

VISUAL AND NARRATIVE CONTENT VARIATION IN BUILDING CONSUMER TRUST: A CASE STUDY OF ECINOS' SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

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Abstract: *This study examines how visual and narrative content variation contributes to consumer trust and purchase intention in local fashion branding. Focusing on Ecinos as a case study, the research explores how promotional content, informative posts, storytelling, and value-driven campaigns operate as communication strategies on social media. This study employs a qualitative single-case study approach grounded in a qualitative constructivist paradigm and supported by descriptive data triangulation. Data were collected through a preliminary perceptual survey involving 55 Instagram users, in-depth interviews with two digital content practitioners and two fashion content creators, and observational analysis of Ecinos' social media content. The survey was used only to identify general audience tendencies and was not intended for inferential or causal claims. The findings indicate that varied content supports trust formation when it combines visual consistency, process transparency, relevant information, and humanized storytelling. Behind-the-scenes content helps reduce audience uncertainty by revealing production processes and product value, while inclusive and socially meaningful narratives foster emotional connection and community identification. The study concludes that, in local fashion branding, social media content design functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a trust-building communication strategy. The findings contribute to visual communication design studies by showing how content variation can transform product-centered communication into a more authentic and relationship-oriented brand experience.*

Keywords: *brand trust; case study; content variation; fashion branding; purchase intention; social media content design; visual narrative*

Introduction

In the post-pandemic digital fashion market, many local fashion brands rely heavily on product-display content, discount announcements, endorse-

ment-based visibility, and repetitive promotional messages. While these strategies may generate short-term attention, they can also create promotional fatigue because audiences encounter similar sales-oriented content across multiple

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brand accounts. This condition creates a challenge for local fashion brands: visibility alone is no longer sufficient to build trust. Brands must also communicate authenticity, product value, and emotional relevance through the design of their social media content (Adya, 2024; Nugroho et al., 2024) (Buditomo, 2024; Wibowo et al., 2021).

In this context, several local fashion brands have begun to shift from purely promotional communication toward more humanized and value-driven content. This shift can be seen through the use of behind-the-scenes production stories, styling education, body positivity messages, personal narratives, and community-oriented language. From a Visual Communication Design perspective, this phenomenon is important because trust is shaped not only by what a brand sells, but also by how the brand designs visual, verbal, and narrative experiences that appear authentic, consistent, and relevant to its audience (Kikelomo Fadilat Anjorin et al., 2024; Sutrisno et al., 2024; Fitriyana et al., 2025).

Previous studies have discussed the relationship between social media marketing, brand trust, and purchase decision (Ruli Kuniawati & Ariyanti, 2024; Yen & Fahlevi, 2023). Other studies have also emphasized storytelling, informative content, and relationship marketing as important elements in digital branding (Hayati et al., 2025; Kikelomo Fadilat Anjorin et al., 2024; Sutrisno et al., 2024). However, many of these studies still approach social media primarily from a marketing effectiveness perspective and pay limited attention to how specific variations of visual and narrative content operate as trust-building mechanisms in local fashion branding. (Hayati et al., 2025; Fajariah, 2025; Diansyah et al., 2025)

Ecinós was selected as the case in this study because the brand demonstrates a

visible departure from purely transactional product promotion. As a local fashion brand, Ecinós communicates through varied social media content that combines product display, behind-the-scenes production narratives, styling education, inclusive messages such as body positivity, community-oriented language such as 'besties,' and soft-selling humor. The brand also shows cross-platform visibility through social media channels such as Instagram, TikTok, and Xiaohongshu, while using direct and comparative communication to differentiate its products from competitors. These characteristics make Ecinós relevant for examining how content variation may contribute to perceived authenticity, credibility, emotional connection, and purchase intention among audiences of local fashion brands (Nugroho et al., 2024; Sutrisno et al., 2024).

Given the complexity of Ecinós' content strategy, which departs from conventional product-centered promotion, this study aims to examine how variations in visual and narrative content contribute to the development of consumer trust and purchase intention. Specifically, this study analyzes how promotional, informative, storytelling, and value-driven content operate as communication mechanisms that shape audience perceptions of authenticity, credibility, and emotional connection. The study is guided by three research questions: (1) How does Ecinós vary its visual and narrative content on social media? (2) How do audiences and practitioners perceive the role of content variation in building consumer trust? (3) How does content variation contribute to purchase intention through trust formation (Ruli Kuniawati & Ariyanti, 2024; Yen & Fahlevi, 2023; Cai et al., 2025)?

