



Personal Branding Strategy Of @Dewohandiko In Promoting Marine Tourism On Instagram

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Abstract. Instagram has become an important digital communication platform for building personal identity and promoting local tourism. This study aims to analyze the personal branding strategy of @dewohandiko in promoting marine tourism through Instagram. This research used a descriptive qualitative approach by examining Instagram content, visual narratives, captions, audience interaction, and supporting documentation. The analysis was based on Peter Montoya's eight principles of personal branding, namely specialization, leadership, personality, distinctiveness, visibility, unity, persistence, and goodwill. The findings show that @dewohandiko builds a consistent personal image as a maritime tourism communicator through visual content, educational messages, and active engagement with audiences. His specialization is reflected in the focus on marine tourism content, while leadership appears through his role as a maritime ambassador who promotes environmental awareness. His authentic personality, consistent visibility, and positive interaction strengthen public trust. This study concludes that personal branding through Instagram can support tourism promotion by creating a credible, attractive, and socially meaningful image.

Keywords: *Personal Branding; Instagram; Marine Tourism; Tourism Promotion; Digital Communication.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital communication has transformed the way individuals, communities, and institutions communicate with the public. Social media is no longer used only as a medium for personal interaction, but also as a strategic space for building identity, reputation, public trust, and promotional communication. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) explain that social media allows users to create, share, and exchange content through digital networks. This characteristic makes social media different from conventional media because audiences are not only receivers of messages, but also active participants in the communication process.

Tourism promotion has also experienced significant changes due to the growth of digital media. Tourism actors, local governments, travel bloggers, ambassadors, and influencers increasingly use social media to introduce destinations to wider audiences. Digital tourism promotion is considered more flexible because it can combine information, visual attraction, personal experience, and audience interaction in one communication space (Kotler et al., 2017). In this context, tourism communication is no longer limited to formal advertising, but also involves personal narratives that are more emotional and persuasive.

Instagram has become one of the most relevant platforms for tourism promotion because it emphasizes visual communication. Through photos, videos, reels, stories, captions, and

highlights, tourism destinations can be presented in a more attractive and memorable way. Visual content plays an important role in shaping the audience's first impression of a destination because tourism is closely related to imagination, experience, and visual attraction (Gretzel, 2018). The stronger the visual and narrative quality of the content, the greater the possibility that audiences will develop interest in the destination being promoted.

The use of *Instagram* in tourism promotion is closely related to *personal branding*. *Personal branding* refers to the process of forming, managing, and communicating a distinctive self-image so that an individual becomes known, trusted, and remembered by the public (Peters, 1997). Montoya and Vandehey (2002) state that a strong personal brand is built through specialization, leadership, personality, distinctiveness, visibility, unity, persistence, and goodwill. These principles are important because audiences often judge a message not only from its content, but also from the credibility and consistency of the communicator.

One figure who uses *Instagram* as a medium for tourism promotion is @dewohandiko. As a maritime ambassador, @dewohandiko actively presents content related to marine tourism, coastal destinations, maritime activities, and environmental conservation. His account does not only show the beauty of tourist destinations, but also communicates educational messages about the importance of protecting marine ecosystems. This condition shows that digital tourism promotion can be strengthened when the communicator has a clear identity, relevant social role, and consistent communication style.

This study focuses on the personal branding strategy of @dewohandiko in promoting marine tourism through *Instagram*. The analysis uses the eight principles of personal branding proposed by Montoya and Vandehey (2002). This study is important because tourism promotion through social media is not only related to destination exposure, but also to the credibility of the figure who communicates the destination. The purpose of this study is to analyze how @dewohandiko applies personal branding strategies in building public image and promoting marine tourism through *Instagram*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Personal Branding

Personal branding is a communication process that allows individuals to build and manage a distinctive image in the public sphere. Peters (1997) argues that every individual can be understood as a brand because each person has values, expertise, characteristics, and reputation that can be communicated to others. In this sense, *personal branding* is not merely self-promotion, but a strategic effort to create recognition, credibility, and trust.

