



Media communication analysis of the Instagram account @yasalamfcb in building its Followers' trust

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ABSTRACT

The development of social media has transformed digital communication into a relational space in which credibility and trust are socially constructed. Although prior studies have extensively examined trust within transactional contexts such as influencer marketing and brand communication scholarly attention to the construction of trust within identity-based communities, particularly football fandom on Instagram, remains limited. This study aims to analyze how the Instagram account @yasalamfcb constructs perceived trust through message structure and symbolic representation. Theoretically, this research integrates Source Credibility Theory and the Social Construction of Reality perspective to elucidate the mechanisms through which trust is formed in digital communities. A qualitative approach was employed, utilizing thematic content analysis of five posts published between March and April 2025, selected purposively, alongside an open-ended survey of five active followers to triangulate audience perceptions. The analysis focused on the dimensions of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, as well as the processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. This study concludes that perceived trust within digital fandom communities emerges from a process of social construction shaped by the interplay between symbolic representation and audience participation. The study's novelty lies in extending credibility-based trust models to the context of sports communities. However, limitations include the relatively small sample size and restricted observation period. Future research is recommended to employ longitudinal and comparative designs to further advance the analysis of digital trust construction.

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1. Introduction

With the advancement of digital communication technologies, social media has transformed how individuals access, produce, and share information, enabling more interactive and participatory communication (Dwi et al., 2025). Indonesia is among the countries with a high level of social media penetration; recent data from Data Reported indicate that, as of October 2025, there were approximately 180 million active social media user identities in Indonesia (Kemp, 2025). In the context of mass communication, social media functions not only as a medium for information dissemination but also as a relational space that shapes perceptions of credibility and follower trust (Baskara et al., 2025). Instagram is a social networking platform that emphasizes expression through images and short-form videos. Within online brand communities, members engage in the



consumption, production, and exchange of information, while textual elements primarily function to contextualize and complement visual content (Kusuma et al., 2024). One community account that is active in disseminating football-related information is @yasalamfcb, which utilizes visual and interactive features to reach and maintain its followers.

Previous research indicates that the formation of trust and audience engagement on social media has been examined through various theoretical and methodological approaches. Meanwhile Utomo et al. (2022), studies on interactivity and trust have identified a significant influence on donation intention and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), although these investigations remain confined to the context of donation campaigns. Furthermore Atiq et al. (2022), other research demonstrates that influencer storytelling enhances engagement through the mediating roles of trust and relatability. In addition Yang et al. (2020), scholarship addressing trust cues such as argument quality and post popularity has predominantly focused on product marketing contexts.

Accordingly, most prior studies have positioned trust within a transactional relational framework involving brands and consumers or influencers, with limited attention to the dynamics of trust within communities grounded in collective identity, such as football fan communities. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on football fandom as a site for the construction of trust based on collective identity, distinguishing it from marketing, influencer, or social campaign contexts examined in previous research. Based on this framework, the study positions the Instagram account @yasalamfcb as a relational space that functions not merely as a channel for information dissemination, but also as an interactive arena where closeness and trust are constructed within a fandom community. In line with the organization–public relational approach that emphasizes communication strategies in building audience relationships, as well as the understanding of social media functions in facilitating information sharing, social networking, participation, and communication (Badham & Mykkänen, 2022; Lin, 2022).

A literature search in the Scopus database for the period 2015–2025 using the keywords *trust* and *social media* yielded 1,555 documents indexed within the *social sciences* and *psychology* subject areas. However, the existing literature indexed in Scopus has not specifically examined the analysis of Instagram-based communication, particularly the account @yasalamfcb, in fostering followers’ trust. Furthermore, the term co-occurrence visualization presented in Fig. 1 indicates that *social media* occupies a central position and is closely connected with concepts such as *trust*, *source credibility*, and *perception*, highlighting the strong relationship between social media environments and the processes of trust formation in digital interactions.

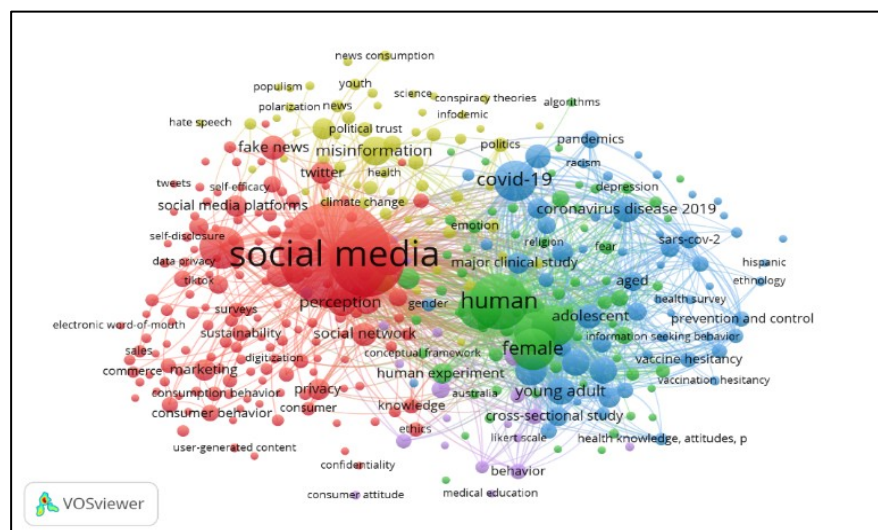


Fig. 1. Mapping the Relationships among Social Media Terminologies Using VOSviewer

