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Strategic Communication Through Instagram: How STMIK IDS Builds Its AI Campus Identity

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ABSTRACT

STMIK Indo Daya Suvana, also known as IDS Digital College, is undergoing a digital transformation aimed at establishing its reputation as an "AI Campus." This paper examines an institution that has begun using Instagram as a communication strategy during its transformation. In the context of higher education, where competition is intensified by digital presence, social media has become essential for influencing student recruitment. This study employs a qualitative research design that combines document analysis with in-depth interviews. The research examines Instagram content, analyzing themes including posts, captions, images, and audience engagement. To enhance the analysis, interviews were held with key participants from STMIK IDS. Analyzing Instagram as a social media platform, this study found that it is used not only to advertise events and programs but also to tell stories about campus identity, values, and future direction. Content related to artificial intelligence (AI), digital innovation, and campus activities is presented in a persuasive and engaging style, helping to build STMIK IDS's image as an institution focused on AI. In conclusion, effective communication on Instagram is not merely visual. It requires internal strategies that enhance understanding of prospective students while ensuring alignment with audience expectations. This case study shows that a digital platform can function as a branding channel while connecting the institutional image and public perception.

INTRODUCTION

Each year, the number of high school (SMA) and vocational school (SMK) graduates increases, especially in Jakarta. According to Badan Pusat Statistik, there were more than 190,000 high school students in 2023 in DKI Jakarta (BPS, 2023). Many students are now seeking universities or colleges that offer industry-relevant programs, especially in technology, with a strong emphasis on artificial intelligence (AI). At the same time, private universities and colleges face intense competition. With hundreds of similar institutions offering IT study programs, such as software engineering (information technology) and cybersecurity (information systems), it has become harder to attract new students. As stated by the Chief of STMIK Indo Daya Suvana, "There are around 300 similar schools in Jakarta, and we've been struggling to stand out" (Hasian, 2025). One of

the biggest challenges is the decline in student enrollment year over year. Here is the case that happened at STMIK Indo Daya Suvana, also known as IDS Digital College, the number of students dropped from 46 in 2021 to 23 in 2024, the number dropped up to 50% (Internal Data, 2025).

The strategic step IDS is taking is to rebrand itself as an AI campus. IDS integrated artificial intelligence across its curriculum. This program, in collaboration with Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), emphasizes project-based learning to align graduates with current industry expectations. The objective of this initiative is to attract prospective IDS student leads to enroll in IDS. Collaboration between IDS and UGM through the independent study program allows IDS students in semesters 6 and 7 to study at UGM for one full semester and gain experience interacting with UGM lecturers and other students, while earning academic credits from both classroom and fieldwork. According to the Head of the Software Engineering Program, "We convert their learning experience at UGM and in the industry into a total of 40 credits across two semesters" (Kurniawan, 2025). This collaboration not only strengthens the AI curriculum but also provides students with real-world exposure to professional environments.

One outcome of implementing AI-based learning integrated with outcome-based education at STMIK Indo Daya Suvana is the achievement of one of its students, who was awarded Best Presenter and Favorite Paper at the 2025 OECM Symposium held at Bogor Agricultural Institute (IPB). The student presented a paper titled 'Innovation of Smart AgriVision Solutions with Machine Learning.' The symposium, organized by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries in collaboration with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), was attended by participants from leading universities in Indonesia, including UI, UGM, and ITB, as well as research institutions such as BRIN, and by professionals in oceanography. The symposium focused on policies, challenges, and opportunities related to MPAs (Marine Protected Areas) and OECM (Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures), particularly in advancing effective management of conservation areas. More important than simply integrating AI into the learning curriculum is how the technology can be used to meaningfully address real-world problems in the surrounding environment. It is essential that students learn to harness AI in ways that positively impact society and their communities.

This study explores how IDS Digital College uses Instagram to build its image as an AI-focused institution. Through a content analysis of the institution's Instagram feed and semi-structured interviews with key members of the campus communications team, the research identifies the roles of digital storytelling, cohesive visual branding, and personally resonant narratives in recruiting prospective students. Instagram plays a big role for young people today. It's not just a platform for photos or event announcements but also a place where students explore, discover, and connect with universities. According to Marhareita, Kila, and Mandagi (2022), social media marketing helps shape a university's brand awareness, image, and even student attitudes. A strong and consistent presence on platforms like Instagram can build trust and influence a student's decision to enroll. "Brand awareness and university image are able to mediate the

influence of promotional activities, accreditation, study program prospects, tuition costs, and facilities on student decisions" (Kharisma & Haryono, 2024).

According to Chiu et al. (2022), effective integration of AI into the curriculum requires a co-creation approach involving lecturers, AI experts, and educational stakeholders. This collaborative process not only yields a more relevant curriculum but also strengthens teachers' capacity and autonomy to implement AI-based learning in the classroom. "Teachers' understanding of AI was improved by the co-creation process, which also encouraged their independence in implementing the topic in the classroom" (Chiu et al., 2022). "In order to create, implement, and assess a new predentary AI curriculum, this study proposes a co-creation method that unites practitioners and pedagogy and AI experts" (Chiu et al., 2022).

