

## Social Media-Based Marketing Strategies to Increase POV Cafe's Visibility Among Generation Z

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### ABSTRACT

Social media development has transformed how businesses reach consumers, including the cafe sector, which increasingly relies on digital strategies to attract the younger generation. This study aims to analyse the social media-based marketing strategy of POV Cafe to increase visibility among Generation Z, particularly students at Airlangga University. The qualitative research method used was in-depth interviews with the owners and customers. The interview data were transcribed and analysed thematically, following Braun and Clarke's framework, to identify recurring patterns in marketing practices, customer perceptions, and digital engagement. The results indicate that POV Cafe has used Instagram as its primary medium, but its utilisation remains limited and inconsistent. The owner emphasises the importance of traditional Word of mouth, while customers consider social media, particularly Instagram and TikTok, as key factors in their decision to visit. Visual content and Instagrammable experiences have proven to be important draws for Generation Z, in line with their preference for aesthetic experiences that can be shared digitally. Furthermore, customers are highly responsive to promotions such as buy-1-get-1 deals, student discounts, and creative events, but these strategies have not been optimally implemented. Collaborations with influencers were attempted but have been ineffective due to their inability to align with the local target market. Other findings confirm that online reviews (e-WOM) play a significant role in building the cafe's image. POV Cafe has significant potential to increase visibility by strengthening social media content consistency, optimising promotional strategies, leveraging micro-influencers, and building a campus community.

### Keywords

Social media marketing; Instagrammable café; Word of mouth; Generation Z; Sustainable economic growth

### Introduction

The development of digital technology and the internet has transformed the way companies conduct marketing. Social media-based marketing is one of the most significant innovations in the It field. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have become key platforms for business owners to reach a wider audience and interact directly with consumers. The numerous positive benefits gained have made social media-based marketing popular among business owners (Efni et al., 2024). Digital marketing encompasses various online technology tactics to promote products or services. With the rise in internet usage, social media has become an effective tool for attracting consumer attention. According to research, social media marketing helps increase sales and allows marketers to understand consumer preferences and behaviour better. It presents an opportunity for small and large businesses to utilise digital platforms to promote their products (Nurmalasari et al., 2020). Social media offers significant competitive advantages. With growing active users, these platforms enable companies to reach various market segments relatively cheaply. Furthermore, social media enables direct engagement between brands and consumers, which can increase customer trust and loyalty (Fahdillah, 2022). One increasingly popular method is influencer marketing, where companies partner with influential individuals on social media to promote their businesses. Influencers can build strong relationships with their followers, thereby increasing consumer trust in a brand. By utilising influencers, companies can reach a more specific and relevant audience (Ramadhani et al., 2024).

The sheer number of social media users worldwide makes social media-based marketing meaningless without a strategy, a crucial step for companies in achieving their marketing goals. Through the use of these platforms, business owners can not only promote their products but also build strong relationships with consumers. Therefore, a deep understanding of social media dynamics and user behaviour is essential for designing effective marketing strategies in the digital era (Rohmah et al., 2022). Cafes are now promoting themselves using social media. With over 4.5 billion active users worldwide, social media offers a significant opportunity to reach a wider audience and interact directly with customers. Engaging visual content, such as photos and videos of the cafe's menu and ambience, can increase appeal and visibility. Therefore, cafe businesses maximise social media by uploading high-quality content and using interactive features like stories and reels (Sekarwangi et al., 2022). Another strategy that can be implemented is influencer marketing. Partnering with local influencers to promote a cafe can attract the attention of specific market segments. Influencers with loyal followings can provide significant exposure through reviews and content shared on their platforms. Cafes can create engaging content trending on social media, using

influencers, also known as "selebgrams" (Kurniati, 2023). Providing attractive promotions, such as discounts or special packages, is an effective strategy to increase customer numbers. For example, discounts on specific days or buy-one-get-one-free promotions can encourage customers to be more loyal to the cafe. Furthermore, hosting live music events on weekends or collaborating with other businesses to hold workshops can attract new visitors and create unique customer experiences (Lindiani et al., 2024).

In addition to social media-based marketing strategies, local Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is crucial for increasing a cafe's visibility in search engines. Ensuring complete and accurate cafe profile information and using high-quality photos can help improve local search rankings. By tagging a location in every social media post, the cafe will be more easily discovered by potential customers in the surrounding area (Sasikirana et al., 2024). Generation Z, which includes individuals born between 1997 and 2012, is a group that grew up in the digital era and has extensive access to technology and information. Their consumption behaviour, particularly towards cafes, reflects significant changes in how they interact with brands and choose places to socialise. Understanding its behaviour is crucial for cafe owners in designing effective marketing strategies. Generation Z visits cafes to relax and find comfortable, productive spaces, such as working or completing assignments (Apriyanti et al., 2024). They tend to seek recommendations through social media and trust reviews from other users more than traditional advertising. This generation is highly connected to social media, which influences their choice of cafes, where they often seek recommendations on platforms like Instagram and TikTok and share their experiences. Cafes with an engaging atmosphere and shareable visual content are more likely to attract the Gen Z generation's attention (Lestari et al., 2023). Furthermore, they are concerned about environmental issues and prefer cafes that implement eco-friendly practices, such as organic ingredients. Amenities like free Wi-Fi and an atmosphere encouraging social interaction are also attractive, as they satisfy consumption needs while enhancing the overall experience. It generates value authenticity in products and services, being more attracted to cafes with unique stories or creative concepts than big brands perceived as less personal, demonstrating the importance of brand storytelling in capturing their attention.