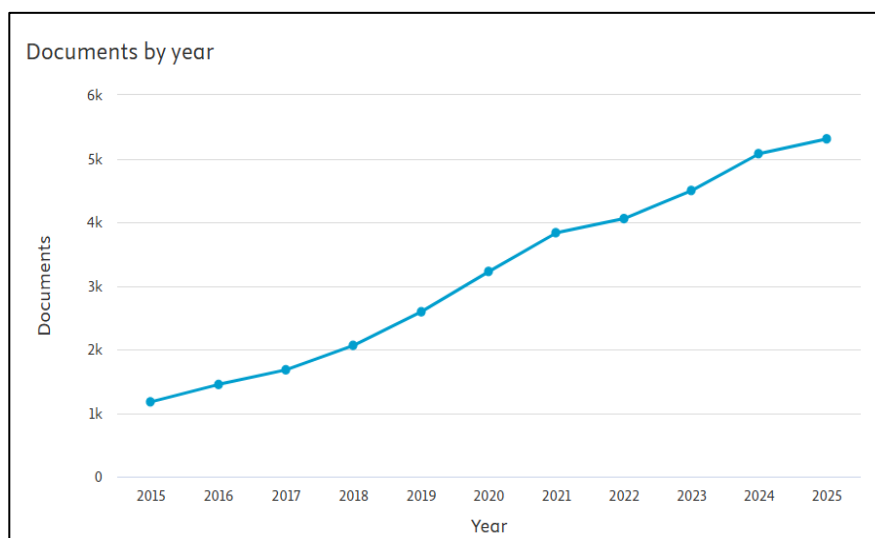


Fig. 2. Number of Social Media Research Documents Per Year (2015-2025)

Based on the annual publication trends presented in Fig. 2, the number of research documents related to social media demonstrates a consistent and significant increase throughout the 2015–2025 period. The increasingly pronounced upward trajectory indicates that social media has evolved into a central object of inquiry across multiple disciplines, particularly in studies of communication, digital identity, and online communities. This growth reflects not only the expansion of digital platform usage but also the increasing scholarly attention to the social and cultural implications it generates.

Although scholarship on social media continues to expand quantitatively, research that specifically examines trust construction within online fan communities particularly Instagram-based football fan accounts remains relatively limited. Most prior studies have concentrated on issues of digital identity, influencer culture, and consumer behavior, whereas in-depth exploration of how credibility and collective identity are constructed within information-oriented community accounts has received comparatively little scholarly attention.

In this context, Instagram-based football fan communities constitute a significant yet underexplored site of analysis. Accounts such as @yasalamfcb may be understood as forms of social media brand communities that function as digital spaces where collective identity and community relations are negotiated (Fenton et al., 2023). Therefore, it is essential to examine how exposure to message structures, source attribution practices, and patterns of community interaction contributes to the formation and maintenance of digital trust among followers (Bebasari et al., 2025; Shareef et al., 2020).

Theoretically, this study draws upon Source Credibility Theory to analyze the dimensions of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness in the account's message construction, and upon Social Constructivism to understand how digital interactions shape meaning and collective identity within football fan communities. These two theoretical perspectives serve as the analytical framework for examining the communication practices of the @yasalamfcb account.

Although scholarship on trust in social media has advanced, there remains a need for a more in-depth understanding of the mechanisms through which trust is constructed within communities grounded in collective identity. Accordingly, this study formulates the following research question: How does the digital message structure of the Instagram account @yasalamfcb represent the dimensions of source credibility (expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness), and how are these representations socially constructed by the follower community as the basis for the formation of

perceived trust? This study aims to analyze how the message structure, communication patterns, and configuration of content elements employed by the @yasalamfcb account contribute to the development of trust and audience engagement.

From an academic perspective, this research contributes to the advancement of digital sports communication studies by offering an analytical framework that systematically explicates the relationship between message construction structures, audience perceptions, and the formation of trust within the football social media ecosystem. From a practical standpoint, the findings provide a strategic foundation for communication practitioners and sports social media managers in designing messages that are more structured, credible, and effective in building and sustaining audience trust.

