



THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO *Social Media Strategy for Small Brands*

A step-by-step guide
to grow your social media presence
to promote your brand

Welcome

A vertical column of social media icons is visible on the left side of the page, partially obscured by a pink background. From top to bottom, the icons include: a pink Facebook logo, a pink Instagram logo, a pink TikTok logo, a pink Snapchat logo, and a pink Twitter logo.

In today's digital landscape, social media is no longer optional for brands- it's essential. Whether a company is launching a new product, building a community, or trying to make a name for itself in a competitive market, an effective social media strategy can be a make-or-break for the brand in terms of increasing awareness, engagement, and long-term loyalty.

Throughout my academic and professional journey as a Communication major with a Public Relations minor at the University of Arizona, I've worked hands-on with real campaigns and content creation that directly shaped my understanding of how brands can grow authentically online. From developing a full campaign proposal for SET Active, centered on increasing brand awareness, physical presence, and community engagement through pop-ups and influencer partnerships, to designing mock newsletters and press materials for Kulani Kinis, I've gained strong experience in storytelling, content creation, and audience strategy.

This guide brings together the practical lessons I've learned through coursework, campus leadership, internships, and creative brand projects. My hope for this ebook is to help small brands, student-run businesses, or aspiring marketers who want to strengthen their social media presence but don't know where to start. Using real frameworks, examples from my own portfolio, and industry best practices, this guide will walk you step-by-step through building an effective, sustainable social media strategy.

SECTION 1:

Know Your Audience

Every successful social media strategy starts with one thing: knowing who you are trying to reach. Before planning posts, choosing platforms, or creating visuals, you need to have a deep understanding of what kind of audience you are speaking to and connecting with.

During my SET Active campaign project, our team conducted audience research to identify that our primary audience was women aged 18–24 in West Coast states, with a secondary audience of young women nationwide. This allowed us to build messaging, visuals, and on-campus events that specifically appealed to their values, habits, and aesthetic preferences

To identify your audience, consider:

- Age, location, and lifestyle
- Interests, motivations, and spending habits
- What problems your brand solves
- Where your audience spends their time online



SECTION 2:

Choose the right platforms

Not every brand needs to be everywhere. Instead, choose platforms strategically based on:

- Where your audience already is
- Your capacity to create high-quality content
- What format best highlights your brand

In my work at the University of Arizona A Center, I learned the importance of choosing platforms intentionally. While managing social media content and creating TikToks to promote student resources, I discovered that short-form video performed significantly better for Gen Z audiences than static posts. The more I tailored content to the platform's strengths, the more engagement and reach I saw



Here's a Quick Guide:

Instagram

Best for: Branding, community building, aesthetic visuals- great for industries like fashion, beauty, lifestyle, and wellness

TikTok

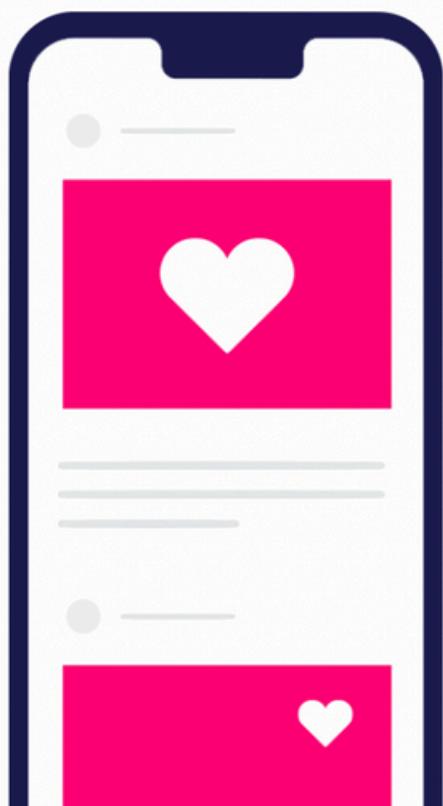
Best for: Fast growth, trends, humor, behind-the-scenes content- Ideal for younger audiences

Facebook

Best for: community events, local businesses, and long-form content

SECTION 3:

Create brand consistent visuals



✓ Visual branding matters. Consistent colors, fonts, layouts, and imagery help customers recognize your brand instantly. Developing the Kulani Kinis mock newsletter taught me how to create visually cohesive layouts and maintain brand consistency across different formats.

