

Utilizing TikTok for Digital Branding in Construction: A Case Study of Havana Sulung

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the digital branding potential of Mitra Havana Sulung Mandiri, a construction service company in East Java, through the use of TikTok as a promotional platform. The construction industry is traditionally slow in adopting digital media, making this study relevant in exploring new communication strategies. Using observations and interviews, the study identifies the company's visual strengths—such as project progress updates, before-after visuals, and client testimonials—as effective content for short-form video storytelling. However, internal challenges include limited digital literacy, lack of content production tools, and the absence of standard procedures. External barriers such as skepticism toward social media marketing in the construction field and algorithm changes on TikTok also hinder adoption. Thematic analysis reveals three key needs: utilizing existing visual assets effectively, improving digital skills through internal training, and developing a culture that supports digital transformation. As an initial solution, the study proposes a basic strategy involving educational and behind-the-scenes videos, a simple content production guide, and a 30-day content campaign to test engagement. Collaboration with local creators is also suggested to increase reach. The findings support previous research on the role of short-form video in enhancing brand awareness and trust, particularly in service-based and traditionally conservative industries.

INTRODUCTION

Digitalization has become a key pillar in the transformation of modern business strategies, where the integration of information and communication technologies into marketing processes is essential for companies aiming to remain competitive (Gregori, ..., and 2015 n.d.; Nabant and Aydin 2023; Telukdarie et al. n.d.). In the construction services sector, the need for digital transformation is becoming increasingly urgent due to shifts in consumer behavior, where consumers are now more proactive in seeking information and engaging online. Social media plays a crucial role in fostering direct, fast, and personal connections between brands and consumers (Aeni and Ekhsan 2020; Fellanny and Paramita 2023; Fitri and Dwiyantri 2021; Krisdanu and Sumantri 2023; MEDVEDIEVA 2023; Sari, Sholihah, and Masali 2023; Sofiko Tevdoradze and Nino Bakradze 2023; Solem and Pedersen 2016). One platform that has recently stood out is TikTok, which, through its content distribution algorithm, enables broad and rapid audience reach (Dinda et al. 2024; Dzalila and Amalia 2023; Fitri and Dwiyantri 2021; Krisdanu and Sumantri 2023; Sheila and Mulyana 2025). This platform is considered effective in building brand awareness, particularly among digital-native generations.

Havana Sulung Mandiri, a company engaged in contractor and building services, recognizes the importance of adapting to these digital changes. To date, its marketing strategies have remained conventional and have not fully leveraged the potential of social media. The company aims to enhance its brand visibility to a broader market, especially targeting younger generations and professionals active on digital platforms (Dinda et al. 2024), (Aeni and Ekhsan 2020; Fellanny and Paramita 2023; MEDVEDIEVA 2023; Sari et al. 2023; Setiawan, Dimas; Pamungkas 2024; Sofiko Tevdoradze and Nino Bakradze 2023). This initiative arises from the company's limited ability to reach consumers online, particularly in the face of competitors who have already established a strong presence on social media. However, several internal challenges exist, including limited human resources with digital marketing competencies, the absence of a structured content strategy, and low social media literacy within the company. These challenges align with findings from previous studies, which note that the primary barriers to adopting digital marketing in traditional business sectors are a lack of internal readiness and limited technological understanding.

The main issue faced by Havana Sulung Mandiri is the suboptimal implementation of its digital marketing system. The company does not yet have professionally managed official social media channels and has not utilized TikTok as a brand communication tool. As a result, its reach to digital target markets remains low, as does direct interaction with potential customers. Nevertheless, the company has demonstrated initial interest in leveraging TikTok, given the platform's growing popularity in Indonesia. Previous research shows that TikTok can significantly increase engagement and brand recall, especially when combined with strong and consistent storytelling.

Given this background, this study aims to explore Havana Sulung Mandiri's internal readiness for digital branding transformation via TikTok, as well as to identify the potential and challenges that may arise during the



process. This is an exploratory qualitative study intended to provide initial insights for other construction service companies considering similar digital branding strategies. Moreover, this research seeks to contribute to academic literature by addressing the relatively unexplored use of short-form video-based social media in the construction industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The effectiveness of using TikTok as a promotional medium to increase brand awareness among MSMEs has been emphasized in several studies. These studies highlight how the use of creative, informative, and entertaining content can foster emotional closeness with the audience, ultimately leading to increased brand awareness. The similarity with this study lies in the focus on TikTok as a medium for digital branding. However, the key difference lies in the business context and scale—previous studies focused on MSMEs with a retail business model, whereas this study highlights the construction services sector, which involves different service processes and content characteristics. The limitation of the previous research is that it does not investigate the direct impact on sales or conversion but is limited to the stage of increasing brand presence and internal readiness (Talib and Sari 2024)