Integrating AI into the curriculum can be effectively achieved through a co-creation process involving academics, practitioners, and other stakeholders. This approach is particularly relevant for curriculum redesign at the university level, including at STMIK Indo Daya Suvana. This is also in line with research conducted by the University of Florida on AI curriculum development. "By launching the AI Across the Curriculum initiative, which makes use of multidisciplinary partnerships, institutional strategy, and faculty development, the University of Florida is integrating AI throughout the curriculum. The foundation of the suggested AI curriculum model is an AI literacy framework designed to provide all students, not just those majoring in computer science, with the knowledge and abilities necessary to interact with AI in their fields in an ethical and productive manner" (Chan, 2023). Several other studies on curriculum adoption also highlight the urgency of digital transformation in AI-based teaching, with a strong emphasis on data-driven decision-making in curriculum design. The following is what Peng et al. conveyed in their research.

This paper focuses on the use of artificial intelligence tools to enhance the intelligent education curriculum system in colleges and universities, in the context of big data. The data processing capability under the new teaching mode is enhanced through the study and analysis of big data clustering algorithms and data analytics, and by leveraging artificial intelligence tools to enhance the teaching system's memory (Peng, Luo, & Liu, 2022). This is reinforced by the conceptual framework guiding AI-based curriculum transformation in higher education. The focus on teacher agency, collaboration with external institutions, and sensitivity to students' socio-technological contexts underscores the importance of a participatory, context-responsive approach to designing AI-integrated curricula. This ethnographic study provides thorough, contextualized descriptions of how a group of elementary school teachers developed a new curriculum while navigating a challenging environment with both external and local demands. The study presents the three sets of external influences (i.e., the orientation of state-level educational policies, AI faculty at a partner university, and students' media and technology environments) to highlight the intricate negotiation involved in collaborative curriculum development and the significance of teacher agency in initiating and sustaining a curriculum change" (Dai et al, 2022).

The inclusion of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT in the curriculum adaptation process is one way Karataş et al. (2024) address curriculum reform in the AI era. They stress how AI makes it easier to personalize learning, improves student engagement, and makes it possible to update contextual content, all crucial components of technology-driven educational reform. Three primary themes emerged from the qualitative findings: removing unnecessary material, expanding the curriculum beyond conventional resources, and updating or revising content to ensure relevance and interest. These topics emphasize how AI can be used to improve educational content to increase student participation, adapt the curriculum to accommodate a range of learning styles, and update instructional materials to ensure ongoing relevance and interest. The results demonstrate teachers' positive experiences and systematic approach to using ChatGPT and other AI tools for curriculum adaptation, underscoring a deliberate shift toward more engaging, relevant, and student-centered teaching methods (Karataş et al., 2024). Other studies have found that integrating outcome-based education principles with AI can lead to a sustainable teaching model that is better adapted to the demands of the digital era. This approach is particularly relevant for developing outcomes-based university curricula in fields such as computing and information technology.

The findings of a study conducted at NingboTech University in China on the adoption of a sustainable teaching approach based on the TSEM (Teach, Study, Evaluate, and Manage) framework and the OBE (Outcome-Based Education) concept are presented in this paper. To investigate sustainable teaching and learning methods based on artificial intelligence and education, the TSEM framework and the OBE idea are combined in the context of digital education (Zheng et al, 2023). Chen et al. (2020) demonstrated that artificial intelligence enhances the effectiveness of curriculum design and learning by enabling automation, personalizing content, and incorporating immersive technologies such as virtual reality and intelligent tutoring systems. These findings support the argument that curriculum reform in higher education should integrate AI technologies to promote more effective, outcome-based learning.

By automating administrative tasks through web-based platforms and apps, artificial intelligence (AI) has increased the efficiency of grading, evaluating student work, and providing assignment feedback. Curriculum and content creation, as well as instruction using technologies such as virtual reality, web-based platforms, robots, video conferencing, audiovisual files, and 3D technologies, are additional areas where AI has been used in education to improve student learning. Students gain a more individualized and comprehensive education, and teachers are more productive and efficient (Chen et al, 2020). The development of higher-order cognitive abilities, including critical thinking, problem solving, and creative imagination through cooperation with AI, should be the main goal of curriculum reform in higher education. The tenets of the outcome-based learning methodology align with this.