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative sin-

gle-case study approach supported by descriptive data triangulation. The study is grounded in a qualitative constructivist paradigm, which views consumer trust and brand perception as meanings constructed through audience interpretation, visual experience, and interaction with brand communication. Therefore, the survey, interviews, and case observation were not positioned as separate quantitative and qualitative strands, but as complementary sources for understanding how content variation operates as a trust-building communication strategy. The preliminary perceptual survey was used only to provide contextual insight into general audience preferences and was not intended to support inferential, causal, or population-level claims (Poth, 2023; Taherdoost, 2022).

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis focused on identifying recurring patterns related to content variation, visual consistency, storytelling, information transparency, perceived authenticity, trust, and purchase intention. The process included familiarization with interview transcripts and Ecinos' social media content, initial coding, theme development, and interpretation of the relationship between audience perception, practitioner insight, and case observation. This approach allows the study to explain how meaning and trust are constructed through visual and narrative communication practices (Braun & Clarke, 2024; Braun & Clarke, 2024).

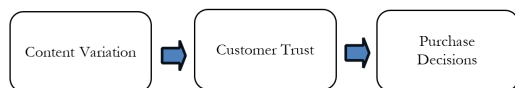


Figure 1. Relationship diagram between variables (Source: author's documentation)

This research was conducted from September to October 2025. Ecinos was selected through purposive case selection because it represents a local fashion brand

that actively combines promotional, informative, storytelling, and value-driven content. The brand was considered relevant because its communication strategy does not rely solely on product display, but also includes behind-the-scenes narratives, styling education, inclusive body-related messages, community-oriented interaction, cross-platform visibility, and direct comparative positioning. These characteristics make Ecinos suitable for examining how content variation works in trust-building communication. A preliminary perceptual survey involving 55 respondents was conducted using Google Forms. Respondents were Instagram users in Indonesia, primarily Surabaya, aged 18-28, who follow or are familiar with local fashion brand accounts. The survey results were treated as descriptive tendencies and were not intended for inferential statistical claims or population-level generalization (Utomo & Wardaya, 2023).

1. Two expert users, practitioners in the field of digital content strategy.
2. Two extreme users, content creators who actively produce and consume fashion content on social media.

The instruments used were a preliminary perceptual questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and case observation of Ecinos' social media content. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale and yes-or-no questions to identify general audience preferences toward promotional, storytelling, informative, and value-driven content. Interviews were used to explore respondents' perspectives on visual elements, communication style, storytelling, transparency, and trust formation. The Ecinos' content observation was used to identify concrete examples of how content variation appears in actual brand communication. The three data sources were then triangulated inductively: the survey provided contextual audi-

ence tendencies, the interviews provided interpretive explanations, and the case observation provided empirical grounding for the analysis.

Result and Discussion

This section integrates the preliminary survey findings, interview insights, and Ecinos case observation. The analysis focuses on three dominant forms of content variation: product promotion, informative content, and storytelling or value-driven narratives. Rather than treating these data sources separately, the discussion explains how audience preferences, practitioner interpretations, and Ecinos' content practices intersect in the formation of trust and purchase intention (Arya et al., 2022; Yulinda & Iskandar, 2023).

Brand Trust

Brand trust is a consumer's belief that a brand is reliable and has good intentions to fulfill promises and serve their interests (Setyawan et al., 2024). As a result, developing enduring relationships between customers and brands depends heavily on brand trust. When customers believe a brand to be genuine, dependable, and consistent, trust develops (Setyawan et al., 2024).

Purchasing Decision

Purchasing decisions are characterized as a complicated process in which people or organizations obtain and combine information and knowledge prior to selecting one of numerous competing goods or services. (Hayati et al., 2025). This occurs when consumers have considered at least two product brand options that can meet their needs (Putri, 2022). The stages of purchasing decisions include pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase, each

of which involves need awareness, transaction, and product evaluation (Regina et al., 2024).

Content Variation

As introduced earlier, Ecinos provides a relevant case of content variation in local fashion branding. The brand balances product promotion with storytelling, educational information, and value-driven communication to support audience trust and engagement. Figure 2 shows how Ecinos presents behind-the-scenes content by displaying the product production process, including material selection, sample creation, quality control, and revision. By revealing these processes, the content does not merely entertain audiences but also reduces uncertainty about product value and brand seriousness. In this way, behind-the-scenes content functions as process transparency that helps audiences understand why the product has value.

