

## **THE POWER OF TEMPORARY CONTENT: ANALYZING EPHEMERAL MARKETING'S ROLE IN BUILDING ENGAGEMENT AMONG ART FUSION'S FOLLOWERS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The rapid evolution of the digital landscape compels businesses to innovate through creative marketing strategies. One of the most compelling trends is *ephemeral marketing* short-lived content such as *Instagram Stories* that fosters spontaneous and authentic interaction. This study aims to examine the influence of *Ephemeral Marketing Exposure* on *Customer Engagement* among Instagram followers of Art Fusion, a creative industry SME. Using a quantitative explanatory approach, the study involved 186 respondents drawn from a population of 3,548 followers, determined using the Isaac & Michael table with a 7% margin of error. Data were collected through an online Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using simple linear regression via SPSS. The findings reveal that *Ephemeral Marketing* has a positive and significant impact on *Customer Engagement* ( $R = 0.864$ ;  $R^2 = 0.746$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that 74.6% of engagement variation is explained by ephemeral content exposure. These results highlight that authentic, time-limited content can strengthen emotional bonds, enhance digital connections, and stimulate active participation between customers and brands. This study provides practical insights for creative SMEs to design adaptive, sustainable, and high-engagement content strategies in today's competitive digital innovation era.

**Keywords:** ephemeral marketing; customer engagement; digital innovation; social media; creative SMEs

### **INTRODUCTION**

The digital transformation era has profoundly reshaped how businesses communicate, connect, and co-create value with their audiences. The proliferation of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat has shifted marketing from a persuasion-based broadcasting model to an interactive, experience-driven approach that emphasizes real-time participation and authenticity (We Are Social, 2024). In this dynamic environment, consumers no longer act as passive recipients of information but as co-creators of brand meaning through constant digital interaction.

One of the most transformative innovations in this context is ephemeral marketing short-lived digital content such as Instagram Stories or TikTok Reels that vanish within 24 hours. This marketing approach leverages immediacy, scarcity, and authenticity to evoke emotional responses and stimulate user engagement (Hinsch et al., 2020; Alalwan, 2023). Temporary content triggers the psychological mechanism of *Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)*, compelling users to respond quickly before the content disappears (Mendelsohn, 2021). Recent empirical studies confirm that ephemeral media formats outperform permanent posts in fostering real-time interaction, emotional closeness, and perceived brand intimacy (Zhao & Wu, 2022; Kim et al., 2024).

From a theoretical standpoint, ephemeral content can be explained through the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model, where short-lived and visually stimulating content acts as a *stimulus* that elicits internal cognitive and affective reactions (*organism*), leading to behavioral engagement outcomes such as liking, commenting, or sharing (Brodie et al., 2011; Dessart, 2020). Furthermore, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2020) offers a psychological lens to explain why ephemeral content effectively sustains engagement: users experience autonomy through participation, competence through creative interaction, and relatedness through social connection. Collectively, these mechanisms reinforce emotional attachment and active involvement, crucial components of digital customer engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2019).

Despite its growing importance, the state of current research reveals a significant *gap* in understanding how ephemeral marketing functions within creative small and medium enterprises (SMEs), particularly in emerging economies. Previous research has predominantly focused on large-scale brands or e-commerce sectors (Pentina et al., 2021; Towner & Lego, 2022), leaving limited empirical exploration of how smaller, creative-based enterprises utilize ephemeral strategies to build sustainable engagement. In Indonesia, creative SMEs such as art studios, craft businesses, and design workshops rely heavily on Instagram and other visual platforms to reach audiences, yet engagement levels fluctuate unpredictably (Pradana & Setiawan, 2024). This inconsistency suggests that exposure alone may not guarantee meaningful interaction, highlighting the need to understand the psychological and strategic mechanisms that drive engagement in this specific sector.

