

Article

Entrepreneurial Business on Instagram - the Imperative of Marketing 4.0

Danica Golović¹ and Jovana Gardašević^{1,*}

¹ Faculty of Economics and Engineering Management in Novi Sad, University Business Academy in Novi Sad, Cvećarska 2, 21000 Novi Sad, Serbia

* Correspondence: danica.golovic@fimek.edu.rs

Received: 27 May 2025; Accepted: 5 October 2025

Abstract: The subject of this work is the analysis of the role and importance of the Instagram social network in modern entrepreneurship in the context of Marketing 4.0. The work focuses on the possibilities that Instagram offers as a tool for promotion, brand building and direct communication with consumers. Today, organizations emerge, make changes and disappear from the market scene much more dynamically than we could have imagined a few years ago [1]. The paper explores the role and importance of Instagram as a tool for brand building, communication with consumers and business improvement. Using methods of content analysis, case studies and a review of relevant literature, the strategies of successful entrepreneurs who use Instagram to promote products and services are analyzed. The results show that this platform is an indispensable channel in the implementation of digital marketing. The paper concludes that the presence on the Instagram network is not only a marketing strategy, but also a necessary practice for the success and growth of entrepreneurial ventures in the era of Marketing 4.0. The paper is of an overview character and relies on qualitative analysis and synthesis of the author's existing views, with the use of secondary data sources. The aim of the work is to point out the potential that Instagram offers to future and existing entrepreneurs in order to improve their business and strengthen their market presence. The work is also intended for digital marketers with the aim of helping them define more effective communication strategies with target audiences.

Keywords: *Instagram; entrepreneurship; marketing 4.0; digital marketing; social networks; influencers; targeted advertising; branding; business strategy; digital communication; online sales.*

1. Introduction

Contemporary society is imbued with digital transformation processes that fundamentally change the way individuals, institutions and organizations function, communicate and achieve goals. The digital era has redefined consumer behavior patterns, market structures and the very mechanisms of business.

In this context, social networks are not only a dominant form of everyday communication, but also a key channel for placing information, promoting products and establishing a direct connection with users. Their ubiquity and dynamism make them an indispensable part of the modern marketing environment, especially in the domain of entrepreneurial initiatives. Through these platforms, entrepreneurs and companies can communicate directly with consumers, creating interactive and engaging relationships that increase visibility and expand the market. Social networks enable fast and efficient communication with users, which gives them the opportunity to quickly react to market needs and adjust their strategies [2].

Marketing 4.0 marks the transition from traditional, one-sided marketing to multidirectional, interactive communication between entrepreneurs and consumers in a digital environment. This

approach places the customer in the central focus, viewing him as an active participant who shapes the course of the marketing strategy. The key success factors are becoming consumer trust and loyalty, while digital technologies enable entrepreneurs to reach their target audience and build a personalized relationship based on authenticity, engagement and transparency. Entrepreneurship in the digital age is characterized by flexibility, innovation and the ability to quickly adapt to market changes. Social networks, especially Instagram, open new opportunities for the development and positioning of small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as for individual entrepreneurs who are looking for new ways to reach the market. Due to its visual nature, ease of use, as well as the possibility of two-way communication, Instagram is becoming a key platform for entrepreneurial creativity and digital visibility [3].

The main research question relates to understanding why Instagram has become an indispensable channel in entrepreneurial marketing. To understand this, it is first necessary to define entrepreneurship. As is known, definitions of entrepreneurship are different, and there is no universal definition. Also, entrepreneurship is very often identified with small business, which does not have to be the case [4]. Namely, as Petković [5] states in his book, “not every small business is also entrepreneurial, nor is every business owner an entrepreneur”. Thus, Šumpeter claims that entrepreneurship is much more than just starting a new business. He believes that entrepreneurship refers to truly revolutionary changes in business methods and practices, including the introduction of exceptional new products, production techniques, and organizational approaches [6]. Although this approach sounds idealistic, this nevertheless indicates that, in order to bring about major, so-called. revolutionary changes in business, which bring great profits, entrepreneurs must be prepared to take certain risks. The willingness to take risks was first associated with entrepreneurship by Frank Knight, presenting the concept of uncertainty. According to this concept, an entrepreneur is a person who readily accepts risk and gains profit for the accepted risk, and has the ability to predict some future events that allow him to be more successful than others [7]. Advertising on social networks plays a significant role in achieving success in an increasingly competitive market, especially on the increasingly popular social platform Instagram. Instagram is a social media platform that has rapidly developed from a photo-sharing application to a successful marketing tool. It provides various business opportunities, and its rapid growth helps in presenting business offers [8]. By analyzing the use of this platform for promotion, branding and achieving business goals, one can better understand the strategies that help entrepreneurs achieve success in the digital environment. The aim of this paper is to examine, through a theoretical and methodological framework and a review of contemporary literature, the role and significance of Instagram in the development of entrepreneurial activities. Special emphasis is placed on analyzing the functionality that this social network offers to users with entrepreneurial ambitions, as well as identifying the potential it brings in the era of Marketing 4.0. This opens up space for understanding the broader impact of digital tools on contemporary entrepreneurial models.