POV Café (Point of View Café) was selected as the case study because it exemplifies the new wave of youth-oriented coffee shops that combine social media marketing, lifestyle branding, and digital engagement. Located near Airlangga University in Surabaya, the café primarily targets Generation Z consumers, especially university students and young professionals seeking both social and study spaces. With a medium-sized capacity of approximately 50–70 seats, POV Café adopts a minimalist and Instagrammable concept with affordable menu prices and an aesthetic presentation designed to attract social media attention. Its marketing strategy relies heavily on Instagram and TikTok, utilising visual storytelling, influencer collaborations, and user-generated content to enhance visibility. The café's strategic location within a student-populated area and its strong focus on digital branding make it an ideal representation of how small to medium enterprises (SMEs) leverage social media to build brand awareness and consumer engagement. Therefore, the case of POV Café is significant because it reflects how modern cafés navigate the intersection between digital marketing practices and youth consumer behaviour, serving as a model for other local businesses seeking to strengthen their online presence and market positioning. Based on this rationale, the objective of this study is to analyse the social media-based marketing strategies implemented by POV Café to increase visibility and engagement among Generation Z consumers, particularly by examining how visual content, influencer collaboration, and interactive digital features contribute to building brand awareness and customer loyalty in the café sector.

## **Theoretical Review**

### **Marketing**

Marketing is one of the key factors in achieving a company's success. Marketing focuses on how to sell products and satisfy consumers, which can generate profits for the company. Therefore, the importance of the marketing function requires serious attention (Pandowo et al., 2024). "Marketing" comes from the word "market," meaning market. In a market, people conduct exchanges driven by demand supported by purchasing power and diverse needs and desires. Put, marketing can be defined as the effort to market, namely, one person's efforts to fulfil the desires of others. In a corporate context, marketing can be defined as achieving profit, satisfying consumers, or building consumer loyalty by fulfilling their desires (Rasam et al., 2018).

### **Marketing Strategy**

A marketing strategy is a plan to define the market and the marketing mix concept, encompassing two essential elements: the target market and the marketing mix (Eliyana et al., 2018). A marketing strategy is a method for achieving desired results by considering existing conditions and structures and utilising the best resources and company strengths to achieve predetermined goals. Marketing is often equated with sales, but these terms have

different meanings. Marketing encompasses the entire product sales process, from product planning to the point of sale, while sales only relate to the transaction of buying and selling a product. Marketing activities focus on efforts to identify human needs through the process of exchanging goods and services. With a broad scope, a marketing strategy is a fundamental tool for achieving company goals by developing competitive advantages through implemented marketing programs. Therefore, it can be concluded that a marketing strategy is a structured and planned procedure carried out to achieve company goals (Rambe & Aslami, 2022). A marketing strategy must have a specific function. Bunga states that marketing aims to achieve business goals by generating profitable sales of products or services to the target market. Its function can guide managers in determining what to sell, to whom, where, and how to sell it (Bunga & Kholid, 2017; Amaliyah, 2021; Ficky, 2023).

## **Social Media**

According to Kottler and Keller, social media is a medium consumers use to share text, images, audio, video, and information with others. Social media is a medium individuals use to be social or gain social online presence by sharing content, news, photos, and other things with others (Sugianto, 2016). Social media is the interaction process between individuals, which creates, shares, exchanges, and modifies ideas or concepts in virtual communication or networks. Social media can create various communication and information for everyone using it. Social media consistently provides various conveniences that make it comfortable to spend time on social media (Pujiono, 2021). Social media is a group of internet-based applications built on the ideological foundations of Web 2.0, a platform for the evolution of social media that enables the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan, 2015). Over the years, many social media platforms have developed significantly, each with unique characteristics. Facilitating communication and obtaining information are the purposes of social media. Nearly all levels of society are currently connected to social media. According to the latest global data as of May 2024, there were 191 million social media users, equivalent to 73.7% of the population. Meanwhile, in terms of age, social media users are predominantly aged 18-34 (54.1%), with women (51.3%) and men (48.7%) (Gradianto & Andiansari, 2024). Based on the opinions of several experts mentioned above, social media is a place for socialising through sharing information, text, images, videos, and other activities. In this way, people socialise with others on social media platforms connected by the internet (Luthfia et al., 2024).

## **Generation Z**

Generation Z is the group born in the early 2000s. They grew up in an era of technological advancement and interacted directly with various innovations. Rapid technological developments influence this generation, who feel connected to the information available via the internet (Kamil & Laksmi, 2023). Generation Z is also known as an independent generation, thanks to the ease of access to information through technology and the internet, enabling them to make decisions independently without needing involvement from others. In decision-making, Generation Z relies heavily on technology to obtain information on the latest trends, influencing their brand views (Anindia et al., 2023).

## **Social Media Marketing in the Digital Era**

The rapid growth of social media has fundamentally reshaped marketing practices. Unlike traditional channels, social media platforms allow interactive engagement, enabling consumers not only to receive information but also to generate and share content (Kaplan, 2015). This evolution aligns with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which posits that adoption of new technologies is determined by *perceived ease of use* and *perceived usefulness* (Davis, 1989). Applied to social media, TAM suggests that platforms like Instagram and TikTok are widely adopted by businesses and consumers alike because they are intuitive and perceived as effective in delivering marketing value (Khan & Jan 2021). However, TAM has been critiqued for focusing mainly on technology adoption without explaining *why* individuals continue to engage over time. Here, the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) offer complementary insights. UGT explains that consumers actively use media to satisfy specific needs, including information-seeking, entertainment, social interaction, and identity formation (Katz et al., 1973; Whiting &

Williams, 2013). For café marketing, this means that consumers, particularly Gen Z, engage with content not only because platforms are easy to use, but because such content gratifies their desire for social belonging and lifestyle expression.