The lecturer stated that helping students develop the skills necessary to be future-ready citizens in a rapidly changing world shaped by digital and artificial intelligence technologies was the main goal of SAC's learning. Above all, teachers hoped that SAC would improve students' higher-order thinking abilities, including analytical, creative,

and imaginative thinking. To help students develop higher-order thinking abilities, educators must teach them to collaborate effectively with AI, conduct in-depth analyses to inform decisions, critically evaluate the data AI receives and processes, and use AI to generate a wider range of solutions (Kim, Lee, & Cho, 2022). Incorporating AI into the educational system and utilizing its potential to improve student learning results is ultimately the wisest course of action (Kamalov et al., 2023). Higher education curriculum reform should prioritize the development of advanced cognitive skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and creative imagination, made possible by AI integration. This approach aligns with the goals of outcome-based education and is supported by research highlighting the need for teachers to use AI to rethink their teaching methods and align them with learning objectives (Ng et al., 2023). When combined, these viewpoints underscore the need for a curriculum that develops higher-order thinking skills and leverages AI as a teaching tool. This aligns with the broader objectives of outcome-based education, which aim to prepare students for complex, AI-enhanced future environments.

Nowadays, university branding is not only about strengthening the curriculum but also about adding value that helps universities gain greater brand recognition and awareness. Freberg (2018) explained that "strategic use of platforms like Instagram helps organizations personalize communication, build engagement, and showcase brand values through visual storytelling". Kharisma and Haryono (2024) found that brand image and awareness significantly affect students' preferences. Mandagi et al. (2022) also emphasized that consistent social media presence can improve students' trust and perceptions. In Indonesia, this strategy is visible across institutions. Aisyah and Oktaviani (2018) showed how digital platforms supported public communication for government programs, while Maryolein et al. (2023) explained how Instagram can increase brand awareness for Jakarta Aquarium.

Setiawan et al. (2022) also reported that private universities use Instagram to attract students with visuals and testimonial content. As Eriani et al. (2025) found, social media branding strategies can enhance the school's image and strengthen trust. Social media is not only for promotion but also a tool for engagement. Citra et al. (2024) emphasized the role of storytelling and interaction in university branding. International studies by Constantinides and Stagno (2023) and Peruta and Shields (2022) confirmed that well-planned content and platform consistency improve institutional reputation and student engagement globally. In summary, some researchers focused on social media's role in higher education branding. A few studies also explore how Instagram supports a thematic theme like AI Campus. The researchers consistently highlight that visual storytelling, consistent content strategy, and audience engagement are key to building trust, brand image, and student decision-making. This study also examines how IDS Digital College uses social media, specifically Instagram, to build brand awareness as an AI Campus and support its transformation in attracting prospective students.

Previous studies have discussed strategic communication through social media, university branding, and AI-driven curriculum transformation as important but often separate areas of research. Studies on social media branding tend to emphasize

engagement, visual storytelling, and audience interaction, while research on AI in education focuses more on curriculum design, learning outcomes, and institutional readiness. This study brings these perspectives together by viewing AI-related curriculum transformation as a core element of institutional brand identity. From a strategic communication perspective, branding is shaped not only by messages but also by consistent values and practices communicated over time. Instagram becomes a space where academic transformation is translated into accessible narratives, visuals, and student-centered stories that help audiences understand what an "AI Campus" represents in practice. By integrating strategic communication theory with digital branding and AI-driven educational change, this study positions Instagram as a key platform for constructing and reinforcing institutional identity, rather than merely supporting promotional activities.

AI-driven curriculum transformation should be understood not only as an internal academic change but also as a core element of institutional brand identity. From a strategic communication perspective, branding is formed through the alignment between what institutions do and how they communicate those actions to the public. When an institution integrates artificial intelligence into its curriculum, this transformation becomes part of the values and promises it presents to prospective students. Social media, particularly Instagram, provides a platform where these academic changes can be translated into visible, relatable narratives that shape digital identity over time (Freberg, 2018; Luttrell, 2019). Instagram enables higher education institutions to connect complex academic developments with human-centered storytelling through visuals, captions, and audience interaction. Rather than presenting AI as a purely technical subject, institutions can frame curriculum innovation through student experiences, learning projects, and academic collaborations, making the transformation easier to understand and trust. As visual platforms strongly influence how organizations are perceived, consistent representation of AI-related academic practices contributes directly to the construction of digital identity (Frier, 2020). In this sense, strategic communication through Instagram functions as a bridge between curriculum transformation and public perception, reinforcing institutional branding through continuous, value-based communication.

Strategic communication on Instagram plays a key role in shaping institutional brand identity in the digital era. IDS Digital College uses Instagram not only as a social media platform but also as a channel to build brand awareness, convey its values, and engage with audiences in a personalized, visual way (Luttrell, 2019). Strategic communication is goal-oriented communication aligned with an institution's objectives (Freberg, 2018). In the case of IDS Digital College, Instagram content shows how the institution is evolving into an "AI Campus" and seeks to position itself as innovative and future-ready. It reinforces brand identity and achieves marketing objectives through consistent messaging (Tuten & Solomon, 2018). Effective Instagram strategies consist of storytelling, visual branding, and original content. IDS Digital used visual content like reels, carousels, and AI visual graphics, including the narratives of student success and campus partnerships, to humanize the brand (Rodriguez, 2023). This aligns with best

practices in brand storytelling: even high-tech brands must highlight human-centric benefits to stimulate emotional connections. This also aligns with Kerpen's (2019) view that authentic and engaging storytelling builds trust and connection. Visual identity is another key element of the Instagram content strategy.