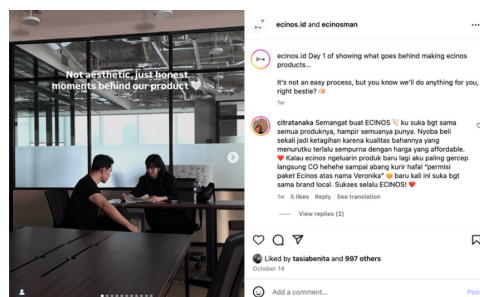


Figure 2. Storytelling behind the scenes (Source: Ecinos, Instagram)



Figure 3. Informative styling tips (Source: Ecinos, Instagram)

Another example can be seen in Figure 3, where Ecinos actively displays social-themed content such as self-confidence and body positivity campaigns. This type of content is more value- and emotion-oriented, rather than simply selling products. The content itself is packaged in a way that doesn't seem discriminatory, such as styling tips. They also often use a more relaxed approach with soft-selling content, as in the example in Figure 4. They leverage existing memes or trends to create relevant and entertaining content.

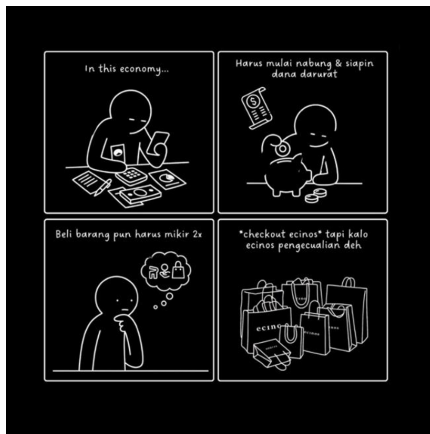


Figure 4. Fun soft selling content (Source: Ecinos, Instagram)

The preliminary perceptual survey involving 55 respondents provides descriptive context for understanding how audiences respond to different types of fashion brand content on Instagram. These findings are not treated as statistical generalization, but as audience tendency data that support the interpretation of the Ecinos case and interview findings.

Apakah kamu pernah membeli produk fashion karena terpengaruh konten di Instagram? 55 responses

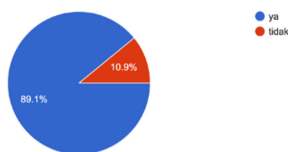


Figure 5. Evidence of respondents' answers (Source: author's documentation)

Based on the results in Figure 5, when asked whether they had ever purchased a fashion product influenced by social media content, 89.1% of respondents answered yes. This indicates that social media visuals and narratives may play an important role in shaping both impulsive and emotionally driven purchase intention.

When given two feed styles to choose from (promotional versus storytelling), 63.6% of respondents preferred storytelling-oriented content, stating that it felt more human and personal. Content featuring behind-the-scenes processes, campaign insights, or styling tutorials made respondents feel closer to the brand than posts that only emphasized selling. These results support the argument that emotional narratives can increase consumer engagement and support long-term trust and loyalty (Hayati et al., 2025).

Seberapa besar pengaruh cerita atau makna di balik campaign terhadap persepsimu pada brand? 55 responses

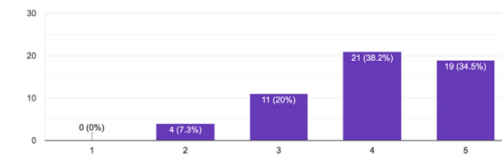


Figure 6. Evidence of respondents' answers (Source: author's documentation)

Furthermore, 74.5% of respondents preferred campaigns with social or emotional meanings, such as self-confidence and body positivity, compared to content that focused solely on the product. Figure 6 also shows that brand storytelling can make a brand appear more authentic. A total of 34.5% of respondents strongly agreed (scale 5) that the message or meaning behind the campaign influenced their perception of brand authenticity, while 38.2% agreed (scale 4). This suggests that storytelling-based campaigns are not only entertaining but also contribute to perceptions of brand integrity, in line with the theory of brand authenticity (Fajariah, 2025).