## **Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) and Influencer Marketing**

One defining feature of social media is its ability to facilitate electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), where users share opinions, reviews, and recommendations online (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Research consistently shows that e-WOM has stronger persuasive power than firm-generated content, as peer recommendations are perceived as more

authentic (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Within the café industry, reviews, hashtags, and geotagged photos function as e-WOM tools that influence consumer perceptions. Influencer marketing amplifies e-WOM dynamics. Influencers, often seen as opinion leaders, shape followers' attitudes by creating relatable narratives around products or experiences (Abidin, 2016). Studies show that Gen Z particularly values influencer authenticity, preferring micro-influencers who appear genuine over celebrity endorsements (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). This reinforces the argument that e-WOM and influencer credibility are central to café marketing strategies aimed at younger audiences.

## **Generation Z as Digital Natives and Cafe Consumers**

Generation Z, broadly defined as individuals born between 1997–2012 (Dimock, 2019), represents the first cohort of true digital natives. Growing up with constant access to technology, they exhibit distinct consumption patterns compared to Millennials. Research shows that Gen Z is more likely to trust peer reviews over corporate advertising, and they actively seek interactive, visually appealing content on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok (Priporas et al., 2017; Lestari et al., 2023). UGT provides a useful framework for understanding Gen Z's engagement with social media. For this cohort, platforms fulfil needs for entertainment (short videos, memes), information (reviews, café recommendations), and social integration (sharing café experiences as part of identity performance) (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). This behaviour also strengthens the impact of e-WOM, as their café visits are often influenced by user-generated content shared within their networks. Moreover, Gen Z consumers emphasise authenticity and sustainability. They prefer cafés with eco-friendly practices, unique brand stories, and experiential value beyond food and drink (Kamil & Laksmi, 2023). This highlights a gap: while much literature examines digital marketing broadly, fewer studies explicitly connect TAM, UGT, and e-WOM to explain how cafés can strategically attract and retain Gen Z customers.

## **Critical Synthesis and Research Gap**

Taken together, TAM explains how consumers adopt social media platforms, UGT explains why they continue engaging, and e-WOM explains what drives persuasion and decision-making. Yet, current studies tend to examine these frameworks in isolation. For example, TAM-based studies focus on adoption (ease of use, usefulness) but overlook the social gratifications driving ongoing use (UGT). Meanwhile, e-WOM studies highlight credibility but rarely integrate platform usability or user motivations. For café businesses targeting Gen Z, a more integrated approach is needed. Gen Z's decisions are not only shaped by the technical usability of social platforms (TAM) but also by gratifications sought (UGT) and trust derived from peer-generated content (e-WOM). This intersection represents a theoretical and practical gap: how can cafés design social media strategies that align with Gen Z's platform adoption, usage motivations, and reliance on peer-driven trust?

## **Methods**

The interview method in qualitative research is an effective way to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of social media-based marketing strategies on a café's business operations. Through interviews, researchers can explore respondents' views and experiences regarding the influence of social media on café development. A total of 6 participants were involved in this study, consisting of one café owners/managers and five Generation Z customers (aged 18–26). Owners was recruited through purposive sampling, based on their direct involvement in promotional and operational activities. Customers were recruited using snowball sampling, starting with initial contacts who met the criteria of being active Instagram/TikTok users and visiting cafés at least twice a month. This combination of purposive and snowball sampling ensured that participants were both relevant and information-rich. This technique is frequently used in qualitative research, particularly in management, and requires special attention during the transcription stage for subsequent application (Nascimento & Steinbruch, 2019). In this context, interviews allow researchers to collect accurate and relevant data about social media marketing strategies that can increase café visibility.

Interviews, which involve directly asking business owners about the marketing strategies implemented to increase their business's visibility, are a highly effective approach to understanding the impact of these strategies. This interview method allows researchers to explore the success of the marketing strategies used to increase café visibility. According to research, marketing strategy in business involves determining market targets and a marketing mix expected to achieve desired results, considering existing conditions and structures and leveraging the company's resources and strengths to achieve established goals (Eliyana et al., 2018). The interview involved a visit to the café, where researchers posed questions to the café owner, employees, and customers. By directly observing the activities in the field, researchers could gain a clearer understanding of the success of the café owner's marketing strategies. The interview and observation methods allowed researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of social media marketing strategies at POV Café. By observing direct interactions in the field and engagement with the café's Instagram account, researchers were able to identify challenges faced and effective marketing strategies.

These two methods provided the necessary data for implementation and helped design better strategies to improve marketing success. The study's results will significantly contribute to the development of POV Cafe by emphasising the current importance of social media, especially among Generation Z, in promoting cafes (Sekarwangi et al., 2022).

## **Results**

### **Interview with the Owner of POV Café**

Interviews with the owner of POV Cafe revealed that social media is indeed used as a marketing tool, although it is not currently a primary focus. The owner emphasised that current priorities are improving internal human resources (HR) and stabilising the cafe's menu to maintain service and product quality. So far, the Instagram account @povcoffee is the only digital platform utilised, with uploaded content often consisting of videos rather than photos. The marketing strategy was simple at the beginning of its operation: Word of mouth and inviting friends to visit. It was effective given the cafe's strategic location, right next to the Airlangga University campus, making it a primary target market for students. The owner acknowledged that visuals in digital marketing are crucial for attracting attention. However, once customers become familiar with the product, promotional strategies such as discounts are more effective in encouraging purchases. However, social media promotions have not been implemented routinely. The owner stated that promotions are usually only conducted in collaboration with specific brands, while internal promotions are rarely conducted due to perceived advantages and disadvantages. Similarly, an attempt was made to collaborate with influencers, such as a food vlogger, but the results were insignificant. The owner believes that Word of mouth significantly influences increasing customer visits. It is considered more honest because it is based on direct consumer experience. He also sees that future social media marketing trends will increasingly demand creativity, especially in producing memorable, humorous, and engaging content. Regarding the cafe's Instagrammable concept, the owner stated that while such a plan was initially in place, the current focus is more on creating a comfortable atmosphere worth the price for customers.