2. Theoretical Framework

Digital media platforms facilitate symbolic interactions through which individuals construct and reproduce collective meanings within online communicative spaces such as social media platforms (Cheng & Wu, 2025). Building upon this perspective, the present study conceptualizes digital communication as a symbolic process in which systematically structured messages function to shape and construct social perceptions. To elucidate this mechanism, the study integrates the source credibility perspective with the Social Construction of Reality theory as a conceptual framework that explains how the characteristics of the communicator are manifested in message structures and subsequently socially constructed by audiences as the foundation for trust formation.

Source Credibility in Digital Communication

In social media communication, source credibility constitutes a primary factor influencing how messages are received and interpreted by audiences. Source credibility can be understood as a feature that generates the most accurate perceptions of message credibility (Geels et al., 2024). Credibility is not confined to the informational content itself but also encompasses the characteristics of the communicator as represented through the structure and consistency of message presentation. Ohanian (1990), as cited in Yilmazdoğan et al. (2021), posits that the effectiveness of Instagram influencer source credibility can be assessed through three components: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. The source credibility model elucidates message efficacy, as audience perceptions of a communicator's expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness significantly influence message acceptance and evaluation (Weismueller et al., 2020).

Attractiveness refers to the communicator's appeal, which enhances psychological closeness with the audience; in social media contexts, this is reflected in visual aesthetics, communication style, and the symbolic identity of the community (Karpenka et al., 2021). Trustworthiness in social media communication refers to followers' perceptions of honesty and reliability, reinforced through transparency and consistent communication practices (Azhar et al., 2025; Sachu et al., 2025). Expertise refers to the communicator's knowledge, skills, and competence (Yilmazdoğan et al., 2021), which contribute to perceived credibility (Cassia & Magno, 2021). In digital communication contexts, credibility is further strengthened by high-quality and accurate information, along with professional content presentation (Cassia & Magno, 2021; Chen et al., 2021). These three dimensions are not merely abstract constructs; rather, they are empirically manifested in the structure of digital messages. Accordingly, credibility may be understood as a symbolic representation of source characteristics that is produced and circulated through social media.

Symbolic Representation and Digital Message Structure

Social media content constitutes a form of symbolic representation that organizes social meaning through visual, narrative, and interactive elements. Digital message structures, including visual elements, captions, information presentation formats, and interaction patterns within comment sections, function as mechanisms of meaning construction according to [Manzanero \(2020\)](#) that represent the identity, credibility, and legitimacy of the communication source ([Czakov et al., 2024](#); [Hatch & Schultz, 1997](#)). Accordingly, digital message structure can be understood as a communicative element that potentially contributes to the formation of followers' trust in digital environments.

In this study, message structure is conceptualized as an empirical indicator of source credibility. Accordingly, the analysis of social media content is not limited to identifying informational substance but also seeks to examine how symbolic elements are systematically arranged and consistently reproduced as representations of the communicator's character ([Veum et al., 2024](#)).

Social Construction of Reality in the Digital Media Environment

This study adopts Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality perspective, which conceptualizes reality as the outcome of a dialectical process comprising externalization, objectivation, and internalization ([Berger & Luckmann, 1967](#); [Ramirez & Lepez, 2023](#)). This framework has also been applied in recent studies examining meaning construction on Instagram-based activism [Al-hafidz \(2025\)](#), demonstrating its relevance for analyzing digitally mediated symbolic processes.

Individuals assign meaning to their subjective experiences and thoughts and subsequently express them in the external world through language, symbols, and various forms of communication media; in this context, externalization refers to the production of meaning by social actors, including social media accounts that generate and disseminate digital content ([Al-hafidz, 2025](#); [Berger & Luckmann, 1967](#); [Ramirez & Lepez, 2023](#)). Objectivation occurs when subjective meanings become stabilized as shared social understandings ([Al-hafidz, 2025](#); [Berger & Luckmann, 1967](#); [Ramirez & Lepez, 2023](#)). Internalization refers to the process through which socially objectivated meanings are reabsorbed into individual consciousness; at this stage, audiences interpret and adopt these representations as part of their subjective understanding ([Al-hafidz, 2025](#); [Berger & Luckmann, 1967](#); [Ramirez & Lepez, 2023](#)).

Within the context of social media, consistent content production contributes to the formation of a symbolic reality that is perceived as a legitimate representation of particular identities or forms of authority. Accordingly, trust in an account is determined not solely by the informational content it provides but also by the social processes through which these representations come to be accepted as legitimate realities.

Content Analysis as an Approach to Examining the Construction of Meaning

The digital identities they constructed became a form of performative construction aimed at gaining social recognition and strengthening their personal image within the online community ([Wuna & Fadillah, 2025](#)). In line with the assumption that social symbolic representations manifested in message structures by [Li et al. \(2023\)](#), this study employs content analysis as its methodological approach to identify patterns of meaning construction in digital communication. Content analysis is a systematic method for evaluating and analyzing message content and communication activities by [Susilo & Putranto \(2021\)](#), which in this research is applied to examine how communication elements represent source credibility and construct symbolic reality.