Consistent visual branding, including themes, color palettes, and design style, will enhance recognition and reinforce the intended image of an "AI campus." Luttrell (2019) emphasizes that visual content allows companies to "show, not tell" their story. To evaluate and refine its Instagram strategy, the institution should analyze *audience analytics*, with a focus on engagement metrics. In social media theory, engagement is often viewed as a key indicator of content effectiveness and community building. Engagement metrics such as views, reach, and interactions (likes, comments, shares, and saves) are key to evaluating social media success (Miles, 2019). Instagram fosters direct engagement and two-way communication, which are key to building trust and community interaction (Luttrell, 2019). When audiences interact with the content, they act as ambassadors, helping the brand spread through digital word-of-mouth. In the long run, this helps build perception and loyalty (Kerpen, 2019). Instagram supports both; it regularly communicates AI focus through content while displaying tangible evidence (student projects, curriculum partnerships, events) of IDS's dedication to that focus. Indeed, this case study demonstrates that Instagram operates "as a branding channel that also acts as the intermediary between the institutional image and public perception". In short, Instagram helps close the gap between what the project is (innovative, AI-driven, student-centered) and how people perceive it.

Finally, this framework acknowledges the cultural alignment necessary to achieve meaningful public engagement. Effective strategic communication meets people where they are, not just with a platform but with their values. Instagram is the platform that focuses on the target audience (Gen Z students), who often turn to app platforms that are more visual for information and connection. In addition, Gen Z and Millennials want brands to represent something more meaningful and to speak with authenticity and transparency. This is an example of what some academics call the "cultural impact" of social media branding, as brands that align with their audience's lifestyle values and social identity are more likely to achieve higher levels of brand loyalty. Using this framework, we can illustrate the relationship among Instagram content, audience analytics, and institutional branding, as shown below.
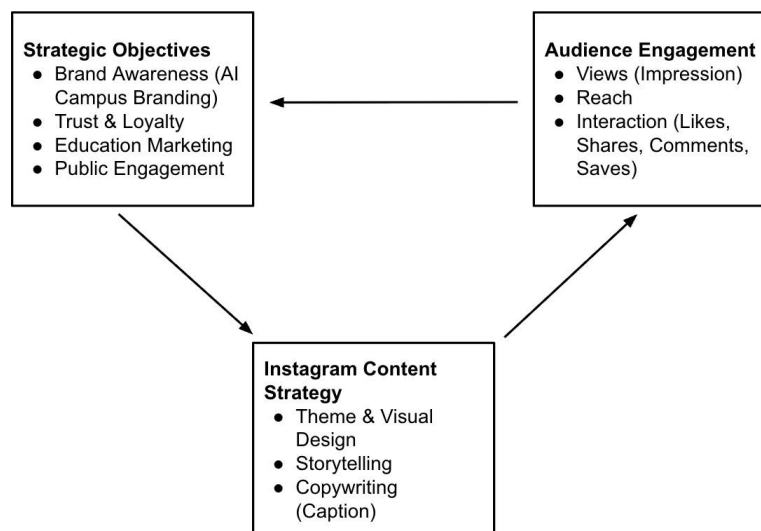
Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

METHOD

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a deeper understanding of how IDS Digital College builds its image as an AI campus through its Instagram communication strategy. These mixed methods were selected to analyze numerical evidence more specifically, for example, social media metrics like views, reach, and interaction, as stated that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The integration of both qualitative and quantitative data helps a more holistic analysis of how IDS Digital College manages its AI campus branding. As Creswell (2018) elaborated, a mixed-methods study combines data from both types, integrates them, and uses unique designs informed by philosophical assumptions and theoretical perspectives. The qualitative data support the reasons behind the communication strategies, for example, why a particular audience segment may be targeted with a specific communication approach, while the quantitative aspects illustrate the effectiveness of these strategies. In short, the two data categories complement each other.

This qualitative approach aims to explore the internal stakeholders of IDS Digital College regarding their communication strategies using Instagram to build AI campus branding. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), qualitative research is best suited to exploring and understanding the meanings that individuals or groups assign to a social problem. Therefore, this study uses semi-structured in-depth interviews with three key informants: the Chief of STMIK IDS Digital College, the Head of the Software Engineering Study Program, and the Social Media Specialist, who leads the planning, management, and evaluation of Instagram content. The focus of these interviews was to understand how IDS Digital College builds the visual storytelling, content strategy, and digital engagement to position itself as an AI campus. The interview informants were selected

through purposive sampling to represent different strategic roles within the institution. The Chief of STMIK Indo Daya Suvana was interviewed to provide insights into the institutional vision and strategic direction behind the AI Campus rebranding. The Head of the Software Engineering Study Program was included due to his responsibility for curriculum development, AI integration, and academic collaboration with Universitas Gadjah Mada. In addition, the Social Media Specialist was selected because of her direct involvement in planning, executing, and evaluating Instagram content related to AI branding. Together, these informants offer a comprehensive view of how strategic decisions, academic transformation, and communication practices are aligned.