### **POV Cafe Customer Interviews**

Interviews with POV Cafe customers revealed various reasons that motivate them to visit. Friends' invitations attracted most customers, as did the cafe's comfortable and aesthetic atmosphere, affordable prices, and campus and student housing proximity. Amenities such as comfortable chairs and a calm atmosphere contribute to productive activities such as completing assignments. Most respondents confirmed that Instagram and TikTok significantly influenced their decisions regarding social media. Social media serves as an initial source of information and a means to assess the cafe's quality through customer reviews. Many respondents reported seeing content about POV Cafe on social media, whether from influencer posts or their friends. It reinforces the role of electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) as a key factor in building a brand image and attracting new customers. Regarding their desired experience, customers expressed their desire for POV Cafe to host creative events such as live music, open mic nights, or workshops relevant to students. They also emphasised the importance of student-specific promotions or buy-one-get-one discounts, which are highly appealing to Generation Z. Most customers also considered POV Cafe to have Instagrammable elements, from the decor, chairs, walls, and even the convex mirror in one corner of the room. They considered the atmosphere conducive to aesthetically pleasing social media content. Furthermore, customers considered the inclusivity and friendliness of the staff to be a significant influence on their decision to return. Some respondents actively shared their experiences on social media via Instagram Stories or TikTok, although others were less accustomed to doing so. For future development, customers suggested that POV Cafe should be more consistent in managing its social media presence, expanding its space, adding promotions, and holding regular events to be more relevant to the Generation Z lifestyle.

### **Observation of the @povcoffee\_ Instagram Account**

Observations of POV Cafe's official Instagram account (@povcoffee\_) from January 24 to February 6, 2025, showed minimal and inconsistent posting activity. Over two weeks of observation, it accounted for only two reposted videos on January 25 and 27, 2025. On other days, no new posts were found, including photos, videos, or other interactive content. The lack of activity indicates that social media has not yet become a primary channel in Kafe POV's digital marketing strategy. It aligns with interviews with the owner, who stated that the current focus is more on internal improvements than social media content management. However, customer interviews indicate that Generation Z relies heavily on social media, particularly Instagram and TikTok, as a source of information and consideration when choosing a cafe. The prolonged absence of new content can reduce the account's visibility in the Instagram algorithm, potentially leading to a decline in audience engagement. Furthermore, the limited content, limited to reposted videos, prevents this account from displaying a strong visual identity, such as through photos of the cafe's ambience, new menu items, events, or customer interactions. These observations highlight the gap between social media's potential

as a promotional tool and its limited implementation. Upload consistency, content diversity, and interactive features such as Stories, Reels, and Highlights must be optimised so that Instagram can truly function as an effective marketing medium to reach Generation Z.

### **Observations of @povcoffee\_ Instagram Posts**

Observations of the upload activity of the @povcoffee\_ Instagram account from November 2024 to January 2025 revealed a variety of content types but limited consistency. During this period, a combination of photos and videos was uploaded, with a higher frequency from late November to early December 2024. The first posts, recorded on November 23 and 24, 2024, were photos of the cafe's ambience. Subsequently, from November 27 to December 10, 2024, the account began utilising video formats to showcase the menu and the room's ambience. The upload frequency was relatively high, with five videos and two photos shared within two weeks. It suggests an effort to build initial exposure and introduce the cafe's visual identity. However, there was a significant lull after that. New upload activity reappeared on December 31, 2024, in the form of videos, followed by photo content on January 26, 2025, and videos on January 27, 2025. The pattern indicates that upload consistency has not been maintained consistently. In terms of format, videos are used more frequently than photos, which aligns with the preferences of Generation Z, who prefer dynamic and shareable content on platforms like Instagram Reels and TikTok. However, the content displayed is still limited to simple documentation, without narrative storytelling or digital interaction through Instagram Stories and Highlights. Overall, the @povcoffee\_ account has begun using social media to promote the cafe but has not yet fully optimised its visual strategy and posting consistency. By increasing content variety, maintaining a consistent posting rhythm, and utilising interactive features, this account has the potential to be more effective in attracting the attention of Generation Z.