Montoya and Vandehey (2002) explain that personal branding consists of eight main principles. The first principle is specialization, which refers to the ability of an individual to focus on one specific field. The second principle is leadership, which shows the ability of an individual to appear as a credible and influential figure. The third principle is personality, which emphasizes the importance of authenticity in presenting oneself. The fourth principle is distinctiveness, which requires individuals to have unique characteristics that distinguish them from others.

The fifth principle is visibility, which refers to the consistency of public presence. The sixth principle is unity, which means that the image displayed to the public must be aligned with real behavior. The seventh principle is persistence, which shows that personal branding must be built continuously over time. The eighth principle is goodwill, which refers to the formation of positive reputation through ethical behavior, useful messages, and constructive interaction with audiences (Montoya & Vandehey, 2002).

In the context of digital communication, these principles are increasingly relevant because social media allows individuals to display their identity continuously. A personal brand can be formed through visual style, captions, interaction patterns, content themes, and consistency of messages (Khedher, 2014). A strong personal brand will make audiences easier to recognize the communicator and associate the communicator with a specific field.

Social Media and Instagram

Social media is a digital platform that enables users to interact, share information, and produce content collaboratively. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) state that social media is built on the foundation of Web 2.0, which allows user-generated content to develop widely. This means that communication in social media is not one-way, but interactive and participatory.

Instagram is one of the social media platforms that emphasizes visual communication. In tourism promotion, *Instagram* is considered effective because it can display destination images, travel experiences, and persuasive narratives through visual-based features (Gretzel, 2018). Visual content has strong influence in tourism because potential tourists often imagine destinations through photos and videos before making travel decisions. This makes *Instagram* an important medium for forming destination image and public perception.

The interactive features of *Instagram*, such as comments, likes, direct messages, reels, stories, and highlights, allow communicators to build engagement with audiences. Audience engagement is important because it shows that tourism promotion is not only about delivering information, but also about building relationships with followers (Kotler et al., 2017). Through interaction, audiences can feel closer to the communicator and more connected to the message being delivered.

Tourism Promotion in Digital Media

Tourism promotion is a communication activity that aims to introduce, inform, and persuade audiences about a destination. Sunaryo (2013) explains that tourism promotion plays an important role in shaping destination image and increasing public interest in tourism objects. In the digital era, tourism promotion is increasingly influenced by social media because audiences tend to search for travel references through digital platforms.

Digital tourism promotion allows destinations to be presented through visual storytelling. Storytelling is important because tourism is not only about places, but also about experiences, emotions, and meanings attached to those places (Gretzel, 2018). A destination becomes more attractive when it is presented through personal experience and authentic narratives. In this context, influencers and tourism ambassadors have an important role because they can connect destination messages with personal credibility.

Marine tourism promotion also requires educational and environmental messages. Marine destinations are closely related to natural resources, coastal communities, and environmental

sustainability. Sustainable tourism communication should not only emphasize beauty and attraction, but also encourage public awareness of conservation and responsible tourism practices (UNWTO, 2018). This perspective is relevant to the role of @dewohandiko, who promotes marine tourism while also communicating messages about marine conservation.

METHODS

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research aimed to understand and describe the personal branding strategy of @dewohandiko in promoting marine tourism through *Instagram*. Qualitative research is suitable for examining social phenomena, meanings, communication practices, and experiences in their natural context (Moleong, 2017). This approach allows the researcher to interpret not only what appears in the content, but also the meaning behind the communication strategy.

The subject of this research was @dewohandiko as the main informant. The object of this research was the personal branding strategy applied through his *Instagram* account, especially content related to marine tourism, maritime identity, and environmental conservation. The unit of analysis included posts, captions, reels, stories, highlights, visual elements, audience responses, and documentation related to the research focus.

Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to obtain information about the motivation, strategy, and communication purpose of @dewohandiko in building his personal brand. Observation was conducted by examining the content uploaded on *Instagram*, including visual themes, consistency of messages, content categories, and interaction with followers. Documentation was used to collect supporting data such as screenshots, captions, and digital materials related to marine tourism promotion.

The data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) explain that qualitative data analysis requires the researcher to select relevant data, organize findings, and draw conclusions based on patterns that emerge from the data. In this study, the data were categorized based on the eight principles of personal branding by Montoya and Vandehey (2002), namely specialization, leadership, personality, distinctiveness, visibility, unity, persistence, and goodwill.

RESULTS

The results show that @dewohandiko applies the eight principles of personal branding in promoting marine tourism through *Instagram*. The personal brand is built through content focus, maritime identity, visual consistency, educational messages, and interaction with audiences.

Table 1. Personal Branding Strategy of @Dewohandiko on Instagram

No.	Personal Branding Principle	Research Finding	Strategic Meaning
1	Specialization	The account focuses on marine tourism, coastal destinations, maritime activities, and conservation messages.	Builds a clear identity as a marine tourism communicator.

2	Leadership	@dewohandiko appears as a maritime ambassador who educates audiences about marine tourism and environmental issues.	Strengthens credibility and positions him as an inspiring figure.
3	Personality	The communication style is friendly, natural, and authentic.	Creates emotional closeness with audiences.
4	Distinctiveness	The content combines tourism visuals, maritime identity, and personal storytelling.	Differentiates the account from general tourism influencers.
5	Visibility	The account uses posts, reels, stories, highlights, and interaction to maintain public presence.	Keeps the personal brand recognizable and memorable.
6	Unity	The online image is aligned with real maritime and conservation activities.	Builds public trust through consistency between image and action.
7	Persistence	The account consistently promotes marine tourism and conservation themes.	Shows long-term commitment in tourism communication.
8	Goodwill	The account builds positive interaction and delivers educational messages.	Strengthens reputation and public trust.

Source: Processed research data, 2025.

1. The principle of specialization is reflected in the focus of @dewohandiko's content on marine tourism. The account consistently presents beaches, coastal areas, maritime activities, and environmental conservation. This focus makes the account easier to identify because audiences can associate @dewohandiko with marine tourism and maritime communication.
2. The principle of leadership appears through his role as a maritime ambassador. @dewohandiko does not only promote destinations, but also educates audiences about the importance of protecting the marine environment. This role strengthens his credibility because he appears as a communicator who has social responsibility in the maritime field.
3. The principle of personality is shown through a friendly and authentic communication style. His captions and visual content tend to show closeness with audiences. This personality makes the tourism message feel more natural and less promotional.
4. The principle of distinctiveness appears in the combination of maritime identity, personal storytelling, and local tourism visuals. This strategy makes the account different from general tourism accounts because the promoted destinations are connected with personal experience and environmental values.
5. The principle of visibility is maintained through the use of various *Instagram* features, such as posts, reels, stories, and highlights. Consistent visibility helps audiences remember the personal brand and recognize the main message of the account.
6. The principle of unity is reflected in the alignment between the online image and real activities carried out by @dewohandiko. His identity as a maritime communicator is

supported by his involvement in maritime and conservation activities. This alignment strengthens public trust.

7. The principle of persistence is shown through continuous efforts to promote marine tourism and conservation messages. This consistency indicates that personal branding is not built instantly, but through repeated communication and long-term commitment.
8. The principle of goodwill is formed through positive interaction, educational messages, and constructive communication with audiences. The account does not only promote destinations, but also encourages public awareness of marine conservation.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that personal branding plays an important role in strengthening marine tourism promotion through *Instagram*. The strategy applied by @dewohandiko shows that tourism promotion is not only determined by the beauty of destination visuals, but also by the credibility and consistency of the communicator. This is in line with Montoya and Vandehey's (2002) view that a strong personal brand is formed through focus, authenticity, visibility, consistency, and positive reputation.