To support the qualitative analysis, this quantitative approach will focus on the performance of the IDS Instagram account. This includes measuring social media metrics such as views, reach, and interactions to evaluate the effectiveness of the AI content IDS communication strategy on Instagram. Creswell & Creswell (2018) defined quantitative research as the process of testing objective theories by examining relationships among variables. In this study, the key variables include the type of content (AI-related posts, testimonials, and promotions) and audience response (measured through engagement rates). This analysis helps validate the internal strategies discussed in the interviews through real digital behavior data. In the qualitative analysis, the interview data were coded thematically. First, all interview recordings were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. The researchers then conducted open coding by identifying recurring words, phrases, and ideas related to AI branding, curriculum transformation, storytelling, and audience engagement. These initial codes were grouped into broader categories through axial coding, allowing patterns and relationships between themes to emerge. Finally, the themes were refined and aligned with the study's research objectives to explain how strategic communication through Instagram supports the construction of IDS Digital College's AI Campus identity. This process enhanced analytical transparency and ensured consistency between the data and the findings.

For the content analysis, this study examined 11 Instagram posts published during the early phase of IDS Digital College's AI Campus branding initiative from May to July 2025. These posts were selected because they represent the initial period when the institution began consistently communicating AI-related messages on Instagram. The selection criteria included posts that explicitly addressed artificial intelligence, digital innovation, student achievements, academic collaborations, and future-oriented learning themes. This early branding phase was chosen to capture how AI identity was first introduced and positioned to the public, providing a clear baseline for understanding the institution's strategic communication approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First, these qualitative findings are based on interviews with internal stakeholders at IDS Digital College who used Instagram as a communication strategy to build the brand identity for AI Campus. The Chief of STMIK Indo Daya Suvana, Hasian (2025), stated that

adopting the strategy to become an AI campus was driven by declining student enrollment and intense competition among more than 300 higher education institutions in technology, especially in the Jakarta area. With the objective of standing out, IDS Digital College aligned its brand with a real AI academic curriculum, project-based learning experience, international certification, and partnerships.

The Head of the Software Engineering Program, Kurniawan (2025), also emphasized that starting in semester 3, AI modules are integrated into the curriculum, including Fundamentals of AI, Machine Learning, and Deep Learning. IDS Digital Collage has signed a collaboration agreement with Gadjah Mada University for the transfer credit program, allowing students to undertake independent studies at Gadjah Mada University in semesters 6 and 7, with an option to complete an internship with industry partners. This also ensures industry relevance and prepares all graduates to be future-ready for industries, especially in AI and technology.

The last respondent was from IDS Digital College, a social media specialist who plays an important role in developing the communication strategy on Instagram. Irfian (2025) noted that Instagram has been the primary platform used to create AI campus branding since mid-2024, with greater intensity in 2025 through new posts and a variety of AI content. The main message that is emphasized on Instagram is "AI as a friend, not an enemy." According to Irfian (2025), she was responsible for the Instagram communication strategy. Started to prepare the content plan, executed it, and also evaluated the Instagram metrics to analyze the impact of AI content on IDS Digital College's Instagram. She used to follow a trend analysis cycle: briefing, copywriting the caption, designing, and posting. In fact, these interviews show that IDS Digital College's Instagram branding is not just an external promotion but part of a larger institutional transformation supported by leadership vision and curriculum AI integration.