Thus, the novelty of this study lies in extending the theoretical and empirical understanding of ephemeral marketing within the context of creative SMEs, focusing on *Art Fusion Workshop* as a case representing

Indonesia's growing creative economy. Unlike prior research centered on global corporations, this study provides localized insight into how ephemeral marketing stimulates engagement through authenticity and immediacy in a small-scale, community-oriented setting.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine the effect of Ephemeral Marketing Exposure on Customer Engagement among followers of Art Fusion's Instagram account. By doing so, it contributes to the discourse on digital innovation, sustainable marketing, and consumer psychology within the creative industry ecosystem.

## METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a verificative and explanatory paradigm to analyze the effect of Ephemeral Marketing Exposure on Customer Engagement among followers of Art Fusion's official Instagram account, a creative small enterprise in Indonesia. The population consisted of all 3,548 followers of Art Fusion's Instagram account as of March 2025. Based on the Isaac and Michael sampling table at a 10% error level, the minimum sample size required was 186 respondents. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with inclusion criteria specifying respondents who actively viewed or interacted with Art Fusion's ephemeral content (e.g., Instagram Stories, Reels, or temporary promotional posts). The research instrument was an online questionnaire distributed via Google Form, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). The questionnaire consisted of two main constructs: Ephemeral Marketing Exposure, measured through 7 indicators adapted from previous studies (Hinsch et al., 2020; Alalwan, 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2022), covering aspects of authenticity, urgency, interactivity, visual appeal, and perceived relevance. Customer Engagement, measured through 6 items adopted from Brodie et al. (2011) and Dessart (2020), reflecting cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement dimensions.

Validity testing was carried out using *expert judgment* and the item-total correlation method with a minimum corrected correlation value of  $\geq 0.30$  (Rönkkö & Cho, 2022). Reliability testing employed Cronbach's Alpha  $\geq 0.70$ , indicating that all constructs were internally consistent (Taber, 2018). Data analysis was performed using simple linear regression (OLS) with the assistance of SPSS version 26.0 to examine the direct effect of Ephemeral Marketing Exposure on Customer Engagement. The model's goodness-of-fit and statistical significance were evaluated using t-tests and p-values ( $< 0.05$ ) as the decision basis. This analytical technique was chosen because it effectively explains the causal relationship between exposure to ephemeral content and consumer engagement behavior in social media-based creative enterprises (Pentina et al., 2021; Zhao & Wu, 2022).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.

The simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of **Ephemeral Marketing Exposure** on **Customer Engagement** among Instagram followers of **Art Fusion Workshop**. The statistical output is presented in the following tables.

Table 1. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.864	0.746	0.745	2.951

Table 2. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	4786.528	1	4786.528	549.614	<0.001
Residual	1628.562	187	8.709		
Total	6415.090	188			

Table 3. Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-2.097	1.112		-1.886	0.061
Ephemeral Marketing	1.059	0.045	0.864	23.444	<0.001

The results of the simple linear regression indicate that Ephemeral Marketing Exposure has a strong and significant positive effect on Customer Engagement ( $R = 0.864$ ;  $R^2 = 0.746$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This implies that 74.6% of the variance in engagement among Art Fusion's Instagram followers can be explained by their exposure to ephemeral content. These results confirm that temporary, time-sensitive digital formats are not merely aesthetic elements but serve as powerful behavioral stimuli that enhance user interaction, emotional connection, and brand participation. From a theoretical perspective, these findings strongly support the Stimulus–Organism–Response

(S–O–R) model (Brodie et al., 2011; Dessart, 2020). In this framework, ephemeral content characterized by its immediacy, interactivity, and limited lifespan acts as an external stimulus that triggers cognitive and affective responses (the organism), which subsequently translate into observable engagement behaviors such as liking, commenting, and sharing. The high regression coefficient ( $\beta = 0.864$ ) empirically validates that followers who are more frequently exposed to such stimuli tend to develop stronger emotional and participatory responses toward the brand.