In addition, this study utilizes an open-ended survey to explore how audiences interpret these symbolic representations. Respondents' perceptual data are used to understand the process of internalization namely, how realities that have been objectivated through digital content are received and interpreted within the community.

Integration of Theoretical Framework

By integrating Source Credibility Theory with the Social Construction of Reality perspective, this study conceptualizes digital communication as a staged process that begins with source characteristics, is represented in message structures, symbolically constructed within the digital social sphere, and ultimately internalized by audiences as the foundation for the formation of perceived trust.

The integration of these two perspectives establishes a coherent conceptual foundation for explaining how communicator attributes are transformed into socially recognized and collectively validated meanings within the digital sphere.

Based on the conceptual model presented in Fig. 3, the formation of audience trust in digital communication is understood as a sequential process originating from source characteristics namely expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness which are subsequently represented in digital message structures such as visuals, captions, and presentation formats. These message structures generate symbolic representations that undergo social construction through the mechanisms of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. This series of processes ultimately produces perceived trust as a form of audience acceptance and legitimization of the social media account.

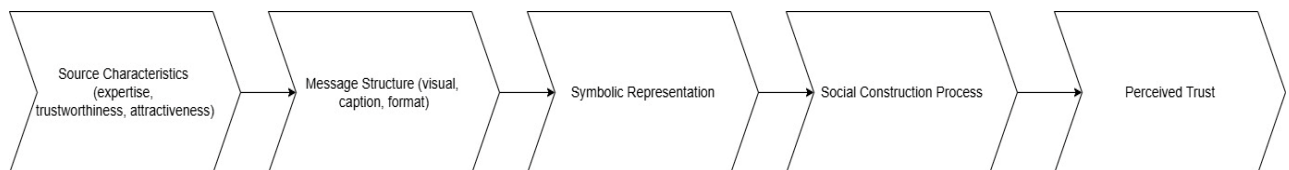


Fig. 3. Conceptual Model Theoretical Framework

3. Method

This study employs a qualitative interpretative approach using a qualitative content analysis design to examine how the Instagram account @yasalamfcb constructs media communication practices that contribute to building followers' trust. Content analysis was employed in this study as it enables a systematic and objective examination of social media communication messages to identify recurring patterns, thematic structures, and strategic communication elements that contribute to the development and reinforcement of followers' trust (de Assis et al., 2026). The study draws upon Source Credibility Theory (expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) and the social construction of reality framework (externalization, objectivation, and internalization) to analyze how digital message structures represent credibility dimensions and how such representations are socially institutionalized within the online community. The object of the study is the Instagram account @yasalamfcb, while the unit of analysis is the digital message structure, including visual elements, captions, narrative patterns, and interactions within the comment section. Primary data consist of five posts purposively selected from 31 March to 30 April 2025.

The one-month timeframe was chosen to capture relatively stable and recurring communication patterns. Posts were selected based on engagement level (likes and comments), relevance to trust-building communication, and variation in content type, including match reports, moment-based

merchandise promotions, question-and-answer sessions, player narratives, and emotionally oriented community content. To enrich interpretive depth, an open-ended survey was administered to five active followers selected Purposive sampling based on their consistent interaction with the account. The survey was not intended to yield statistically representative estimates, given that non-probability sampling lacks the probabilistic foundation required for valid population inference (Cornesse et al., 2020). Rather than pursuing generalizability, the study aims to develop contextually grounded insights into how followers internalize and interpret the account’s communication practices, with analytical claims confined to the sampled participants.

Table 1. Sample and Population Characteristics

	Characteristics	Samples
Gender	Men	100%
	Woman	0%
Age	≤ 19	0%
	19-24	60%
	25-32	40%
Respondent Credibility	Follow	100%

As seen in Table 1. indicates that all respondents are followers of the account and fall within the productive age range. Demographic characteristics are presented as supporting information, while the primary focus of this study lies in respondents’ experiences and perceptions of the account’s communication practices.

Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis with a deductive coding strategy based on an a priori theoretical framework (Khan et al., 2024). The analytical procedure followed four systematic stages: (1) identification and detailed description of digital message elements, (2) coding of data according to theoretical indicators derived from Source Credibility Theory and social construction stages, (3) thematic categorization to identify recurring credibility representation patterns, and (4) iterative review and refinement of categories to ensure conceptual alignment between empirical findings and theoretical constructs. To ensure research validity and reliability, methodological triangulation was conducted by integrating content analysis findings with survey responses, while theoretical triangulation was applied by comparing the results with relevant literature on digital media communication, social media credibility, and online community trust formation. Repeated coding and cross-checking procedures were implemented to minimize interpretive subjectivity and enhance analytical consistency. Ethical considerations were strictly observed by obtaining informed consent from survey participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and utilizing only publicly accessible Instagram content. All data were used exclusively for academic purposes.