2. Materials and Methods

In accordance with the aim of the work – examining the potential and functionality of Instagram as a tool for the development of entrepreneurial activities – a qualitative research with elements of descriptive analysis was conducted. This approach enabled a deeper understanding of the practices and experiences of entrepreneurs who use Instagram in their daily business, with a special emphasis on the strategic, communication and marketing aspects of their digital presence.

3. Results

Marketing 4.0 represents the evolution of marketing strategies in the digital age, combining traditional methods with innovative digital approaches. This concept emphasizes the importance of integrating technology and social media into marketing activities to achieve greater connectivity with consumers. The era of experience and Marketing 4.0 were created to merge and change the dialogue between marketers and customers [9]. Industry 4.0. The marketing process is evolving in parallel

with technology. Accordingly, the number of studies based on Marketing 4.0 is growing day by day [10].

3.1. *The evolution of marketing strategies in the digital age*

One of the fundamental aspects of effective communication through social networks is to understand the motives that lead consumers to use them. Key motives are related to the need for information, social interaction and expression of personal identity, which directly affects the design of entrepreneurial content. When communication is authentic and aligned with the psychological needs of users, engagement and loyalty increase significantly. Within Instagram, this is manifested through interactive and visually appealing content, with quick response to users [11]. From the perspective of social media users, social media platforms allow consumers to socialize with others, search or exchange information and express their love or hate for the brand. Moreover, businesses usually thrive on social media by sharing information and communicating with new and existing customers [12].

Communicating with consumers through social media is a key factor in building long-term relationships and increasing loyalty. Research shows that salespeople's communication skills have a significant impact on consumer satisfaction. The satisfaction that results from these interactions becomes a key mediator between communication skills and consumer loyalty, which further affects business efficiency and competitiveness [13].

In the modern context of Marketing 4.0, consumers have become key players in shaping brand strategies, using social networks and digital platforms to directly influence brands. This change in market dynamics is forcing companies to adapt their approaches, directing resources towards analytical tools such as Big Data, CRM systems and marketing automation to personalize communication with consumers. The integration of these technologies not only improves interaction with customers, but also enables predictability of their behavior through machine learning, which is essential for sustainability in a hypercompetitive environment. Key aspects include customer satisfaction, customer retention, customer profiling and reward systems, which are essential for the effective implementation of marketing strategies [14].

In order for marketing strategies to be functional and successful, it is necessary to know how to use their key factors to create a successful marketing campaign. The key factors are the necessity of understanding various social networks and the way they function, knowing the motives for using social networks by users, and understanding their preferences [11].

A special place in recent literature is occupied by works that deal with the specific role of Instagram in the processes of branding and promotion. The visual character of this platform, along with the possibilities of two-way interaction and creating narratives through content, makes it suitable for the development of the so-called. digital storytelling approach.

The digital transformation of business has significantly redefined the relationship between companies and consumers, with social networks becoming indispensable communication channels and tools for market positioning. Initial insight into the changes brought about by online media in user behavior and marketing practices was provided in the work of Budden et al. [15], who recognize digital media as revolutionary instruments of marketing interaction, especially among the younger population. These findings build on the concept of Marketing 4.0 developed by Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan [3], indicating a shift from traditional to digital forms of communication, emphasizing the importance of connecting and engaging consumers in the online environment.

Authors such as Šapić, Kocić, and Savić [13], emphasize the importance of communication skills in the sales process and maintaining customer loyalty, which becomes especially important in the digital context. In this light, Gardašević et al. [16] contribute to understanding the motives for using social networks, emphasizing their importance in improving business communication and developing female entrepreneurship. Additionally, research by Gardašević and Čenejac [17] points to the strategic role of social networks in marketing, while Brkić et al. [18] analyze the use of digital tools in improving the competitiveness of traditional products.