Meanwhile, other research related to the digitalization process in the service sector has focused on the use of social media as a communication bridge between service providers and consumers. These studies underscore the importance of organizational cultural transformation and improved digital literacy among the workforce to support the success of digital strategies. The similarity between this research and Siregar's lies in the internal focus of the company, such as the readiness of human resources and adaptation to digital technology. However, the notable difference is that Siregar's research is broader in scope and does not focus on a specific platform, while this study specifically explores TikTok as a branding medium. This study also narrows its focus only to the branding aspect, excluding broader digital transformation components such as data management or digital customer service (Talib and Sari 2024)

In addition, studies on the role of short videos as promotional tools—particularly in the beauty, health, and technology service sectors—have shown that short videos which transparently display the service process can increase consumer trust in service providers. The similarity with this study lies in the use of visual content as a promotional medium for services, as well as the use of storytelling to convey brand value. However, the research subjects differ—prior studies focused on personal experience-based services, while this study investigates construction services, which emphasize project documentation and professional work processes. This study is limited to content creation and management and does not explore consumer perception in depth (Melindasari, Al, and 2024 n.d.; Nadhiroh 2024)

From the reviewed literature, it can be concluded that the use of social media—especially TikTok and short video content—has great potential to increase exposure and engagement in both service sectors and MSMEs. However, this study offers a unique perspective by focusing on the construction services sector, which has distinct characteristics compared to other service industries. Furthermore, this research emphasizes internal company readiness and challenges in adopting short video-based digital branding strategies, rather than focusing solely on the consumer side. Another limitation is that the study employs an exploratory and qualitative approach, so the findings are descriptive in nature and do not aim to quantitatively measure the effectiveness of content on marketing performance.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method to explore the process of digital branding transformation in a construction service company. This approach was chosen because it allows for a deep understanding of the context and real-world dynamics from the perspective of those directly involved. Case studies are well-suited to answer “how” and “why” questions related to strategies occurring in actual settings (Hu et al. 2024; Studies and 2025 2025).

Data were collected through direct observation of promotional activities and content production at Havana Sulung Mandiri, semi-structured interviews with the owner and marketing staff, and documentation of previously published digital content. Social media tracing was also conducted to examine the company's interaction patterns. Data analysis was carried out thematically by categorizing findings into key themes relevant to the research focus.

RESULT

In this section, the author needs to explain the hardware and software used, dataset sources, initial data analysis, results, and results analysis/discussion. Presenting the results with pictures, graphs and tables is highly recommended. Formulas or evaluation measuring tools also need to be included here. There must be discussion/analysis, and you can't just rewrite the results in sentence form, but you need to provide an explanation of their relationship to the initial hypothesis. In addition, this section needs to discuss and elaborate on important findings.

Company Profile Description

Mitra Havana Sulung Mandiri is a company operating in the construction services sector, with primary services including the construction, renovation, and repair of small to medium-scale buildings. The company is based in the East Java region and has been established for over five years. Although it possesses a diverse project portfolio, the company's marketing strategy to date has remained conventional, relying on word-of-mouth promotion, brochure distribution, and direct contact through its network of relations. As of this research, the company does not yet have an official, professionally managed social media account, nor has it utilized the TikTok platform for digital promotion.



Findings from Observation and Interviews

Based on in-depth observation and interviews, it was found that the company's activities in construction projects have high visual value. Activities such as the construction process, before-and-after project comparisons, client testimonials, and even worker activities on site can be packaged into engaging short video content.

From a human resources perspective, only a small fraction of the company's staff possesses basic knowledge of social media, video editing, and digital content management. The equipment used for documentation is still limited to personal mobile phone cameras, lacking support tools like tripods or external microphones. Furthermore, there is no specific SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) in place to regulate the content production workflow, from planning to publication. This presents a major obstacle to implementing a sustainable digital branding strategy.

Internal obstacles identified include: (1) Low digital literacy, (2) Resistance to change, (3) Lack of understanding regarding the benefits of digital branding. Some staff members believe that promotional activities on social media platforms like TikTok do not align with the image of a construction services company. Meanwhile, external obstacles encompass challenges in reaching the right target market on TikTok, as well as uncertainty regarding algorithms and the highly dynamic nature of content trends. Based on field findings, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify key relevant patterns.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis Table

No.	Thematic Analysis Results	Explanation
1	Visual Potential as a Branding Asset	Construction projects have strong visual characteristics and can serve as the main material for engaging and educational digital storytelling
2	Limited Readiness in Human Resources and Technology	Limitations in human resources and content production tools are the main obstacles in the digital transformation process..
3	Organizational Culture Does Not Yet Support Digital Change	An internal education process and active involvement of all organizational elements are needed to build a culture that is adaptive to digitalization

Recommendations for Digital Branding Strategy

Based on field findings, an initial strategy was developed for implementing digital branding through TikTok, namely: Focus on educational, informative, and visual content such as project documentation, testimonials, and work processes. Strengthening staff competencies through training in video editing and social media management. Developing a simple Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for content production and publication processes. Conducting a pilot digital campaign targeting segmented audiences to measure initial effectiveness.