## **Discussions**

### **POV Cafe's Social Media Marketing Strategy**

POV Cafe currently utilises social media as a promotional channel, but its utilisation is still low. The owner stated that the Instagram account @povcoffee is the only platform used, with the dominant content being short videos showcasing the cafe's menu and ambience. Its strategy aligns with social media trends, emphasising visual content as the main attraction, especially for Generation Z, who prefer video formats (reels, TikTok) over lengthy text (Lestari et al., 2023). However, there are several limitations in implementing this strategy: (a) Lack of Content Consistency. The owner acknowledged that social media is not a primary focus because priorities focus on improving human resources and stabilising the menu. However, digital marketing theory emphasises that consistent posting and interaction with the audience are key factors in building brand awareness (Efni et al., 2024). (b) Minimal Interactive Features. The owner prefers direct interaction with customers who visit the cafe rather than using interactive features on Instagram (polls, Q&A, quizzes). It results in low online engagement, even though interactive features have been proven effective in increasing customer loyalty (Rohmah et al., 2022). (c) Social Media Promotions Remain Passive. The owner stated that promotions are only available if a brand invites collaboration. It contrasts with customer preferences, where interview results indicate that "buy 1 get 1" promotions, student discounts, or e-wallet cashback are important incentives in visiting decisions. More regular and varied promotions on social media could be a highly relevant strategy to attract Generation Z. (d) Collaboration with Influencers Is Not Optimal. The owner once collaborated with a food vlogger, but it did not produce results. It indicates that the influencer marketing strategy was not carried out with proper audience mapping. It would be more effective for the UNAIR student target market if POV Cafe collaborated with local micro-influencers or student content creators, who are more trusted and closer to the target community (Ramadhani et al., 2024). (e) Word of Mouth is More Dominant than Digital Content. Based on interviews, the owner assessed that Word of mouth is still the primary driver of customer visits. This is true, but in the digital age, Word of mouth has shifted to electronic Word of mouth (e-WOM) in the form of reviews on Instagram/TikTok or customer posts. Many customer respondents said they learned about POV Cafe from friends' reviews or social media content. Therefore, strategies should be geared toward encouraging customers to share their experiences through social media voluntarily.

### **The Role of Visual Content and Instagrammable Experiences**

Visual content is one of the most crucial factors in social media-based marketing strategies, particularly on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Interviews indicate that the owners of POV Cafe consider photos and videos crucial in attracting customers, although the focus on promotions remains limited. Meanwhile, customers consistently emphasise that the cafe's main appeal lies not only in the menu, but also in the atmosphere, interior decor, and aesthetic elements that can be captured and shared on social media. Generation Z tends to have consumption behaviours closely tied to digital experiences (Zhulal et al., 2024). They seek "shareable moments," worthy of being

uploaded to social media. For this group, the presence of a cafe with Instagrammable elements is a crucial factor in choosing a hangout spot. For example, customers have mentioned that uniquely designed chairs, patterned walls, or convex mirrors in the corners are considered visual triggers that increase interest in visiting. In this context, POV Cafe already possesses potential aesthetic capital, but it still needs to be managed to become a truly brand identity. The comfortable atmosphere and unique decor should be positioned as the main content on the cafe's social media accounts, not merely as complementary elements.

Furthermore, visual content should present photos or videos and contain a brand story. Generation Z is more attracted to brands with authentic narratives than direct promotions (Apriyanti et al., 2024). For example, instead of simply displaying menu photos, Kafe POV could present the stories behind the creation of drinks, the barista's serving process, or the experiences of UNAIR students who make the cafe a productive space. Thus, visual content serves a dual purpose: building an aesthetic image while strengthening emotional connection with customers. Beyond aesthetics, Generation Z is also sensitive to the social values represented through content (Confetto et al., 2023; D'Acunto et al., 2025; Prasanna & Priyanka, 2024). This group will more readily accept cafes with welcoming, inclusive spaces that reflect environmental concerns. For example, photos of the use of eco-friendly glassware, warm interactions between staff and customers, or the collaborative atmosphere during live music can represent values of inclusivity and sustainability. In this way, visual content conveys an aesthetic image and a social identity relevant to the younger generation's aspirations.

As Cafe POV's primary platform, Instagram must be utilised to its full potential. Features like Reels, interactive Stories, and Highlights are perfect for bringing Instagrammable visual experiences to life. Reels can showcase short videos of the Cafe's atmosphere, Stories can be used for polls or behind-the-scenes photos, while Highlights can serve as a permanent visual archive that introduces menu items, promotions, and events. Interviews indicate that Cafe POV currently underutilises interactive features. However, for Generation Z, participatory digital experiences are far more engaging than simply viewing passive content. Visual content as a bridge for interaction will increase engagement and strengthen customer loyalty (Putra et al., 2025; Yahya & Mammadzada, 2023). One important strategy in creating an Instagrammable experience is encouraging customers to create content. Interviews indicate that some customers frequently share their experiences on Instagram Stories or TikTok. It should be utilised as a free promotional asset through reposts, challenges, or photo competitions. In this way, customers not only become consumers, but also become part of POV Cafe's digital narrative.

## **Promotions, Discounts, and Influencer Marketing**

Interviews with the owner indicate that Cafe POV rarely actively uses social media to promote discounts. Owners tend to be cautious about offering promotions, fearing they will only be used to target slow-moving menu items. Its strategy is understandable, considering that promotions can be a double-edged sword: increasing traffic but potentially reducing profit margins (Dou et al., 2021; Gauri et al., 2017; Goad et al., 2015). However, customer interviews revealed different results: most respondents stated that promotions such as "buy 1 get 1" deals, student-only discounts, or e-wallet cashback were important factors in their decision to visit. Generation Z is highly responsive to promotions that offer discounts and create a sense of exclusivity (student-only promotions) and convenience (digital payment promotions). It demonstrates a gap between owner perceptions and consumer expectations. If POV Cafe could offer promotions in a more planned manner, for example, by limiting quantities, for a specific time, or only for new menu items, then promotions would not simply be a short-term sales strategy but could also foster customer loyalty. Discounts offered through social media also serve as a strategy to build long-term customer relationships (Sudirjo et al., 2024). Marketing literature has shown that recurring discount strategies can increase Customer Lifetime Value (CLV), especially when combined with elements of community or group identity (Nurmalasari et al., 2020). For example, POV Cafe could create programs like: (a) "Happy Hour for Students" at specific times; (b) Special promotions for e-wallet users that are relevant to Generation Z's digital transaction habits; and (c) Event-based promotions such as discounts during live music or collaborative workshops. In this way, discounts are not just financial incentives, but also become part of the brand experience, integrated with the student lifestyle.