Secondly, the quantitative findings were the IDS Digital College Instagram performance, and these data were used to reinforce the qualitative findings. The Instagram data for this study were collected over about three months, from May 2025 to July 2025. These contents were divided into several categories, including general learning themes, AI focus, and student success stories. Content about general learning themes, such as project-based learning (13 May 2025), reached 454 accounts with 722 views and 18 interactions, while future-ready skills (31 May 2025) reached 397 accounts with 735 views and 19 interactions. AI content performed slightly better than the general content. Google Veo 3 post (9 June 2025) reached 450 accounts with 1,027 views and 11 interactions, and the Tech Trends 2025 post (15 June 2025) reached 453 accounts with 1,309 views and 19 interactions. Below were several samples of Instagram posts with data analytics:
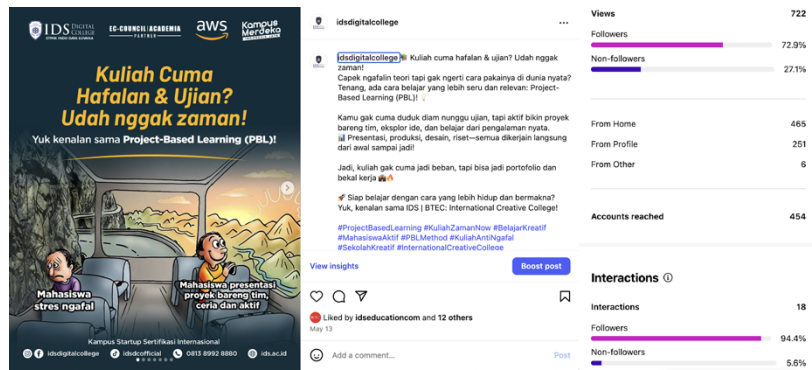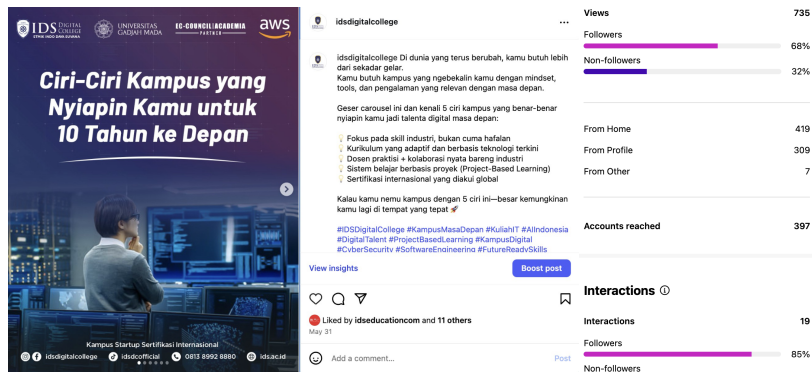
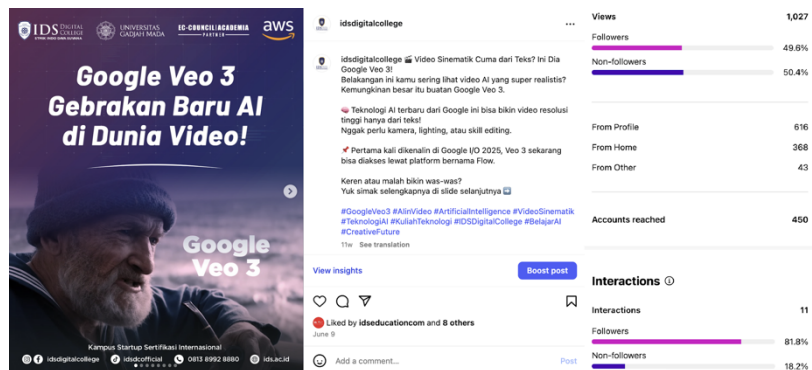**Figure 2. Instagram Post 13 May 2025**