4. Result and Discussion

Based on a qualitative analysis of five Instagram posts from the @yasalamfcb account during the period 31 March–30 April 2025, complemented by an open-ended survey of five active followers, this study identifies five principal mechanisms that explain the process of trust construction within the digital community. These mechanisms include the framing of expertise and informational authority, narrative consistency and transparency, emotional symbolism and the construction of collective identity, dialogic engagement, and commercial transparency.

The analysis was conducted deductively using the framework of Source Credibility Theory (expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) and the Social Construction of Reality perspective (externalization, objectivation, and internalization). The unit of analysis comprised visual structures, captions, narrative patterns, and interactions within the comment section, which collectively demonstrate how symbolic representations are produced, stabilized, and internalized as perceived trust.

Symbolic Representation

Symbolic representations in social media function not merely as vehicles for information dissemination but also as mechanisms of meaning construction that shape perceptions, collective identity, and source legitimacy. In the context of the Instagram account @yasalamfcb, the five posts analyzed demonstrate that each piece of content operates not solely as match-related information or promotional material, but also conveys specific symbols that construct an image of credibility, emotional proximity, and informational authority.



Through a thematic analysis approach, the symbolic representations within these five posts reveal patterned constructions of fandom identity, source legitimacy, and the commodification of celebratory moments. [Table 2](#) and [Table 2. Continue](#), summarizes the dimensions of source credibility expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness along with the symbolic elements represented in each content item.

Based on these thematic patterns, the five posts from the @yasalamfcb account exhibit a consistent structure of symbolic representation in constructing meaning and projecting a credible image. Player quotation narratives and match reports represent symbols of champion mentality, and fighting spirit, further reinforced by religious expressions as a form of localizing the club's global identity within the Indonesian audience context. A post featuring a player's family photograph constructs symbols of familial values and the club's historical continuity, portraying Barcelona as a humanistic and emotionally grounded institution. Meanwhile, the Q&A session with an ESPN journalist represents legitimacy and informational authority through its association with professional media, and the merchandise promotion reflects the commodification of victory symbols as visual identities that fans can possess.

Overall, the table indicates that the constructed symbols operate within the domains of team superiority, collective identity, and professional as well as commercial legitimacy. These findings affirm that symbolic representations in @yasalamfcb's content extend beyond narrative and visual elements, functioning instead as a foundational basis for shaping audience perceptions of the account's credibility. Symbols of champion mentality, familial values, commercial transparency, and media legitimacy contribute to the construction of meanings that reinforce follower trust.

As presented in [Table 3](#), [Table 3. Continue 1](#) and [Table 3. Continue 2](#), the symbols constructed within @yasalamfcb's content including champion mentality familial bonds, religiosity, professional legitimacy, and commercial transparency operate not merely as representational strategies but also as elements that shape a socially constructed reality internalized by followers. Through the processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization, these symbols become consistent communication patterns recognized by the audience, as reflected in survey data and comment patterns emphasizing accuracy, relational closeness, and account credibility. Accordingly, this symbolic construction constitutes the foundation for the formation of perceived trust.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis of Representations in Five Posts from the @yasalamfcb Account

Empirical Data	Representation	
	Source Credibility Dimension	Symbolic Representation
	<p>Expertise: Citing player statements and reputable media sources (Mundo Deportivo).</p> <p>Trustworthiness: Information grounded in direct quotations and credible sources.</p> <p>Attractiveness: The portrayal of a talented young figure (Lamine Yamal) strengthens emotional appeal and fan identification.</p>	<p>Champion mentality and team superiority.</p>
	<p>Trustworthiness: Narratives based on current events and explicit source attribution (David Saura).</p> <p>Attractiveness: The representation of family and emotional values enhances audience affinity and relational closeness.</p>	<p>Familial bonds and the club's historical continuity.</p>

Perceived Trust

Perceived trust in the context of the @yasalamfcb account refers to how followers interpret and evaluate the account’s credibility based on their interaction experiences, content patterns, and the consistency of the narratives presented. Drawing on the findings of the thematic analysis and follower survey data, perceived trust does not emerge instantaneously; rather, it develops through a combination of expertise framing, informational consistency, commercial transparency, emotional symbolism, and dialogic engagement. These dimensions collectively form an interrelated trust structure within the digital communication space of fandom. To elucidate how this process unfolds, the following section systematically examines each dimension of perceived trust.