The owner of POV Cafe once tried collaborating with a food vlogger, but the results were deemed ineffective. It was likely due to a mismatch between the influencer's audience and the cafe's target market (students in the surrounding area). The success of influencer marketing is not determined solely by the number of followers, but rather by the level of relevance and engagement (Ramadhani et al., 2024). For POV Cafe, the influencer strategy should focus on: (a) Local micro-influencers (UNAIR students, campus community content creators) who have an emotional connection with the target audience; (b) User-Generated Content (UGC) from customers who voluntarily share their experiences on social media; and (c) Creative collaborations such as hashtag challenges (#NugasDiPOV or #POVhangout) that can stimulate organic engagement. With its strategy, influencer marketing does not have

to rely on prominent figures but can leverage social authority within the much more authentic student community. Instagram and TikTok provide ideal formats for combining promotions with influencer marketing. For example, a buy-one-get-one-free promotion can be advertised through Reels, featuring customers enjoying the menu in a creative, Gen Z-inspired style. Local influencers can help expand the reach of the content, while customer reposts (UGC) reinforce the authentic feel. Its strategy is effective for leveraging electronic Word of mouth (e-WOM), where promotions are no longer seen as pure advertising, but as part of the social conversations that occur naturally on digital media.

## **Word of Mouth (WOM) and Online Reviews**

The owner of POV Cafe emphasised that Word of mouth is the most influential factor in attracting new customers. It is understandable, as WOM is known to be the most natural and trusted form of promotion, especially in experience-based businesses like cafes. Consumers are more likely to trust recommendations from friends, family, or close friends than conventional advertising (Fahdillah, 2022). Interviews with customers support this view. Many respondents stated that they first visited POV Cafe because of a friend's invitation or because they saw content created by others on social media. In other words, WOM is not just an offline conversation, but also transforms into electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) in the digital world.

Generation Z, the primary target audience for Cafe POV, has consumption behaviour heavily influenced by online reviews. Customer interviews show that nearly all respondents consider reviews on Instagram and TikTok highly influential in their decisions. They use these reviews as a "preview" before deciding to visit. It aligns with research findings by Rohmah et al. (2022), which found that online reviews can influence consumer trust more strongly than direct advertising because they are perceived as more honest, authentic, and uncontrived. Thus, e-WOM is crucial for strengthening Cafe POV's visibility and reputation. Customer reviews on social media are not just testimonials but also shape brand perception. Examples from customer interviews include comments about the friendly baristas, the comfortable atmosphere, and the attractive decorative elements. These reviews reinforce Cafe POV's identity as a friendly, productive, and aesthetically pleasing cafe. However, online reviews can also pose a risk if not managed properly. Customers have cited negative reviews as a significant influence on their intention to visit. A single negative experience shared publicly can significantly impact potential customers' perceptions. Therefore, review management is a crucial part of a digital marketing strategy. In the context of POV Cafe, located near the UNAIR campus, WOM has the potential to be strengthened due to the social connectedness between students. Invitations from friends to hang out, work on assignments together, or try new menu items are often the main reasons for visits. If positive customer experiences, WOM can spread rapidly within the student community, offline and online (Tornike Khoshtaria et al., 2024). A strategy POV Cafe can implement is creating community-based experiences, such as open mic events, live music, or student workshops. These events create engaging experiences and encourage customers to share their stories on social media, strengthening e-WOM. To maximise WOM and online reviews, POV Cafe needs to: (a) Encourage customers to share their experiences, for example, by providing a dedicated photo spot or unique hashtags like #NugasdiPOV or #POVHangout. (b) Repost customer content on official accounts, increasing engagement and demonstrating customer appreciation. (c) Respond to online reviews, both positive and negative, to create the impression that POV Cafe cares about feedback. (d) Manage reviews on external platforms, such as Google Maps and TikTok, as many Gen Z use these platforms to find cafe recommendations.

## **POV Cafe in the Context of Generation Z**

Generation Z (born 1997–2012) is the first generation to grow up in a digital ecosystem. They are accustomed to fast access to information, social media interactions, and an experience-based lifestyle. Some key characteristics of Generation Z relevant to POV Cafe include: (a) Digital natives: relying on Instagram, TikTok, and online reviews as primary sources of information before visiting a cafe. (b) Experience-oriented: choosing a cafe not just for coffee, but also for working, studying, or hanging out with friends. (c) Authenticity-seeking: trusting testimonials from friends or micro-influencers more than formal advertising. (d) Price-sensitive yet loyal: preferring affordable prices, student promotions, and community-based discounts; if their experience is positive, they tend to be loyal. (e) Socially conscious: preferring businesses that are inclusive, environmentally friendly, and provide a personalised experience. Interviews with POV Cafe customers reinforce these characteristics: they are attracted by its proximity to campus, affordable prices, comfortable atmosphere, and potential for productivity (assignments). Generation Z often uses cafes not only as a place to relax, but also as a space for working, studying, and collaborating. Several respondents described Cafe POV as comfortable for working on assignments due to its calm atmosphere, ergonomic chairs, and available Wi-Fi. This indicates that Cafe POV meets Gen Z's primary needs: a multifunctional space that supports productivity and recreation. Cafe POV can strengthen this identity by highlighting taglines like "Comfortable Tasks, Fun Hangouts" or hosting productive community events like student workshops or creative classes.