3.2. Social networks as part of the digital marketing ecosystem

The emergence of the industrial revolution 4.0, which is often identified with the terms fourth industrial revolution, digital smart revolution, digital economy, new or internet economy, refers to the economy of knowledge, innovation and information, i.e. an economy in which the human brain, and not just his hands, become the most important element for the growth and development of a company [19].

The development of the digital economy requires an appropriate infrastructure that includes the following segments: [20] physical-technological, institutional-normative, educational, security and business-entrepreneurial infrastructure. The further path of digital transformation leads to the construction of digital platforms created through the mutual collaboration of numerous and networked stakeholders in the joint creation and delivery of value [21].

By social networks we mean electronic platforms on which users can create personal profiles, create, share and exchange information with other users in the virtual community to which they belong [22].

Numerous authors point out that social networks have become a dominant tool within marketing strategies in the modern business environment, occupying a central place in the interaction between companies and users. Their role goes beyond the boundaries of traditional marketing, as their application can be observed in almost all aspects of business, including sales, public relations, market research and brand building. In addition to being a business instrument, social networks are increasingly viewed as a multidimensional phenomenon – social, cultural, technological and economic – as they reshape communication and interaction patterns in the digital age [17].

By using visual storytelling, authentic narratives and direct audience engagement, local brands manage to overcome limitations in distribution and building market identity. Increasing visibility and strengthening emotional connections with consumers are key effects of this approach, especially significant within modern marketing models oriented towards the consumer experience [18]. In the contemporary context, the boundaries between the real and virtual worlds are becoming increasingly blurred, and interactions that were once exclusively part of physical reality are increasingly moving into the digital space. As a result, online communities are forming that function as new spaces of socialization and exchange, where users actively participate in generating content and shaping public discourse. These platforms allow users to connect, exchange information, share knowledge, and foster intercultural dialogue [15].

Through the opportunities offered by social networks, modern consumers are no longer passive recipients of information, but become active participants in the process of information, evaluation and decision-making. They use digital channels to communicate with each other, exchange impressions and opinions about products and services, evaluate business through comments and ratings on websites, and shape the reputation of companies in the digital sphere.

GWI (formerly known as GlobalWebIndex) is a renowned international research company that provides data on consumer behavior on the Internet and social networks. Their reports are widely used in academic and business analyses because they are based on extensive surveys conducted among Internet users around the world. They collaborate with the DataReportal platform, through which they publish detailed digital reviews by country and globally [23]. Based on the latest Digital 2025 Global Overview report from the DataReportal platform, the global digital population is recording significant growth. According to their latest data, more than two-thirds of the world's population uses the internet, and more than 60% are active on social networks [23]:

- The number of mobile phone users is 5.78 billion, or 70.5% of the total population,
- The number of Internet users has reached 5.56 billion, which is 67.9% of the world's population,
- Social media users number 5.24 billion, Figure 1, which represents 63.9% of the world's population.



Figure 1. Overview of the total population using connected devices and services Feb.2025.

According to the latest data from GWI, 55.8% of internet users, Figure 2, over the age of 16, make purchases online every week. Today, more people make purchases on mobile devices than on desktops and laptops, but computers still play an important role in online shopping habits, especially in North America and Europe. Total online consumer spending in 2024 reached \$4.12 trillion, with global e-commerce spending growing by 14.6% compared to 2023.



Figure 2. Online shopping activities, on a weekly basis.

These trends clearly indicate the increasing dependence of businesses on their online presence and the need to adapt to digital communication channels in order to remain competitive in the global market.

4. Discussion

In the modern business environment, there is almost no organization that is not present on at least one social network. Social networks have become key channels of two-way communication with consumers, as well as effective tools for implementing viral marketing strategies. Among them, Instagram stands out in particular, which, thanks to its global reach and visually oriented content, occupies a significant place in digital promotion and branding of companies [24]. Instagram provides features that allow influencers to promote products and services by publishing images, short videos and stories along with descriptions [25]. Instagram has been downloaded 3.8 billion times, making it the fourth most downloaded application.

Instagram was launched in October 2010, Figure 3, as a simple photo sharing application, but it quickly became one of the most influential digital channels for communication and promotion. Rapid growth attracted the attention of major technology companies, and Facebook acquired Instagram for \$1 billion in 2012, recognizing its potential as a key platform for visual marketing. With its acquisition by Meta (then Facebook Inc.) in 2012, Instagram underwent a series of functional and strategic transformations that positioned it as a key platform for personal expression, but also for business visibility.