Ephemeral marketing operates within the logic of the attention economy, where consumer focus functions as a scarce and highly contested resource (Davenport & Beck, 2023). In this environment, immediacy and scarcity become central psychological drivers. Short-lived content leverages the *Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)* effect, a mechanism that pushes users to interact quickly before opportunities vanish (Mendelsohn, 2021; Alalwan, 2023). For Art Fusion's audience dominated by Gen Z and millennial consumers accustomed to fast-paced digital experiences this urgency fosters spontaneous reactions such as replying to stories, participating in polls, or sharing temporary posts, creating an ecosystem of real-time engagement and emotional responsiveness.

Beyond immediacy, ephemeral content enhances authenticity and emotional proximity, dimensions increasingly valued in digital interactions. Unlike permanent or overly curated posts, temporary stories are perceived as raw, spontaneous, and relatable, reinforcing the perception of brand sincerity (Zhao & Wu, 2022). This dynamic aligns with the Parasocial Interaction Theory, which explains how audiences form one-sided yet emotionally meaningful relationships with content creators or brands through repeated, informal communication (Kim et al., 2024). For creative SMEs like Art Fusion, showcasing behind-the-scenes processes, daily creative activities, or unfiltered workshop moments helps to humanize the brand, creating an intimate digital space where followers feel personally connected.

The psychological mechanisms behind these behaviors can further be explained through the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2020), which posits that engagement increases when three intrinsic needs autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled. Interactive ephemeral features such as polls, Q&A sessions, or countdowns allow users to make autonomous choices, demonstrate participation, and feel relationally connected to the brand. This intrinsic motivation sustains engagement beyond superficial reactions, transforming passive viewing into active contribution.

These results also expand upon Engagement Marketing Theory, which defines engagement as a co-created, affective, and participatory process between consumers and brands (Hollebeek et al., 2019; Hollebeek & Macky, 2024). Ephemeral content, by promoting immediacy and emotional authenticity, facilitates this co-creation process, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with limited advertising budgets. Rather than competing on scale, creative SMEs like Art Fusion can leverage temporary yet meaningful digital interactions to cultivate community involvement and emotional loyalty.

Comparatively, this study strengthens and extends the body of literature that previously focused on large corporations or e-commerce contexts (Pentina et al., 2021; Towner & Lego, 2022). The findings demonstrate that ephemeral marketing serves as a democratizing tool for digital engagement, allowing smaller creative enterprises to achieve comparable emotional impact and audience connection. This constitutes a novel empirical contribution, showing that psychological and engagement mechanisms traditionally observed in global marketing environments are equally effective in localized, creative SME ecosystems. In summary, the regression analysis and theoretical synthesis confirm that ephemeral marketing exposure significantly enhances customer engagement through the interplay of psychological immediacy, emotional authenticity, and interactive storytelling. These dynamics validate the relevance of S–O–R, SDT, and Engagement Marketing frameworks in explaining modern digital behavior. For creative SMEs, this indicates that sustainable engagement can be achieved through consistent, authentic, and participatory use of ephemeral content, enabling them to build emotional equity and community-based competitiveness in the evolving digital economy.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study confirm that Ephemeral Marketing Exposure significantly enhances Customer Engagement, supporting the hypothesis that short-lived, authentic, and interactive content strengthens consumers' emotional and behavioral connections with creative brands. Beyond statistical validation, this research contributes a deeper understanding of how immediacy, scarcity, and authenticity operate as psychological mechanisms that transform digital interactions into meaningful engagement within the creative SME context. These results emphasize that ephemeral marketing functions not merely as a promotional tool but as a sustainable engagement strategy that nurtures community participation and brand loyalty in the digital attention economy. Future research should extend this model by integrating moderating factors such as content interactivity, brand authenticity, or AI-driven personalization to further explore how temporal digital experiences influence long-term customer relationships across diverse cultural and industrial settings.

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