Specialization becomes the main foundation of @dewohandiko's personal branding. By focusing on marine tourism, the account has a clear identity that distinguishes it from other social media accounts. This finding supports the idea that a personal brand must have a specific field so that audiences can easily recognize and remember it (Montoya & Vandehey, 2002). In the context of tourism promotion, specialization helps build a strong association between the communicator and the tourism sector being promoted.

Leadership strengthens the persuasive value of the content. As a maritime ambassador, @dewohandiko has symbolic credibility to communicate marine tourism and conservation issues. This supports Khedher's (2014) argument that personal branding is closely related to the ability of individuals to build credibility and public trust. Audiences are more likely to accept tourism messages when the communicator is considered relevant and responsible in the field being discussed. Personality and distinctiveness also contribute to the effectiveness of the personal brand. A friendly and authentic communication style allows audiences to feel closer to the communicator. At the same time, the use of maritime identity and personal storytelling creates uniqueness. This finding is relevant to Peters' (1997) view that personal branding must reflect the distinctive character of the individual. In the case of @dewohandiko, the personal brand is not only built through appearance, but also through values, communication style, and social role.

Visibility, unity, and persistence show that personal branding requires consistency. Regular use of *Instagram* features helps maintain public presence, while unity between online image and real action strengthens credibility. Montoya and Vandehey (2002) emphasize that personal branding will be weak if there is a contradiction between the image displayed and the behavior shown in real life. In this study, the alignment between digital content and maritime activities makes @dewohandiko's personal brand more trustworthy.

Goodwill gives social value to tourism promotion. The account does not only display the beauty of marine destinations, but also encourages audiences to care about conservation. This finding is relevant to the concept of sustainable tourism communication, which emphasizes the

importance of balancing promotion, education, and environmental responsibility (UNWTO, 2018). Through this approach, tourism promotion becomes more meaningful because it does not only aim to attract visitors, but also builds awareness of responsible tourism.

Overall, the personal branding strategy of @dewohandiko shows that *Instagram* can function as a medium for identity formation, destination promotion, and public education. The integration of visual content, personal credibility, maritime identity, and conservation messages creates a more holistic tourism communication strategy. This finding is important for tourism actors and local governments that want to involve ambassadors or influencers in digital tourism promotion. The selection of influencers should not only be based on follower numbers, but also on relevance, credibility, consistency, and contribution to public awareness.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that @dewohandiko applies a personal branding strategy through the eight principles proposed by Montoya and Vandehey (2002), namely specialization, leadership, personality, distinctiveness, visibility, unity, persistence, and goodwill. These principles are reflected in the way he presents marine tourism content, communicates conservation messages, interacts with audiences, and maintains consistency between his online image and real activities.

The strongest aspect of his personal branding is specialization in marine tourism. This specialization makes the account easily recognized and associated with maritime tourism promotion. His leadership as a maritime ambassador strengthens credibility because he is not only a content creator, but also a figure who carries educational and social responsibility.

The use of *Instagram* supports the formation of personal branding because the platform provides visual and interactive features. Through photos, videos, reels, stories, highlights, captions, and audience interaction, @dewohandiko is able to build a personal image that is credible, attractive, and socially meaningful. His personal branding strategy contributes to the promotion of marine tourism by shaping positive public perception and encouraging awareness of coastal environmental conservation.

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations. First, the research focuses only on one *Instagram* account, namely @dewohandiko, so the findings cannot be generalized to all tourism influencers or maritime ambassadors. Second, this study uses a qualitative approach, so the analysis focuses on interpretation rather than numerical measurement. Third, this research does not measure the direct impact of personal branding on tourist visits, destination income, or audience behavioral change. Future research may compare several tourism influencers or maritime ambassadors to obtain broader findings. Further studies may also use quantitative methods to measure audience perception, engagement rate, and the influence of personal branding on tourist interest.

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