✓ When creating your own visual identity:

- Choose a color palette that aligns with your aesthetics
- Use consistent photo editing styles
- Create reusable templates (Canva is perfect for this)

For Instagram or TikTok, templates make posting faster and keep your feed cohesive. This is especially helpful for busy small business owners.

SECTION 4:

Topic Summary

View key performance metrics for this Topic.

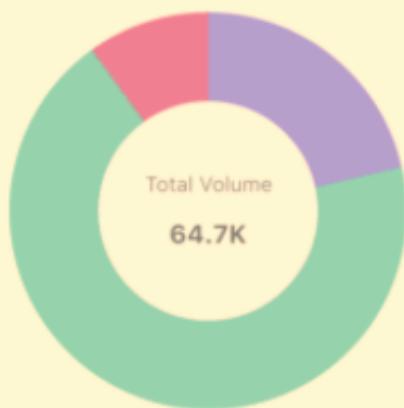
Share of Voice

Coffee Cabin

Coffee Cabin 62%

Coffee House 24%

Espresso Espresso 14%



Total Engagements

5,619

Avg. Engagements Per Message

4.94

Total Potential Impressions

123.4K

Total Unique Authors

1,234

Avg. Positive Sentiment

55%

Track Your Success

A strategy is only effective if you measure how it performs. Tracking data helps you understand what's working, what isn't, and where to adapt your strategy.

In the SET Active campaign, our evaluation plan included weekly metric monitoring, Google Analytics tracking, baseline measurements, and pre-/post-campaign surveys to gauge awareness, engagement, and attendance outcomes.

AN idea of what you should track:

Engagement: Likes, comments, shares, saves

Growth: Follower increases, reach, impressions

Traffic: Website clicks, link taps

Conversions: Sign-ups, purchases, downloads

Content Performance: Which posts gained the most engagement and views

Even basic insights tools built into Instagram and TikTok can guide your strategy.



Conclusion

Social media is one of the most effective tools small brands can use to build visibility, trust, and community. With a clear strategy, consistent visuals, and intentional messaging, any brand, regardless of size or resources, can create an online presence that feels authentic and engaging. The principles in this guide are rooted in the work I've done throughout my academic and professional experiences, and they reflect the practical lessons that shaped my approach to digital communication.

My SET Active campaign proposal showed me how research-driven strategies, in-person activations, and digital engagement can work together to increase brand awareness. Designing that campaign strengthened my ability to analyze audiences, build communication goals, and create content that drives real interaction both online and offline. This experience reinforced the idea that the strongest strategies blend creativity with intentional planning.

Through my roles with the University of Arizona A Center and the Discourse Series, I've gained hands-on experience creating content, managing social platforms, promoting events, and communicating information in ways that resonate with specific audiences. Producing TikToks, designing promotional materials, and coordinating outreach efforts taught me how to translate ideas into clear, visually compelling content that drives engagement. These environments also showed me the importance of adaptability, consistency, and understanding how messages perform across different platforms.

Whether you're a student launching a side project, a small business owner building your brand, or an emerging marketer learning the basics, these strategies provide a strong foundation. Social media doesn't have to be complicated- start by understanding your audience, posting with purpose, and staying consistent. Over time, small, intentional steps create momentum.



About Me

I'm currently pursuing my Master's in Marketing at the University of Arizona. Through both my undergraduate and graduate experiences, I've realized that what excites me most is making a positive impact on people. Marketing gives me the opportunity to do this- not just by promoting a brand, but by creating connections, spreading positivity, and inspiring others. I especially love using my creativity and passion for social media to bring ideas to life through content creation and digital storytelling.

Moving throughout my life- from Oregon to Ohio, then Tennessee, and now Arizona- has given me a unique perspective. Each transition introduced me to new communities and cultures, and in the process, I learned how to adapt, connect, and build relationships with people from many different backgrounds. Those experiences shaped the way I see the world and gave me the ability to approach marketing with empathy and openness.

Another passion that has guided me from a young age is women's empowerment. From joining women-centered clubs and volunteering with organizations, to completing projects on brands that uplift women- like my portfolio work for Kulani Kinis- I've always sought out ways to support and celebrate women. Looking ahead, I hope to combine my skills in marketing with this passion by contributing to organizations and initiatives that empower others to pursue their goals and dreams.



Joselyn