Gen Z is highly responsive to Instagrammable elements. They come not only to enjoy the menu but also to seek out aesthetic moments to share. Some customers highlighted the unique decor, chairs, walls, and even convex mirrors as visual appeal. However, there was also criticism that the limited space meant the Instagrammable impression was not maximised. This means that for Gen Z, an aesthetic space must not be luxurious but creative, unique, and authentic. With small touches, such as murals, interesting lighting, or aesthetic corners, Cafe POV can enhance its visual appeal. Gen Z customers desired specific promotions (student discounts, buy 1 get 1 deal, e-wallet cashback) and creative events (live music, open mics, or collaborations with campus communities). It aligns with the Gen Z trend of favouring collective experiences; they want to come to cafes to consume and be part of a social community. For example, several customers suggested that Cafe POV regularly host live music featuring UNAIR students. Its strategy attracts a new audience and creates a sense of belonging, crucial for Gen Z loyalty.

Gen Z prioritises brands with a clear brand story and social values. Several customers assessed Cafe POV as welcoming, inclusive, and friendly in interviews. These factors are non-material added value that are crucial for Gen Z loyalty. However, Cafe POV could strengthen this aspect by explicitly conveying its brand story, for example, "started by UNAIR alumni for UNAIR students" or "a local cafe committed to comfort and inclusivity." Authentic stories like these resonate more with Gen Z than mere product promotions. The challenges faced by POV Cafe include limited physical space, an inconsistent social media strategy, minimal promotions, and poorly targeted influencer marketing. Opportunities that must be addressed include establishing a clear customer base (UNAIR students), capitalising on a comfortable atmosphere, Instagrammable potential, and Gen Z customers' preference for community-based events and promotions. Suppose POV Cafe can bridge these challenges and opportunities. In that case, it can position itself as a "student-based community Cafe" that is not just a hangout, but also a centre for student social and creative activities.

## **Conclusion**

Research shows that POV Cafe's social media-based marketing strategy is still in its infancy and has not been fully utilised. The cafe owner focuses more on internal improvements and menu stabilisation than on consistent digital content management. However, customer interviews confirm that Generation Z relies heavily on social media, particularly Instagram and TikTok, as their primary source of information before visiting the cafe. Visual content and the concept of Instagrammable experiences have proven to play a crucial role. Generation Z seeks affordable menus, a comfortable atmosphere, and experiences that can be shared digitally. This places spatial aesthetics, unique interiors, and visual storytelling integral to brand identity. Promotional strategies such as discounts, student packages, and creative events are rarely used, despite being highly anticipated by customers. Influencer marketing, which has been tried, has been ineffective due to a lack of targeted targeting. Conversely, Word of mouth and online reviews have proven more influential in shaping perceptions and visiting intentions. Overall, POV Cafe has a significant opportunity to increase visibility among Generation Z by optimising social media, strengthening its visual identity, implementing relevant promotions, and building a campus-based community. By integrating a comfortable offline experience with creative online strategies, POV Cafe has the potential to become a prime destination for UNAIR students to socialise and be productive.

## **Contribution to Practice**

The findings of this study provide several practical implications for café businesses seeking to attract and retain Generation Z customers. First, the results highlight the importance of consistent and visually engaging social media content, particularly on Instagram and TikTok, to enhance visibility and align with Gen Z's preference for aesthetic and shareable experiences. Second, promotion strategies such as student discounts, buy-one-get-one offers, and event-based packages are highly effective in appealing to this demographic, suggesting that cafés should integrate such promotions into their digital campaigns. Third, collaborations with local micro-influencers and student content creators can be more impactful than relying on mainstream influencers, as they provide authenticity and closer relevance to the target audience. Fourth, the study emphasizes the need to strengthen electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) through customer-generated content, reviews, and community-based engagement activities, which can enhance credibility and trust among Gen Z. Lastly, cafés can create stronger value propositions by positioning themselves as student-centered community hubs, offering both productivity-friendly spaces and creative, inclusive events.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

This study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, it employed a single case study design focused on one café, which limits the generalizability of findings. Second, the sample size was small ( $n = 6$ ), restricting the diversity of perspectives, particularly from customers with varying backgrounds and frequency of café visits. Third, the data collection period was relatively short, covering only a limited timeframe of interviews and social media observations. Fourth, the study concentrated on one cultural and geographical context (a café near

a university in Surabaya, Indonesia), which may not capture broader variations in Generation Z behaviour across different regions.

Future research could address these limitations by: (a) Conducting comparative studies across multiple cafés to identify patterns and differences in digital marketing strategies; (b) Expanding the sample to include a larger and more diverse group of Gen Z respondents, including those from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds; (c) Employing longitudinal research designs to examine how café marketing strategies and consumer responses evolve over time; (d) Exploring cross-cultural perspectives, comparing how Generation Z in different countries or regions responds to café marketing strategies, which would provide valuable insights into cultural nuances. (e) Integrating mixed-method approaches, combining qualitative insights with survey-based quantitative data, to enhance robustness and generalizability of findings.