Table 2. Continue: Thematic Analysis of Representations in Five Posts from the @yasalamfcb Account

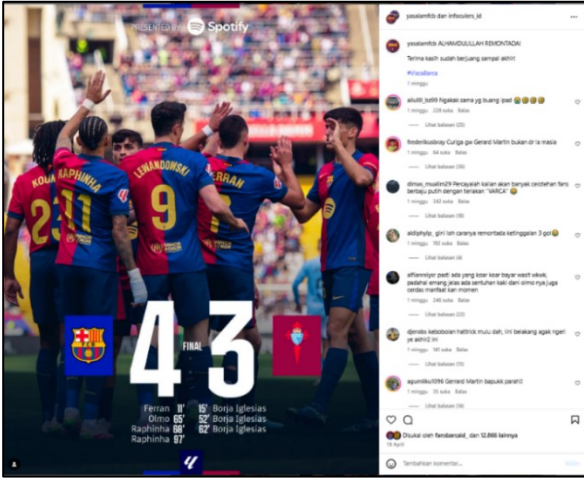
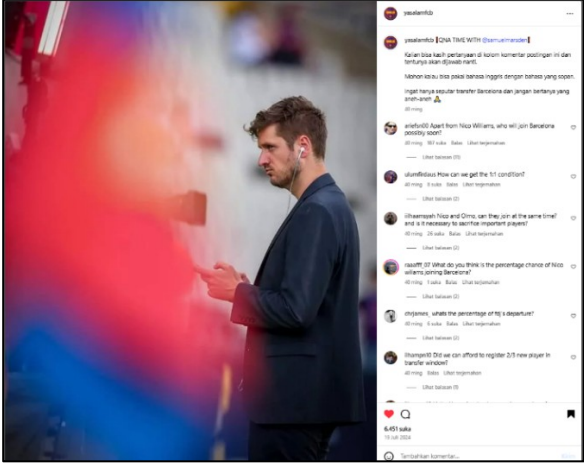

Empirical Data	Representation	
	Source Credibility Dimension	Symbolic Representation
	<p>Expertise: Presentation of up-to-date match results.</p> <p>Trustworthiness: Provision of factual information (match scores).</p> <p>Attractiveness: The use of religious expressions and hashtags enhances emotional affinity in the Indonesian community.</p>	<p>Religiosity and the localization of identity.</p>
	<p>Expertise: Collaboration with ESPN journalists enhances the authority of the information.</p> <p>Trustworthiness: Limiting the topic (specifically transfers) demonstrates control and professionalism.</p> <p>Appeal: Direct interaction creates a sense of exclusivity and closeness.</p>	<p>Global legitimacy and professional authority (Q&A session with an ESPN journalist).</p>
	<p>Trustworthiness: Transparency regarding product specifications and direct contact information.</p> <p>Attractiveness: The momentum of victory heightens emotional appeal and purchase intention.</p>	<p>The commodification of victory through merchandise.</p>

Table 3. Thematic Analysis of Symbolic Representation Generates Trust

Symbolic Representation	Empirical Data	Social Construction Process	Audience Perception Evidence	perceived trust
Champion mentality and team superiority.	Lamine Yamal's quotation following El Clásico; 199 comments; 13,539 likes; a narrative expressing confidence toward rivals.	Externalization: The administrator frames the player's quotation as a symbol of dominance. Objectivation: The champion mentality becomes recurring theme in victory-related content. Internalization: Followers accept the narrative of superiority as part of their collective identity.	Comments reflect support for team optimism; survey responses describe the account as "more up-to-date" and "accurate."	Expertise framing dan informational authority.

Expertise Framing and Informational Authority

The analysis indicates that the @yasalamfcb account consistently frames its content through explicit source attribution, including player quotations and references to reputable sports media (e.g., Mundo Deportivo, ESPN journalists). "This mechanism mirrors findings in digital persuasion research where argument quality and credible attribution significantly shape audience attitudes and behavioral responses (Lutfunnisa et al., 2025)." This structural pattern reinforces the expertise dimension of Source Credibility Theory, wherein perceived knowledge and competence significantly influence message acceptance (Cassia & Magno, 2021; Yilmazdoğan et al., 2021).

The inclusion of verifiable match statistics, named journalists, and direct quotations functions as argument quality cues that enhance perceived credibility (Yang et al., 2020). In cue utilization terms, followers rely on such informational indicators to reduce uncertainty in digital environments.

Survey responses describing the account as "accurate" and "up-to-date" suggest that followers internalize these expertise signals as indicators of reliability. This finding aligns with prior research demonstrating that content quality and informational strength significantly predict trust formation in social media contexts (Atiq et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2020).

Emotional Symbolism and Collective Identity Construction

Digital identity is not formed statically; rather, it is constructed through relational and current social interactions within digital environments (Czakov et al., 2024). In the context of social media, micro-interactions contribute to the development of stories and narratives that become constitutive of an organization's collective identity (Czakov et al., 2024). This process is not solely cognitive but also emotional, as alignment between the constructed image and digital interactions can elicit strong emotional responses from stakeholders.