Figure 3. Time spent on Instagram in a day.

Key moments in Instagram's development include its acquisitions and expansion of functionality, but also its transformation into a platform that today offers much more than simple photo sharing [26]. One of the key elements that set Instagram apart from other platforms was a set of filters that allowed users to give their photos an artistic touch, which quickly made the platform popular among photography enthusiasts.

Over the past few years, Instagram's revenue has increased rapidly. This happened because the pandemic attracted more users and brands to join the platform. Today, Instagram has over two billion monthly active users, and its potential for business activities is especially evident in the context of small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, influencers, digital creators, and emerging brands. Basic statistics related to Instagram are [27]:

- Since 2024, Instagram has emerged as a popular social platform. Most of its features are known to come and go at a dizzying rate,
- Instagram has over 2.1 billion monthly active users as of January 14, 2025,
- India leads with 385+ million users, the most in the world,
- 49% of Instagram users are women,
- 62% of global users fall into the 18-34 age group,
- 166 million Instagram users are counted in the US alone, American adults spend 33 minutes a day on Instagram,
- 70% of shoppers turn to Instagram when deciding on their next purchase,
- In 2022, Instagram earned an estimated \$51.5 billion in revenue, Figure 4.

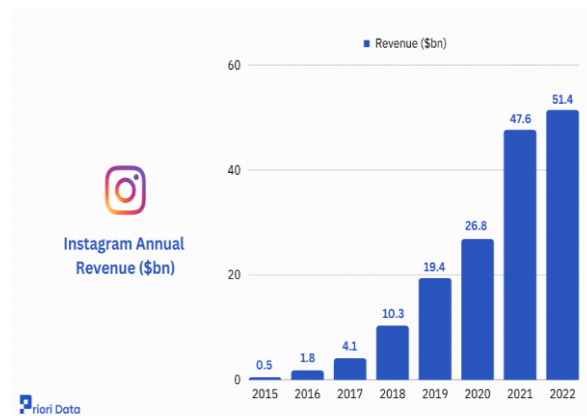


Figure 4. Instagram's annual revenue.

The use of social networks in the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector has become an increasingly present topic in academic circles in recent years. Numerous studies confirm that digital platforms, especially social networks, allow SME sectors greater flexibility, more direct communication with customers and a more economical approach to the promotion of products and services. In this context, social networks are most often seen as tools for building relationships with customers, increasing visibility and strengthening market identity.

The role of Instagram is evident as an indicator in the development of female entrepreneurship. That effectiveness is reflected in its potential to serve as an affordable channel for promotion, networking and sales. Businesses who use it have greater audience engagement, greater loyalty, and clearer feedback that they use to improve strategies. A special value is brought by the presence of a personal story and an emotional connection with the product, which often proves to be a crucial differentiator on the market [16].

The digital competitiveness of traditional manufacturers also relies heavily on social networks.

Instagram as a platform enables multiple ways of engaging consumers through visually attractive formats such as Story, Reels, IGTV, as well as direct purchase options through the Shop function. These capabilities allow entrepreneurs to create an authentic brand narrative and establish direct communication with their target group. An increasing number of entrepreneurs use promotion on the Instagram platform, not only for the purpose of promotion, but also for the overall positioning of products and services, including sales through comments, messages and swipe-up links. This practice confirms that Instagram has transformed from a social network into a multifunctional tool for digital marketing and small business growth [28].

- Story - is a format of short-term content that is available 24 hours a day, and allows the publication of photos, videos, polls, quizzes, "swipe-up" links and other interactive elements. This form is used for quick and direct communication with the audience, it encourages urgency and the everyday presence of the brand in the user's mind. For marketers, Stories offer a number of possibilities, including sharing current events, announcements and promotions. Given that Stories have a high engagement rate, brands use them to create urgency and prompt audiences to take action, such as clicking on an affiliate link or direct message [29].
- Reels - allows users to create and share dynamic, short video clips with a variety of music, visual and editing effects. This format has proven to be highly viral and suitable for organic growth and expansion of content visibility, especially among younger audiences.
- IGTV (Instagram TV) - is intended for the publication of longer video formats (over 60 seconds), which opens up space for more detailed presentation of products, educational series, interview formats or behind-the-scenes content. IGTV enables deeper narrative communication between brand and audience.

