential for sales conversion (Kanter & Fine, 2010) Therefore, content strategies should focus on leveraging the platform's interactive nature, not just as a digital broadcast channel.

2.2 Organizational Social Media Content Analysis and Uni-Directional Patterns

To understand social media usage patterns by organizations, quantitative content analysis techniques are often used to measure the frequency and thematic nature of published content. One relevant seminal study is (Corbu et al., 2020) study of social media use by Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) engaged in health promotion. Although the context of CBOs differs from commercial retail, their findings highlight behavioral patterns that are universally relevant to any organization facing resource constraints and strategic focus.

Ramanadhan et al., (2013) found that Organizational Promotion was the most dominant content category across various platforms. This dominance of self-promotional content indicates that organizations tend to use social media as a one-sided promotional tool. Consequently, the study concluded that there is a low level of utilization of interactive features by CBOs. This pattern

is referred to as a missed opportunity, where organizations fail to maximize the potential of two-way communication. This failure indicates that, despite the availability of Web 2.0 technologies, many organizations still operate with a Web 1.0 communication mentality, focusing on pushing information rather than on creating dialogue.

2.3 Social Media Performance Metrics: Awareness vs. Engagement

When measuring social media performance, it's important to clearly distinguish between awareness and engagement metrics. Awareness is measured through reach, impressions, and views, which indicate how much of an audience has been exposed to content. In the case of Instagram, high impressions (like the 181,800 views on Gramedia's account) are often achieved through algorithm-driven formats like Reels, which expand reach beyond the core follower base.

In contrast, Engagement is measured through qualitative measures such as likes, comments, shares, and saves. A key metric for assessing true effectiveness is the Engagement Rate (ER), which compares total interactions to reach or impressions. True strategic success lies in converting Awareness into Engagement. If an account has very high impressions, but a very low Engagement Rate (ER) (such as approximately 0.52% for the accounts studied), this indicates a performance gap. This gap reinforces the hypothesis that although the content has successfully spread widely (success in awareness), it has failed to meet Web 2.0 communication objectives because it has failed to trigger action or active participation from the audience (failure in engagement), reflecting the unidirectional pattern criticized by (Ramanadhan et al., 2013).

3. Method

This study used a quantitative descriptive case study approach to examine the awareness and engagement gap in Instagram content strategy within the book and lifestyle retail sector. The case focused on the Instagram account @gramediabigmall_samarinda, representing a book and lifestyle retailer in Samarinda, East Kalimantan. A case study design was selected because it allows an in-depth analysis of social media content performance, posting patterns, audience reach, interaction levels, and the extent to which Instagram communication functions as a two-way engagement channel. The account was considered suitable for this study because it showed high posting intensity and broad content exposure, yet relatively low audience interaction, indicating a potential gap between awareness and engagement.

The study used secondary data derived from Instagram content and performance records during a 30-day observation period from November to December 2025. The dataset consisted of 308 Instagram posts uploaded by the account. The data included content characteristics, posting format, content theme, impressions, total interactions, follower growth, and engagement indicators. The main performance metrics analyzed were total impressions of 181,800, total interactions of 959, follower growth of 192, and the calculated engagement rate of 0.52%. These data were used to assess whether the content strategy successfully converted audience exposure into active participation.

The data were analyzed in three stages using quantitative descriptive content analysis. First, all Instagram posts were identified and classified according to content format and thematic category, including short video or Reels, educational content, photo or carousel promotion, and discount announcement content. Second, each category was examined based on its contribution to awareness and engagement, using impressions as the awareness indicator and interactions such as likes, comments, shares, and saves as engagement indicators. Third, the relationship between content intensity, reach, and interaction was interpreted to identify whether the account's communication pattern reflected interactive Web 2.0 communication or remained dominated by one-way promotional communication.

To support the performance interpretation, the study used the engagement rate formula:

The resulting engagement rate was compared with the general Instagram benchmark of 2–5%. A lower engagement rate was interpreted as evidence of weak conversion from awareness to engagement. High impressions were considered an indicator of successful audience exposure, while low interaction levels indicated limited audience participation. Therefore, content strategy effectiveness was not evaluated solely from posting frequency or reach, but from the account's ability to stimulate meaningful user engagement.

The main indicators of social media communication performance in this study were content frequency, impressions, total interactions, follower growth, engagement rate, and the degree of interactivity in the posted content. A high level of reach accompanied by low engagement was interpreted as an awareness–engagement gap. Meanwhile, the dominance of promotional and hard-selling content with limited dialogic features was interpreted as evidence of unidirectional communication and underutilization of Instagram's interactive potential.