This dimension demonstrates that emotional symbolism plays a central role in fostering identity-based trust namely, trust rooted in shared belonging and symbolic attachment. Victory narratives such as “ALHAMDULILLAH REMONTADA!” and representations of familial bonds

among players generate a distinctive sense of emotional proximity within the follower community. The integration of religious expressions and family symbols reflects a process of localizing the global club identity within the cultural context of Indonesian supporters.

Survey data indicate that followers perceive themselves as “fellow devoted FC Barcelona fans” and as part of a broader community. In this context, trust assumes an affective character constructed through belonging, solidarity, and collective identification rather than being based solely on informational validity or accuracy. Accordingly, emotional symbolism functions as a social adhesive that collectively reinforces perceived trust. “Unlike influencer-driven trust formation (Sudoł-Kaszuba, 2024), where credibility is anchored in personal authenticity, trust in fandom communities emerges from shared symbolic alignment and collective identity construction.”

Table 3. Continue 1: Thematic Analysis of Symbolic Representation Generates Trust

Symbolic Representation	Empirical Data	Social Construction Process	Audience Perception Evidence	Perceived trust
Familial bonds and the club’s historical continuity.	Post featuring a player’s family photograph; 175 comments; 12,107 likes; caption comparing the Messi era and the Flick era.	Externalization: Family imagery is produced as an emotional symbol. Objectivation: Barcelona is represented as a humanistic and enduring institution. Internalization: Followers identify themselves as part of a broader community.	Survey responses include phrases like “fellow devoted fans” and “the largest fanbase,” while comments show strong emotional tones.	Emotional symbolism and collective identity construction.
Religiosity and the localization of identity.	Post reporting a 4–3 score line against Celta Vigo; 1,039 comments; 12,867 likes; caption: “ALHAMDULILLAH REMONTADA!”	Externalization: The integration of religious expression into the victory narrative. Objectivation: A Religious language becomes a distinctive feature of the account’s communication. Internalization: The audience interprets the account as a representation of local fandom culture.	Comment patterns reflect gratitude and solidarity; survey responses describe the language style as “casual and easy to understand.”	Trustworthiness through Transparency and Narrative Consistency.

Table 3. Continue 2: Thematic Analysis of Symbolic Representation Generates Trust

Symbolic Representation	Empirical Data	Social Construction Process	Audience Perception Evidence	perceived trust
Global legitimacy and professional authority.	Q&A session with ESPN journalist Samuel Marsden; 554 comments; 6,451 likes; focused on Barcelona transfer issues.	Externalization: Collaboration with a journalist function as a symbol of authority. Objectivation: The account is positioned as a bridge between global and local information flows. Internalization: Followers perceive the account as having credible sources.	Survey responses include statements such as “not careless in providing information” and “cites European journalists as sources,” alongside active participation in the comment section.	Expertise authority and dialogic engagement.
The commodification of victory through merchandise.	Promotion of a Copa del Rey championship t-shirt; detailed product description; WhatsApp contact information and ready-stock availability.	Externalization: Victory is translated into a symbolic product. Objectivation: Transparency regarding specifications and contact information reinforces commercial legitimacy. Internalization: Followers perceive purchasing as an expression of loyalty.	The absence of dominant negative comments and survey responses that continue to describe the account as “accurate and trustworthy” indicate sustained credibility.	Commercial transparency and trust extension.

Trustworthiness through Transparency and Narrative Consistency

The consistency of communicative style and the repeated attribution of credible sources generate *perceptual stability*, thereby reinforcing the dimension of *trustworthiness*. Prior research indicates that transparency and responsiveness in social media environments enhance trust by reducing perceived uncertainty (Kartomo, 2024). In this account, trustworthiness is not primarily constructed through intensive interaction but rather through narrative stability and clarity of source attribution. This finding extends prior understandings that trust in social media environments is generally shaped by interactivity and direct responsiveness (Kartomo, 2024).

Based on survey findings, followers characterized the account’s narrative structure as “informative yet casual” and “fairly easy to understand.” This stylistic consistency fosters perceptual stability, whereby audiences are able to anticipate the account’s communication patterns across different types of content, including match reports and transfer discussions. When the account consistently provides clear source citations and attribution, followers tend to

generalize this credibility across its entire body of content. This suggests that audiences rely on credibility cues as a basis for evaluation. In the social media context, research indicates that when only certain posts are labeled with corrections, unlabeled posts are often perceived as accurate, even when this may not necessarily be the case (Geels et al., 2024; Pennycook et al., 2020). This phenomenon illustrates how credibility can emerge through implicit audience inferences. Although some criticism was directed at the administrator's limited responsiveness to comments, respondents nonetheless emphasized that informational accuracy is more important than the frequency of replies. This finding indicates that trustworthiness is not determined solely by direct interaction but rather by sustained narrative consistency and the ongoing integrity of the information conveyed.