- Shop function (Instagram store) - integrates e-commerce within the application itself. Through product tags in posts, stories and Reels content, users can click to get more information about the product, view the price and make a purchase without leaving the platform. This functionality enables the conversion of traffic directly into sales, thereby shortening the sales path and increasing the effectiveness of digital marketing [28].

By combining the above tools, Instagram allows companies to shape a multi-channel and visually rich presence strategy, which contributes to the creation of brand loyalty, increased visibility and direct monetization of online presence. That's why Instagram is increasingly being used not only to showcase products, but also to communicate brand values, build an emotional connection with the audience, and differentiate in an oversaturated market. Finally, Instagram ranked sixth among the most valuable media brands in the world in 2023 [30].

5. Conclusions

From the aspect of small and medium enterprises, Ostojić, Ilić and Damnjanović [2] underline the importance of social networks for the promotion and visibility of entrepreneurial activities. In this regard, the work of Kaplan and Haenlein [31] lays the theoretical foundations for understanding social networks as complex communication spaces that offer both challenges and opportunities for brands. In modern digital marketing, as stated by Tuten and Solomon [32], platforms like Instagram are becoming crucial for shaping relationships with the target audience through personalized and visually attractive content.

A special contribution to this domain is provided by works dealing with the concrete application of Instagram in entrepreneurial practices. Guta [28] describes how small businesses use Instagram to build a brand, while Novaković and Beraha [24] point to the positive effects of this network in the art sector in Serbia. Kaur et al. [14] further shed light on contemporary trends in Marketing 4.0, including the role of technology and social networks in the automation and personalization of marketing strategies.

Statistical data on the use of social networks further confirm their increasing importance in the entrepreneurial environment. According to the latest reports, Instagram has more than two billion monthly active users [33], while the DataReportal report [23] indicates a constant growth of digital connectivity in a global context.

Based on the reviewed literature, it can be concluded that Instagram, as part of the wider ecosystem of social networks, represents an important channel of digital marketing in entrepreneurship, with a special potential for the development of small businesses, personal brands and innovative business models in the era of Marketing 4.0.

The literature synthesis indicates that entrepreneurs most often use functionalities such as visually attractive posts, Instagram stories, real-time announcements, as well as direct communication through messages and comments. These features enable authentic presentation of products and services, rapid dissemination of information and creation of real-time relationships with consumers. Precisely thanks to such dynamics, Instagram proves to be particularly useful in the early stages of business development, when visibility, access to the target audience and credibility are of crucial importance.

In the later stages of business growth, Instagram is used to strengthen the brand, differentiate in the market and develop a community of loyal consumers. However, despite the many advantages, certain challenges have been identified that accompany the use of this platform, especially in the context of small and medium-sized enterprises. Among the most pronounced limitations are the lack of professional capacities for managing digital marketing, the volatility of algorithms, the growth of advertising costs and the limited reach of posts without paid promotions.

In the context of modern entrepreneurship, Instagram is not just another communication channel, but is becoming a key infrastructural element of a digital presence strategy. Its ability to combine visual presentation, narrative dimension and interactivity in one format makes it an ideal

tool for operationalizing Marketing 4.0 principles. Entrepreneurs who manage to integrate Instagram into their business models in a way that is creative, consistent and strategic not only improve sales, but build long-term relationships with their users, integrating a certain level of emotional relationships. In this sense, the use of Instagram is not only a choice, but becomes a market imperative - both in theory and in the practice of modern business.

Instagram is becoming an indispensable tool for entrepreneurs who want to align their strategies with the needs of modern consumers, who are looking for authenticity, interactivity and value. In the context of Marketing 4.0, Instagram allows entrepreneurs to move from traditional methods of communication to dynamic, engaging, digital strategies that not only increase sales, but also create loyal communities of consumers. Understanding the principles of Instagram marketing, as well as the strategic use of all available tools, are becoming key to success in today's entrepreneurial environment. One of the key success factors is the proper use of Instagram's algorithmic strengths, which favor content with high engagement.

The inclusion of Instagram in online sales brings numerous advantages: greater reach, interactive communication, the possibility of targeting through ads, cooperation with influencers, as well as strengthening the brand through authentic content. For entrepreneurs, especially those from the SME sector, Instagram provides an affordable and powerful tool for business development in the digital sphere.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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