Integrated Discussion: From Content Variation to Trust Formation

Trust Formation and Purchase Intention

The majority of respondents (94.5%) stated that their purchasing decisions were influenced by trust in the brand. Fur-

thermore, 80% of respondents stated that once they trust a brand, they prefer to re-purchase from that brand even if competitors offer similar prices. These descriptive findings suggest that trust functions as a bridge between content experience and purchase intention, consistent with consumer-brand relationship quality theory (Diansyah et al., 2025). In the Ecinos case, this bridge is built through a combi-

Table 1. Expert interview question
 (Source: author's documentation)

No	Category	Interview Questions
1	Background and Experience	Could you tell me a bit about your role and experience in managing social media content for brands, especially fashion brands?
2		What are your main responsibilities in handling content (visuals, narrative, engagement strategy, or others)?
3		In your view, what is the role of visual content design in building brand identity and image?
4	Design Strategies and Content Variation	How do you differentiate strategies between product promotional content and non-promotional content such as storytelling, tips, or value-based campaigns?
5		Why is content variation important for maintaining relationships with the audience?
6		Have you ever observed a direct impact of content variation on audience engagement or trust? Could you share an example?
7		How much attention do you give to visual aspects such as color, tone, and typography in fostering audience trust?
8	Perceptions of Trust and Relationship	In your opinion, what are the main factors that make a brand's content appear trustworthy to the audience?
9		How do you evaluate the success of content in building trust — through comments, DMs, repeat engagement, or other indicators?
10		Do you observe differences in audience behavior when the content is more humanistic/informative compared to promotional content?
11		In your perspective, what is the ideal balance between aesthetic content, informative content, and sales-driven content on a fashion brand's social media?
12	Professional Challenges and Insights	What is the biggest challenge in maintaining audience trust in the fast-changing social media landscape?
13		Do you see a future trend where brands will increasingly focus on value-driven content (not just promotion)?
14		If you could give advice to a new brand, what are the three main things they should pay attention to in content design to build long-term trust?

nation of product visibility, visual consistency, information transparency, inclusive narratives, and direct audience interaction. (Diansyah et al., 2025)

Interview Insights from Practitioners and Extreme Users

The first expert user is Samuela Yosafa Isabel Anritan, a Brand Strategist with two years of experience in brand communication strategy and digital content design. The second expert user, Michelle Christina, is a former Brand Strategist who now has a career as a wedding content creator, still focusing on storytelling and personal branding in the context of visual social media. Meanwhile, two extreme users are Shienni Susanto and Yesica Suyanti, both active as fashion content creators and fashion enthusiasts who have experience in creating, observing, and interacting with fashion content on Instagram.

From the first interview category, Samuela and Michelle both emphasized that the role of a brand strategist is not limited to producing visually appealing content. A strategist must also develop focused communication between the brand and its target audience. Both informants have experience in digital strategy, content planning, copywriting, and community interaction. Samuela explained that “the human eye is sharp; even small details like color and copywriting can determine whether people want to learn more about a brand.” This supports the idea that visual appearance and verbal tone in the first few seconds can influence whether audiences continue exploring a brand (Hayati et al., 2025).

Then, in the next category, the two differentiate promotional and non-promotional content based on the focus of the message. Promotional content emphasizes product advantages, while non-promotional content focuses on social issues or

audience needs to build emotional relevance. Samuela stated, “Variety is important because trends change rapidly; brands must have consistent content pillars so that audiences know they specialize in a particular field.” Michelle added that storytelling content and educational tips create a sense of “togetherness,” where audiences feel involved and trust the brand. This statement aligns with the theory of content diversification (Sutrisno et al., 2024), which emphasizes that content variation can extend the engagement cycle and strengthen emotional connections with audiences.

Entering the third category, both experts once again agreed that visual elements such as color, tone, and typography, while not the primary pillars, still significantly influence brand credibility. For fashion brands, visual harmony is considered a representation of seriousness and professionalism. Michelle explained that audiences can judge “how serious or high-quality a brand is from its color balance. Because quality can’t be haphazard. Attention to detail is what differentiates a brand.” This reinforces the theory of aesthetic credibility (Fajariah, 2025), which states that perceptions of digital trust are often shaped by aesthetic clarity and visual harmony.

For the next category, both experts believe that “raw” content that showcases the brand’s human side is key to building trust. Samuela cited the trend of brand owners appearing directly in content, such as with brands like Jelita or Skin-game. According to her, “people trust because they see the face and authenticity of the brand owner; there’s a stake in reputation.” According to them, the indicator of content success is no longer the number of followers, but rather engagement rate and meaningful comments from the audience. These findings support the consumer-brand relationship quality theory (Setyawan et al., 2024), where trust is

Table 2. Extreme interview question
(Source: author's documentation)