Recommendations for Havana Sulung Mandiri

Based on field findings, an initial strategy was developed for implementing digital branding through TikTok, namely: As a follow-up step, the researcher recommends that Havana Sulung Mandiri: Form a small Social Media Management Team responsible for the consistent production and publication of digital content. Conduct Basic Training in Digital Marketing and Video Editing, either through internal workshops or collaborative programs with third parties.

Develop a Digital Visual Identity, such as creating an animated logo, a simple video intro, and caption templates to reinforce brand consistency. Create Official TikTok and Instagram Accounts, and run an initial campaign for at least 30 days to test market response. Collaborate with Local Creators to expand content reach in a more organic and authentic way. Conduct Monthly Performance Evaluations of content based on engagement metrics (views, likes, shares, and comments), and develop follow-up content based on this data.

Recommended Educational Promotional Content Template

This template is designed to assist internal teams of construction companies like Havana Sulung Mandiri in creating engaging and easy-to-implement short educational video content, particularly for the TikTok platform. The content focuses on promoting services, showcasing professional work processes, and building trust through behind-the-scenes footage and client testimonials:

Table 2. Hook Recommendation

No.	Headline Recommendation for Content Social Media
1	Home Renovation Process in 30 Seconds
2	Why Should You Hire a Professional Contractor?
3	Behind the Scenes: Our Team on Site
4	What Our Clients Say After the Project

The following headline recommendations are designed to capture attention and spark interest on social media platforms, especially TikTok and Instagram. **“Home Renovation Process in 30 Seconds”** offers a quick, time-efficient look into the renovation workflow, appealing to audiences who prefer fast, visual content. **“Why Should You Hire a Professional Contractor?”** provides an educational angle that can build trust and highlight the company’s expertise. **“Behind the Scenes: Our Team on Site”** humanizes the brand by showcasing real teamwork and daily operations,



fostering transparency and authenticity. Lastly, “What Our Clients Say After the Project” leverages social proof by featuring testimonials, which are powerful in convincing potential customers. These headlines are crafted to encourage engagement, build credibility, and position the company as both professional and relatable.

Table 3. Recommended Visual Elements

No.	Visual Element	Description
1	On-screen text	Use large and clear fonts; highlight key points.
2	Background music	Use upbeat or acoustic royalty-free music
3	Light transitions	Apply effects like cut, zoom-in/out, or swipe.
4.	Logo	Add the company logo in the top-right corner
5.	Tiktok Watermark	Leave it visible to maintain an authentic look

To ensure engaging and professional promotional content, several visual elements are recommended. On-screen text should use large, clear fonts with highlights on key points to enhance readability, especially on mobile devices. Background music, preferably upbeat or acoustic and royalty-free, sets an inviting tone without distracting from the message. Simple transitions like cuts, zooms, or swipes help maintain a smooth and dynamic flow. Including the company logo in the top-right corner reinforces brand identity, while keeping the TikTok watermark visible adds authenticity and aligns the content with platform norms. Combined, these elements support the creation of compelling and trustworthy digital branding content

DISCUSSION

The observations and interviews reveal a significant disparity between the digital branding potential of Havana Sulung Mandiri and its current marketing practices. Despite having visually rich construction activities—such as project progress, before-and-after transformations, and on-site operations—the company has not utilized digital platforms like TikTok to showcase its services. This untapped potential is hindered by several internal limitations, including a lack of digital skills among staff, minimal documentation equipment, and the absence of standard operating procedures for content creation. Additionally, the organizational culture shows a degree of resistance to change, with low digital literacy and skepticism about the relevance of social media in the construction industry.

Nonetheless, the opportunity for digital transformation remains promising. The proposed strategies—such as forming a social media team, providing training in video editing and digital marketing, and focusing on educational and testimonial-based content—offer a practical starting point. Implementing a 30-day pilot campaign using visually engaging and informative videos may help the company assess the effectiveness of this digital approach. In conclusion, the findings suggest that with strategic planning and internal commitment, construction service providers like Havana Sulung Mandiri can adopt TikTok as a viable platform for digital branding, bridging the gap between traditional marketing methods and modern consumer engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Havana Sulung Mandiri has great potential to build a digital branding strategy through TikTok, especially by utilizing visual content from construction activities. However, the internal readiness is still low, ranging from digital literacy, human resources, to content workflow systems. Therefore, it is recommended that the company form a dedicated social media management team, develop standard operating procedures (SOP) for content production, provide basic digital marketing training, and initiate a 30-day TikTok campaign to test the effectiveness of the developed branding strategy using the recommended content templates.

It is advised that Havana Sulung Mandiri promptly establish an internal content team, create simple SOPs for the content production process, and provide basic training to staff on social media management and video editing. Additionally, the company should start a 30-day trial campaign on TikTok featuring educational and documentary content, while collaborating with local creators or interns to accelerate digital adaptation and expand audience reach.

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