Figure 3. Instagram Post 31 May 2025
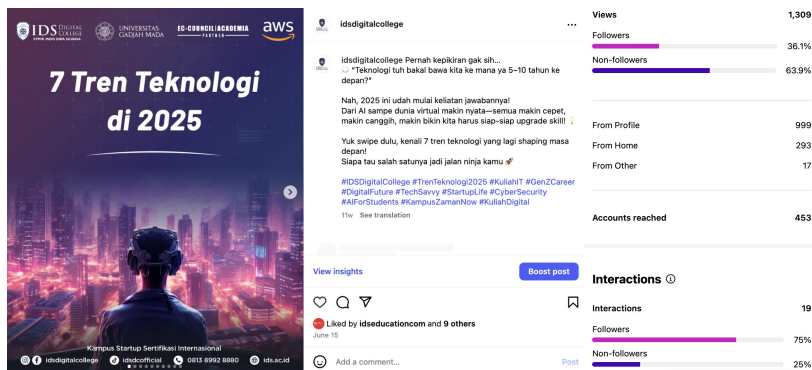

Figure 4. Instagram Post 9 June 2025

Figure 5. Instagram Post 15 June 2025

The strongest response came from student success stories and collaboration partnerships. The post about Ahmad Gaos as a national symposium presenter at the IPB Convention Center (18 July 2025) reached 1,528 accounts, with 2,788 views and 153 interactions. The post about the collaboration transfer program with UGM reached 823 accounts, with 2,333 views and 45 interactions. This indicates that AI branding is most effective when connected to human-centered achievements and collaboration. These findings suggest that IDS Digital College's Instagram strategies resonate with audiences not only for their technological relevance but also for their credibility and emotional connection. Content that highlights student achievements and academic collaboration strengthens institutional trust, as it shows audiences tangible outcomes of the AI curriculum rather than abstract claims. By presenting AI as a supportive and human-centered tool, the institution reduces technological anxiety and positions itself as approachable and reliable. This combination of credibility, relevance, and emotional appeal explains why posts featuring real students and partnerships consistently generate higher engagement than purely informational content.
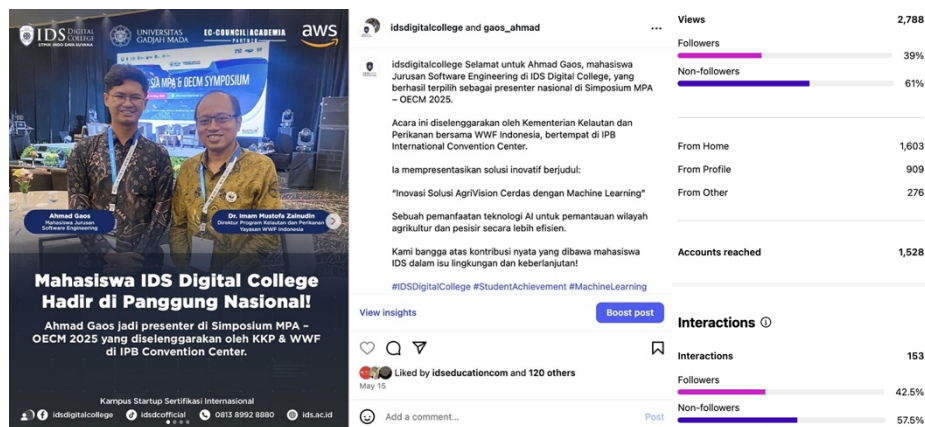

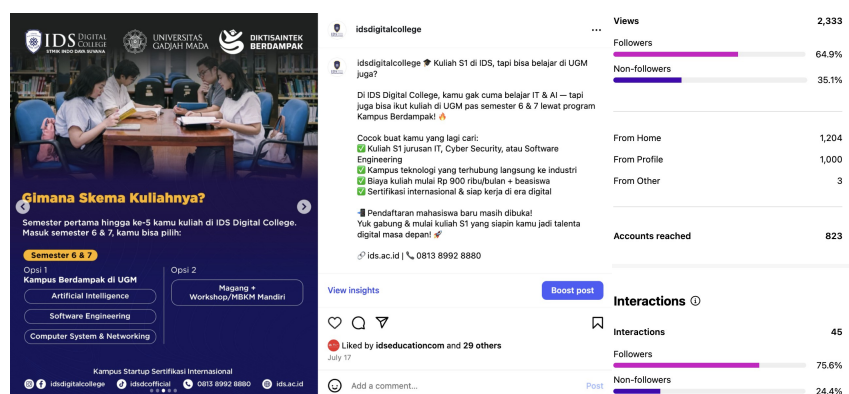**Figure 6. Instagram Post 15 May 2025**

Figure 7. Instagram Post 17 July 2025

Based on the results of these interviews and data analytics from Instagram metrics, we can define eight aspects related to IDS Digital College's communication strategy through Instagram as follows:

Table 1. Eight Aspects of Analysis Findings

Aspects	Key Insight
Background of AI Branding	IDS started to focus on AI theme in mid 2024. By 2025, the AI Campus branding had become more focused. AI Campus branding is the strategic decision for IDS to be different from other higher education institutions.
Content Development Process	The social media team reviews the social media trend, drafts briefs, copywriting and visual design, also publishing with the relevant caption and keywords. Content sources were usually inspired by IDS article blogs, tech portals and online news.
Core Message	AI is a tool to support people, not to threaten them. AI as a friend, not an enemy. It encourages critical thinking and innovation and also strengthens human potential.
Storytelling Approach	Complicated and technical AI topics are simplified into daily conversation. Content is framed to be friendly and humanized to ensure clarity and avoid misinformation.
Academic Support	IDS curriculum has integrated with AI. Collaboration and partnership with UGM allows students in semester 6 or 7 to join the credit transfer program with AI expertise in academics and industries.
Audience Response	Engagement with AI content reached higher performance than other topics. Instagram metrics that were analyzed were views, account reach and interactions (likes, comments, saves). Popular posts were UGM transfer program and student success stories. Some followers even reached out IDS by direct messages.
Challenges	The main challenges were translating technical AI terms into daily conversation for wider audiences. Storytelling must be relevant, consistent and up to date to attract prospective students.
Future Direction	IDS plans to broaden this AI Campus branding across different points of view, such as technology, education, creative industry and innovation.

To provide a clearer overview of how these strategies operate in practice, Table 2 summarizes the key communication approaches and their audience responses. This table highlights the relationship between content themes, strategic objectives, and engagement outcomes observed during the study period.