No	Category	Interview Questions
1	Social Media Habits & Interactions	How often do you use Instagram in a day, and what do you usually use it for?
2		Do you follow fashion brand accounts on social media? Which brands do you follow?
3		What is your main reason for following those brand accounts (content style, design, promotions, brand values, etc.)?
4	Perceptions of Content Types	When viewing a fashion brand's account, what type of content catches your attention first?
5		What is the difference between promotional content and storytelling/informative content?
6		Which one makes you more interested in learning more about the brand?
7		Does content variation help you feel more connected to the brand?
8	Perceptions of Visual Design & Aesthetics	In your view, how important are visual elements (colors, tone, layout, fonts, photography style) in making a brand look professional and trustworthy?
9		Which visual elements make a brand appear trustworthy?
10		How does design aesthetics influence your desire to purchase the brand's products?
11	Trust & Relationship with the Brand	What makes you feel confident in a brand on social media?
12		Can honest and transparent content increase your trust in a brand?
13		How do you know a brand genuinely cares about its audience?
14		If you already trust a brand, are you more likely to buy its products?
15		Would you recommend the brand to others?
16	Reflections & Suggestions	Have you ever felt bored because a brand posts promotional content too often?
17		What type of content makes you feel emotionally connected to a brand?
18		If you could give advice to a local fashion brand, what type of content would be ideal to stay engaging and build trust?

built through emotional interactions and perceptions of authenticity, not just one-way communication.

And in the final category, Samuela and Michelle mentioned that the biggest challenge today is maintaining consistency

and relevance amidst rapidly changing algorithms and trends. According to Samuela, "social media is about the moment; if you're even a little late, you can be left behind." Meanwhile, Michelle believes that going forward, brands must focus

on value-driven content rather than solely promotions. These findings reinforce the research that the success of brand trust is determined not only by the frequency of promotions, but also by narrative continuity, visual honesty, and communication consistency.

In the first category of interviews, both interviewees used Instagram as their primary platform for fashion references and inspiration. As active content creators, they needed to stay updated with current trends. This finding suggests that fashion enthusiasts consume brand content not solely to purchase, but also to gain ideas and inspiration. This supports the theory of consumer engagement through content consumption (Regina et al., 2024), which states that social media users actively engage with brands that provide visual and referential value.

Both interviewees indicated that try-on videos, mix-and-match concepts, and brief yet impactful advertisements were their favored types of material in the second category. According to Yesica, she usually only watches narrative content once she has “fallen in love with the brand,” but Shienni favored content that made decisions easier by clearly displaying costs and discounts. This is consistent with a study. (Arya et al., 2022) which found that consumers respond differently to storytelling and informative content depending on their emotional connection to the brand.

Both interviewees in the third category agreed that content diversity is important, but they also stated that content alone does not automatically create emotional relationships. Yesica noted that positive interaction with the administrator and a satisfying purchasing experience strengthen intimacy with the brand. Meanwhile, behind-the-scenes or creative process content was perceived as a way to improve authenticity. This supports relationship marketing theory (Kikelomo Fadilat An-

jin et al., 2024), which argues that two-way interaction between consumers and brands plays an important role in building emotional attachment. Content variety is therefore important, but it must be supported by customer experience and consistent communication (Kikelomo Fadilat Anjin et al., 2024).

In the fourth category, both interviewees emphasized the importance of visual appearance in building trust. Yesica explained that she can judge a brand owner’s “taste” simply from their brochure design or Instagram feed.

Important markers of a brand’s professionalism include natural tones, consistent colors, and well-composed photography. Shienni argued that aesthetically pleasing images can communicate quality, while brands such as Orgeo appear more down to earth by balancing visual style and brand personality. These findings support the notion of visual coherence in branding (Sutrisno et al., 2024), which states that consistency in color tone and visual style can improve brand memory and credibility on social media.

In the next category, the main factors that build trust for both respondents were transparency, product quality, and human interaction.

Both respondents trusted brands that displayed real testimonials, videos of the production process, or direct involvement from the brand owner. However, Shienni stated that true trust emerges when “the product is in hand,” while Yesica considered transparent content such as “upgraded materials” to be very effective in demonstrating a brand’s concern for customers.

Finally, in the sixth category, both respondents rarely felt bored with promotional content as long as the product and its presentation remained relevant.

Live try-ons, styling advice for differ-

ent body shapes, and mix-and-match ideas were the content types that most strongly created emotional connection. According to both respondents, local brands should highlight product honesty through actual photos, material information, and sizing clarity, feature models with varied body types, and maintain a consistent visual tone and friendly interaction. These interview findings support Hayati et al. (2025), who argue that inclusive and authentic content encourages consumers to perceive brands as more human, thus strengthening trust and purchase intention (Hayati et al., 2025).