## **. Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Results from the Owner of POV Café

No	Question	Answer
1.	Do you use social media for marketing POV Café?	Yes, I use social media but currently less active because my main focus is improving internal HR and stabilizing the cafe menu.
2.	Which social media platform is currently used by POV cafe?	So far, only Instagram with the account @povcoffee
3.	Since the cafe opened, what was the marketing method?	Word of mouth and inviting my friends to drop by
4.	Who is the target market of POV cafe?	Since the cafe is next to a campus, our target market is UNAIR university students
5.	When posting on Instagram, do you tend to post photos or videos?	Video
6.	How important are visuals (photos and videos) in your Instagram marketing strategy?	Visuals are important, but once people already know, then push promos to get customers to try the menu
7.	Do you use interactive features like polls or Q&A on Instagram Stories?	No, I prefer to ask visitors personally about the menu served
8.	How do you plan promotions or special discounts attractive to Generation Z through social media?	Promotions are infrequent unless brands offer collaborations. Usually, promos are for menu items that sell less
9.	Have you collaborated with influencers or content creators to promote your cafe? How do you select them?	Once collaborated with a food vlogger but it was not effective
10.	How influential is word of mouth from social media on customer visits to your cafe?	Very influential. Word of mouth is an honest reflection of our product from customers' perspectives
11.	How do you see social media marketing trends evolving in the coming years, especially for Generation Z?	Most people now look for creative content that is easy to remember, funny, and interesting as promos; others follow these trends
12.	Do you aim to make the cafe Instagrammable?	Initially intended to make it Instagrammable; maybe to be evaluated later, but right now comfort and value are prioritized

## Appendix B

### Interview Results from Customers

Question	Customer Answer	Code
What attracts you to visit POV Cafe?	Because friends invited me	C1
	Because the place is very comfortable with unique decorations at each spot	C2
	Because the price is affordable and location close to where I live, important for student without personal transport	C3
	Because the place is comfortable, cool and great for studying	C4
	Comfortable seating and layout with reasonably priced menu	C5
How important is social media in your decision to visit the cafe? Which platforms do you use?	Very important, especially Instagram and TikTok	C1
	Very important as social media helps review cafes without visiting; mostly TikTok	C2
	Important, mainly TikTok and Instagram	C3
	Instagram	C4
	Very important as online reviews help avoid making wrong cafe choices	C5
Have you seen content about POV Cafe on social media? How did it influence your decision to visit?	Yes, very influential	C1
	No, I have never seen the content	C2
	Yes, my friend made content when the cafe opened, then I asked about the location	C3
	No, I have never seen the content	C4
	No, I have never seen the content	C5
What kinds of experiences or events would you like POV Cafe to offer to attract Gen Z?	None currently	C1
	Expand the cafe location	C2
	Maybe add live music on weekend nights, as many alumni might want a stage for talents	C3
	Special student promotions	C4
	Cafe expansion	C5
How much do online reviews influence your decision to choose POV Cafe compared to others?	Very influential, bad reviews reduce buyers' interest	C1
	Online reviews help customers know more about the place	C2
	Quite influential, also the barista is good looking	C3
	Not influenced by online reviews, only by direct visit	C4
	8/10, reviews are usually more honest than the promo itself	C5
Do you feel POV Cafe creates an Instagrammable atmosphere? Which elements attract you?	Yes, attractive posters and decor	C1
	Yes, the cafe offers aesthetic menus recommended for Gen Z capture	C2
	Mostly Instagrammable design but limited space	C3
	A convex mirror in one corner of the cafe	C4
	Attractive chairs and walls	C5
What is your opinion about the values of inclusivity applied by the cafe? Does it influence your support?	Yes, very influential	C1
	The friendly, open vibe appeals to various groups, making it a reason to visit	C2
	Already good, menu fits Gen Z expectations	C3

	Yes, very influential	C4
	Influences especially the friendly attitude of staff	C5
What types of promotions or discounts attract you most as Gen Z customers?	Buy 1 get 1 free	C1
	Prefer buy 1 get 1, student discounts, or cashback with e-wallet payments	C2
	Word of mouth from UNAIR students	C3
	Buy 1 get 1 free	C4
	Buy 1 get 1 free or bundle offers	C5
How often do you share your cafe experiences via photos or reviews on social media?	Never	C1
	Often share via Instagram Story or TikTok if the place is aesthetic or menu interesting	C2
	Rarely asked about study spots in POV cafe but haven't made social content yet	C3
	Yes, sometimes upload but not as reviews	C4
	Prefer not to use social media	C5
What suggestions do you have for POV Cafe to be more relevant and attractive to Gen Z in the future?	Increase social media content because it influences interest to visit	C1
	More exciting events like live music, open mic, creative workshops, seasonal menus, or brand collaborations	C2
	Add live music, expand cafe space, provide official social media open/close status	C3
	No suggestions	C4
	Add discounts, expand space, broader promotions	C5

## Appendix C







### Results of Observations of the Instagram Account @povcoffee\_ for 2 Weeks




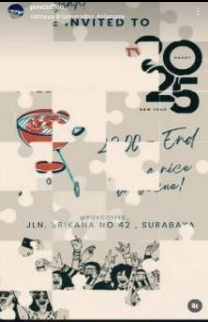


Date	Form	Information
January 24, 2025	-	-
January 25, 2025	Video repost	
January 26, 2025	-	-
January 27, 2025	Video repost	
January 28, 2025	-	-
January 29, 2025	-	-
January 30, 2025	-	-
January 31, 2025	-	-
February 1, 2025	-	-
February 2, 2025	-	-
February 3, 2025	-	-
February 4, 2025	-	-
February 5, 2025	-	-
February 6, 2025	-	-



## Appendix D

Table 4. Instagram Post from @povcoffee\_ Account

Content	Form	Date Upload
	Photo	November 23, 2024
	Photo	November 24, 2024
	Video	November 27, 2024
	Photo	December 1, 2024
	Video	December 3, 2024
	Video	December 4, 2024

	Video	December 7, 2024
	Video	December 9, 2024
	Photo	December 10, 2024
	Video	December 11, 2024
	Photo	January 26, 2025
	Video	January 27, 2025