4. Result And Discussion

4.1 Posting Activity and Content Reach

During the 30-day research period, the @gramediabigmall_samarinda account showed a very high level of activity with a total of 308 posts. This activity generated total impressions of 181,800. The high number of impressions indicates that the Instagram algorithm pushed most of the content, especially short video formats, to a wide audience. Generally, the account successfully achieved a strong level of awareness during the observation period.

4.2 Engagement Performance and Content Effectiveness

Despite the high reach rate, the total interactions obtained were only 959, resulting in an Engagement Rate (ER) of 0.52 percent. This ER is far below the average benchmark for Instagram (2–5 percent), which indicates that most of the content was successfully viewed but failed to trigger an active response from the audience. These results highlight a significant gap between awareness and engagement.

These findings reinforce the indication that the communication established by the account is still predominantly one-way. The large volume of impressions is not proportional to audience action, meaning the content has not fulfilled the interactive function that is the core of Web 2.0-based social media.

4.3 Composition and Dominance of Content Types

Content categorization analysis shows two main patterns:

- a. Short Video & Educational Content: This content uses the Reels format with a light and informative approach. This format proved to be the main contributor to impressions and awareness.
- b. Photo & Discount Promos: This hard-selling style content dominates the volume of posts in the form of photos or carousels, but has a low contribution to user interactions.

The dominance of one-way promotional content weakens the potential for two-way dialogue. This pattern is identical to the tendency of other organizations that are still stuck in the Web 1.0 approach, as found in previous studies. The combination of hard-selling dominance and minimal dialogic content is the main cause of the low ER.

Table 4. Content Performance Comparison Table

Content Format	Primary Function	Awareness Contribution	Average Interaction Performance	Engagement Tendency
Short Video (Reels)	Informative/Educational	High	Moderate-High	Relatively Strong
Photo/Carousel Promotion	Hard-selling/Promotional	Moderate	Low	Weak

The results indicate that Short Video (Reels) contributed strongly to impressions and generated relatively better interaction, while Photo/Carousel promotional content, despite dominating posting volume, generated weaker engagement.

This supports previous literature suggesting promotional-dominated content often limits dialogic communication. Similar to Corbu et al. (2020), the dominance of organizational promotion reflects underutilization of social media's interactive features.

Thus, the low ER appears linked not to lack of posting activity, but to content strategy emphasizing hard-selling over participatory communication.

4.4 Follower Growth

During the research period, the account gained 192 new followers from a baseline of 2,703. This growth indicates that content exposure was reasonably successful in attracting new users, although the growth was not accompanied by a significant increase in interaction levels. This pattern suggests that audience growth does not automatically lead to an improvement in the quality of the relationship between the brand and users.

4.5 Indication of Uni-Directional Communication Patterns

The overall findings indicate a communication pattern still dominated by organizational promotion, failing to optimize the interactive function of social media. The gap between high impressions and low interactions reflects a lost opportunity to maximize engagement. Despite highly intensive posting activity, the account technically succeeded in building a digital presence but failed to convert that presence into strategically relevant engagement.

4.6 Strategic Implications

The research results affirm that a high volume of content and reach are not indicators of successful social media communication if they are not followed by active engagement. A lack of interactivity creates a risk of inefficient resource use and potential stagnation in the relationship with the audience. In the context of book and lifestyle retail, interactivity is a crucial element for building social capital and emotional connections with users.

5. Conclusion

This research indicates that although Instagram provides significant opportunities to build two-way communication in line with Web 2.0 characteristics, the book and lifestyle retailer studied has not utilized this potential optimally. The posting activity of the @gramediabigmall_samarinda account is considered very high with a total of 308 pieces of content in 30 days and successfully generated wide reach with 181,800 impressions. However, the interaction rate, which only reached 0.52 percent, indicates a significant gap between awareness and engagement.

The dominance of organizational promotional content through photos and discount announcements exhibits a communication pattern that is still one-way, resembling a Web 1.0 approach. The low user engagement suggests that Instagram's interactive features have not been utilized to their full potential. These findings align with those of previous research which stated

that self-promotion patterns hinder the formation of dialogue and reduce opportunities to build emotional relationships and social capital.

Overall, this study confirms that the success of a social media strategy is not solely determined by posting frequency and high reach, but by the content's ability to trigger active audience participation. The low interactivity has direct implications for communication effectiveness, the strength of brand engagement, and the potential for customer loyalty.

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