The survey, interview, and case observation data were analyzed through descriptive triangulation. The preliminary survey provided contextual information

about audience preferences, the interviews provided interpretive insights from practitioners and active fashion content users, while the Ecinós case observation provided concrete examples of how content variation appears in actual social media practice. Therefore, the findings are not presented as separate quantitative and qualitative results, but as an integrated interpretation of how content variation functions as a trust-building strategy.

Based on this triangulation, Table 3 summarizes how the preliminary survey, Ecinós case observation, and interview insights connect to form an integrated interpretation of trust-building content variation.

The integrated findings indicate that

Table 3. Triangulation of survey, interview, and case observation findings (Source: author's documentation)

Survey Tendency	Triangulated Evidence from Ecinós Observation and Interviews	Integrated Interpretation
89.1% of respondents had purchased fashion products because of social media content.	Ecinós combines product display with styling tips, campaign narratives, and soft-selling content. Practitioners stated that consistent visual content and tone make a brand appear more professional and trustworthy.	Visual and narrative content may trigger purchase intention when it functions as a credibility signal, not only as product exposure.
63.6% of respondents preferred storytelling content over purely promotional content.	Ecinós uses production narratives, behind-the-scenes processes, and humanized captions. Experts explained that storytelling creates a sense of togetherness and authenticity between the brand and its audience.	Storytelling works as a transparency mechanism that reduces uncertainty and supports trust formation.
74.5% of respondents preferred campaigns with social or emotional meanings.	Ecinós uses body positivity, styling inclusivity, and community-oriented language such as 'besties'. Extreme users stated that inclusive and honest communication makes a brand feel more attentive to its audience.	Value-driven content supports emotional relevance and helps transform audiences into a participatory brand community.
94.5% of respondents stated that purchase decisions are influenced by brand trust.	Ecinós displays product processes, testimonials, and direct communication to show product honesty. Interviewees emphasized transparency, real testimonials, and visible brand-owner or admin interaction as trust indicators.	Trust functions as a bridge between content experience and purchase intention.
80% of respondents preferred to repurchase after trusting a brand.	Ecinós maintains repeated audience contact through varied content pillars and community interaction. Respondents noted that friendly interaction, honest communication, and product experience strengthen loyalty.	Long-term relationship is built through visual consistency, process transparency, and humanized communication, not merely through product quality.

content variation is not only a matter of posting different types of content. In the Ecinos case, content variation works as a layered communication strategy: promotional content introduces the product, informative content clarifies product relevance, behind-the-scenes storytelling legitimizes product value, and inclusive narratives help audiences identify with the brand community. This mechanism explains why varied content may support trust formation more effectively than content that is solely sales-oriented.

Conclusion

This study shows that Ecinos' content variation contributes to trust formation through several communication mechanisms. Promotional content introduces product features and maintains product visibility. Informative and styling content helps audiences evaluate product relevance in everyday use. Behind-the-scenes content reduces information asymmetry by showing material selection, production processes, and quality considerations. Meanwhile, inclusive narratives such as body positivity position the brand as more emotionally relevant and community-oriented.

The contribution of this study lies in explaining content variation not merely as a way to increase engagement, but as a layered communication mechanism in local fashion branding. In this mechanism, visual consistency functions as an aesthetic credibility signal, storytelling functions as a transparency device, and value-driven content functions as a bridge between brand identity and audience identification. These mechanisms help explain why audiences may develop stronger trust and purchase intention toward brands that communicate beyond transactional product promotion.

Practically, local fashion brands should

avoid relying exclusively on product-display and discount-based content. Instead, they can develop a balanced content strategy that includes product information, styling education, behind-the-scenes processes, customer interaction, and value-based narratives. For resource-constrained brands, process-based and community-oriented content can become a low-cost trust-building alternative to high-cost endorsement because credibility is developed through transparency rather than borrowed popularity. Brands may also evaluate communication performance beyond likes and follower growth by considering trust-related indicators such as meaningful comments, saved posts, direct messages, repeat purchase behavior, and audience-generated recommendations.

This study is limited by its focus on a single case and a preliminary perceptual survey of 55 respondents. Therefore, the findings should not be generalized to all fashion brands or all social media users. Future research may compare several local fashion brands, expand the number of respondents, or examine other platforms such as TikTok and Xiaohongshu to understand how trust-building content strategies operate across different digital environments.

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