Table 2. Summary of Instagram Communication Strategies and Audience Response

Content Type	Key Message	Strategic Purpose	Audience Response
AI Trends & Technology	AI as future-ready knowledge	Establish technological relevance	Moderate to high views
Project-Based Learning	Learning through real projects	Academic credibility	Stable engagement
Student Success Stories	Real AI-based achievements	Emotional appeal & trust	Highest reach and interaction
Academic Collaboration (UGM)	Strong institutional partnership	Institutional credibility	High engagement
Soft Skills & Future Skills	AI supports human potential	Human centered positioning	Positive interaction
"AI as a Friend" Narrative	Reduce AI anxiety	Trust building	Strong message recall

All findings indicate that IDS Digital College applies a strategic communication framework on Instagram, aligned with social media branding theory and concepts. First, message consistency is important. The repeated framing of AI as a supportive tool, similar to Freberg's (2018) argument that consistent storytelling will enhance brand values. IDS has consistently highlighted the message that AI is a friend, not an enemy, making technical concepts more accessible while reinforcing IDS's positioning and branding. Second, audience engagement validates the communication strategy. Analytics from Instagram metrics showed that general AI content performed moderately, while posts highlighting student success stories in AI-related content received higher engagement. This also reflects Setiawa et al. (2022), who emphasized that testimonials and original content strengthen trust and brand credibility in higher education institutions. Third, academic credibility in branding. A collaboration partnership with UGM and the integration of AI into the IDS curriculum ensures that communication is not just rhetorical but grounded in substance. This supports Constantinides and Stagno (2023), who stated that sustainable branding in higher education institutions depends on alignment between the communication strategies and academic quality.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings align with brand identity theory, which emphasizes consistency between institutional values, actions, and communication.

IDS Digital College communicates its AI identity not only through visual symbols but through repeated narratives that reflect curriculum innovation and academic quality. This approach also aligns with digital engagement theory, in which interaction, storytelling, and audience participation reinforce meaning-making and trust. Moreover, the integration of academic messaging, visual branding, and audience analytics demonstrates principles of integrated marketing communication, as Instagram functions as a unified platform that connects institutional objectives, content strategy, and public perception.

All these processes can be explained through the conceptual framework (Figure 1). Institutional strategic objectives are to build brand awareness, trust, and engagement, which can drive the Instagram content strategy, supported by consistent visual themes, storytelling, and copywriting. The content itself can generate audience engagement (views, reach, interactions), thereby strengthening strategic objectives by validating IDS Digital College's positioning and branding as an AI campus. In practice, this flow explains why posts about student achievements can generate the highest engagement and reinforce the institutional images. Overall, this study shows that Instagram functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a branding ecosystem, bridging the gap between institutional identity and public perception. By integrating digital storytelling and curriculum innovation, IDS Digital College leverages social media to build a sustainable brand identity as an AI-focused higher education institution.

In summary, the results indicate that an effective Instagram communication strategy needs consistency, originality, and academic alignment. These three elements become the foundation for IDS Digital College's transformation into an AI campus. This study also highlights how social media branding can address enrollment challenges and strengthen long-term institutional branding and positioning.

CONCLUSION

This study examines how STMIK Indo Daya Suvana, as known as IDS Digital College, uses Instagram as a strategic communication platform to build its identity as an AI campus. The findings from both qualitative and quantitative research confirm that Instagram is not only a platform for promotion but also a medium for digital storytelling, audience engagement, and institutional branding.

Qualitative interviews revealed that the Chief of IDS Digital College, program heads, and social media specialists consistently framed AI content as a friend, not an enemy, while aligning communication with curriculum innovation, project-based learning, industry certification, and collaboration partnerships such as the UGM credit transfer program. Quantitative analysis of Instagram performance revealed that content featuring student success stories and collaborations with UGM generated the highest reach and engagement. This content highlights the value of originality and human-centered narratives. Together, these results illustrate that the effectiveness of communication strategies needs consistency, originality, and academic alignment.

Instagram is used as a branding ecosystem, with strategic objectives emphasizing content creation that drives audience engagement and engagement that strengthens institutional positioning. For IDS Digital College, this integrated approach supports its transformation into an AI campus and increases its competitiveness in the higher education sector.

The findings of this study suggest that while the communication strategies are shaped by STMIK IDS's specific context as an AI-focused campus, several elements are transferable to other higher education institutions. Strategies such as consistent messaging, human-centered storytelling, and the alignment between academic practices and digital communication can be applied across different institutional settings. However, the effectiveness of these strategies depends on how well they reflect each institution's unique academic strengths and strategic positioning. Rather than replicating content themes verbatim, institutions should adapt the underlying principles to align with their identity and target audiences.

For communication practitioners in higher education, this study highlights the importance of integrating academic substance into digital branding efforts. Social media teams should work closely with academic leaders to ensure that content reflects real curriculum innovation, partnerships, and student achievements. For policymakers, the findings emphasize the need to support institutional communication strategies that align digital branding with educational transformation. Policies that encourage collaboration between academic units and communication teams can help universities build credible and sustainable digital identities in an increasingly competitive environment. Future research could explore other social media platforms, such as TikTok, YouTube, and X, and track data over a longer period to analyze how digital branding influences student enrollment and institutional reputation simultaneously.

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