Commercial Transparency and Trust Extension

In the context of digital communication, transparency in commercial practices is regarded as a factor that can strengthen perceptions of trustworthiness, as openness reduces uncertainty and perceptions of manipulation (Kusuma et al., 2024). Transparency has been linked to trust formation in digital contexts (Utomo et al., 2022). Merchandise promotion posts demonstrate that transparency regarding product specifications and direct contact information enhances perceived honesty. Such transparency indicates that commercial practices are communicated openly rather than in a concealed manner. Notably, survey findings reveal that followers continue to perceive the account as an "accurate" and "trustworthy" source of information despite the presence of promotional content. This suggests the existence of trust extension, whereby previously established informational credibility enables commercial activities to be accepted within the framework of community loyalty.

Dialogic Engagement and Participatory Trust

The final dimension is reflected in the Q&A session with an ESPN journalist, which generated substantial participation (554 comments). This content created a dialogic space that enabled followers to engage directly in the process of meaning production, particularly regarding player transfer issues. Although some respondents noted that the administrator's responsiveness to comments could be improved, they nevertheless perceived the interaction as effective. While previous studies emphasize rapid responsiveness as a primary determinant of trust (Kartomo, 2024), the present findings suggest that identity-based credibility may compensate for limited interactional reciprocity. This indicates that perceived trust is also cultivated through participatory experience. Engagement in discussion fosters a sense of recognition and inclusion, rendering trust not merely passive but participatory and dialogic. Trust cannot be established solely through informational clarification; rather, it emerges through the active involvement of audiences in the process of meaning construction. These findings suggest that trust cannot be built exclusively through corrections or rebuttals of misinformation, as their effectiveness depends on audience attention and engagement. Accordingly, users cannot be entirely excluded from the process of credibility evaluation (Arifin et al., 2025; Zakiah et al., 2025). Overall, perceived trust in the @yasalamfcb account is formed through the integration of informational authority, narrative consistency, commercial transparency, emotional symbolism, and dialogic participation. Followers' trust derives not only from informational accuracy but also from identity-based closeness and sustained interactional experiences. Thus, perceived trust in this context represents a complex process of social construction, in which symbols, narratives, and digital communication practices operate simultaneously to establish the account's legitimacy in the eyes of its audience.

Comparison with Previous Research

The findings of this study indicate that the construction of credibility in the @yasalamfcb account is established through a combination of storytelling, consistency in information sourcing, and community interaction that collectively fosters trust. These results are consistent with prior research [Atiq et al. \(2022\)](#), which demonstrates that storytelling content significantly influences audience engagement through the mediating roles of relatability and trust. In the present study, captions featuring direct player quotations and media attributions (e.g., *Mundo Deportivo*) illustrate that narratives function not only informatively but also as mechanisms for building trust through references to external sources. Furthermore, previous research [Yang et al. \(2020\)](#) emphasizes that post popularity and argument quality serve as cues for trust formation on Instagram. This aligns with the present findings, where highly liked comments operate as indicators of popularity and as forms of social proof that reinforce informational legitimacy. In other words, high levels of engagement represent not merely participation but also signals of collective credibility. Research [Yang et al. \(2020\)](#) also shows that trust mediates attitudes and intentions. In the context of football fandom, trust in the account is constructed not only through the quality of argumentation but also through shared identity and club loyalty.

Accordingly, this study extends the storytelling–trust–engagement model into the domain of sports fandom communities, which has previously been examined predominantly within influencer marketing and apparel branding contexts. Unlike prior studies that generally position trust as a mediating variable within transactional relationships between brands and consumers, this research conceptualizes trust as the outcome of symbolic construction within identity-based communities. By integrating Source Credibility Theory and the Social Construction of Reality perspective, this study advances the trust model from a persuasion-based framework toward an identity-based digital trust construction framework in the context of sports fandom.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the formation of perceived trust in the @yasalamfcb Instagram account constitutes a process of social construction shaped by symbolic representations and consistently structured digital messages. The dimensions of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness are represented through credible source attribution, narrative consistency, emotional symbolism, professional legitimacy, and commercial transparency, which subsequently undergo processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization within the fandom community. These findings affirm that trust within identity-based communities depends not solely on informational accuracy but also on the reinforcement of shared identity and audience participation in digital communication spaces. Theoretically, this study contributes by integrating Source Credibility Theory and the Social Construction of Reality perspective to explain the mechanisms of trust in the context of digital sports communities, thereby extending trust scholarship beyond its predominant focus on marketing and influencer domains.

From a practical standpoint, the findings offer implications for sports social media managers seeking to establish credibility through well-organized message structures, clear source attribution, consistent communication styles, and transparency in commercial practices to strengthen community loyalty. This study is limited by the relatively small number of respondents and the short observation period, which may not fully capture the long-term dynamics of digital communities. Future research is therefore recommended to employ longitudinal designs, expand participant samples, and conduct comparative studies across fandom communities to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of trust construction within the social media ecosystem.

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