



Personal Branding Of Erika Richardo As A Content Creator On Instagram

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Abstract. The rapid advancement of communication technology has significantly influenced the way individuals build their personal brand, particularly through visual platforms such as Instagram. Erika Richardo, a young Indonesian painter and content creator, is one example of how personal branding can be developed creatively and consistently in the digital space. This study aims to describe Erika Richardo's personal branding strategy through her Instagram account @erikarichardo using Peter Montoya's eight principles of personal branding: specialization, leadership, personality, distinctiveness, visibility, unity, persistence, and goodwill. The research uses a qualitative descriptive content analysis method, with data collected through observation, documentation, and literature review. The findings show that Erika applies all eight principles in shaping her personal brand. She stands out through her artistic focus on unique painting media, consistent content uploads, and inspirational storytelling. Her branding reflects authenticity, leadership in community projects, and a strong connection between her online persona and real-life values. By maintaining consistent visual identity and interacting with her audience, Erika has successfully positioned herself as an inspirational and professional young artist. This research contributes to a broader understanding of how personal branding can be effectively implemented by creative individuals through social media platforms.

Keywords: *personal branding; instagram; content creator; Digital Identity .*

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, social media has drastically redefined the way individuals construct and present their identity in the public sphere. Among these platforms, Instagram emerges as a dominant medium, particularly in the field of visual storytelling and personal branding (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). Personal branding, once a concept exclusive to celebrities and public figures, is now a strategic tool utilized by content creators, professionals, and even everyday users to differentiate themselves, communicate values, and cultivate a public persona (Montoya & Vandehey, 2008). The phenomenon of personal branding in the digital era aligns with the shift from traditional mass communication to participatory, user-generated content. As suggested by Labrecque, Markos, and Milne (2011), personal branding is no longer solely dependent on conventional media exposure but can now be nurtured through active and intentional self-presentation online. Instagram, as a photo- and video-sharing platform, facilitates visual-based impression management where aesthetics, consistency, and authenticity play vital roles in the branding process.

This study explores the personal branding efforts of Erika Richardo, a young Indonesian painter and entrepreneur, who utilizes Instagram not merely as a portfolio space but as a medium to communicate her identity, values, and creative journey. Her account, @erikarichardo, exemplifies how individuals can strategically position themselves in the

attention economy, crafting a brand persona that resonates with their audience. Erika's online presence reflects elements such as authenticity, creativity, leadership, and positive influence, which align with the core principles of personal branding theory developed by Peter Montoya (2005). Montoya's eight pillars of personal branding—specialization, leadership, personality, distinctiveness, visibility, unity, persistence, and goodwill—serve as the conceptual framework for analyzing Erika's digital persona. Each of these pillars offers a lens to assess how personal brands are constructed and sustained in a saturated social media landscape. For instance, specialization refers to having a clear area of expertise, while personality emphasizes human qualities that make the brand relatable. These elements are not only observed in Erika's content but also reflected in her engagement with followers and collaborations with other creatives.

The rise of content creators as influential figures further underscores the relevance of personal branding studies. Content creators, often functioning as both producers and marketers of their own brand, must curate a digital identity that is both visually appealing and value-driven (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017). Erika Richardo's Instagram is a compelling case of how personal branding can merge artistic expression with entrepreneurial acumen, transforming a personal account into a brand platform. Her journey also illustrates the intersection between visual art, digital marketing, and self-representation. From a communication science perspective, Erika's branding approach demonstrates a hybridization of interpersonal communication, mass communication, and digital semiotics. The intentional use of color palettes, captions, hashtags, and story highlights are semiotic choices that contribute to meaning-making. According to Barthes (1977), signs in visual media are not passive—they carry cultural codes and convey ideological positions. In Erika's case, her choice to consistently showcase her painting process, behind-the-scenes moments, and inspirational quotes communicates not only her professionalism but also her values and artistic philosophy.

Furthermore, the research situates itself within the broader discourse of identity performance in digital contexts. As Goffman (1959) posited in his dramaturgical model, self-presentation involves performing roles to manage impressions. Social media, especially Instagram, acts as a stage where users perform curated versions of themselves. Erika's case highlights how curated authenticity can become a powerful branding strategy. Despite the curation, her posts often convey emotional sincerity, vulnerability, and empowerment, all of which foster trust and audience loyalty. In Indonesia, where the number of Instagram users reached over 100 million in 2023 (We Are Social, 2023), the platform holds immense power as a branding tool. The culture of visual consumption among Indonesian youth, coupled with the entrepreneurial spirit fostered by the digital economy, has opened new opportunities for self-made influencers and artists. Erika Richardo's success story becomes especially significant in this context. It demonstrates how young Indonesians can capitalize on their talents and identity to build a sustainable brand without relying on mainstream media or formal institutions.

However, personal branding is not without its challenges. The pressure to constantly produce content, maintain aesthetic standards, and meet follower expectations can be mentally taxing. There is also the risk of identity commodification, where the self becomes a product tailored to algorithmic preferences rather than authentic expression (Marwick, 2013). Thus, understanding how content creators like Erika balance commercial appeal with artistic integrity offers valuable insights into ethical and sustainable branding practices. The motivation for this study stems from the need to examine how individual creators navigate personal branding beyond surface-level aesthetics. While much research has focused on influencers in the fashion or lifestyle domain, there is limited academic literature on visual artists who use social media as a branding platform. Erika Richardo's case provides a unique opportunity to explore how branding principles are applied in the creative industry, especially by female entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia.

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive method, specifically using content analysis to examine Erika Richardo's Instagram posts. The data will be interpreted through Montoya's personal branding framework and supported by relevant theories in visual communication and identity studies. By analyzing selected content across Erika's Instagram timeline, the study seeks to understand not only what constitutes her personal brand, but how it is strategically curated and communicated to her audience. In summary, this research addresses several key questions: How does Erika Richardo construct her personal brand on Instagram? Which elements of Montoya's personal branding principles are most visible in her content? What strategies does she employ to maintain consistency and authenticity? How does her branding contribute to her recognition as an artist and influencer in Indonesia?

Answering these questions will not only enrich the academic understanding of personal branding in the digital context but also offer practical guidance for young creatives aspiring to build their brand identity. As personal branding continues to shape professional success in the digital era, studies like this are vital for dissecting the mechanics, implications, and potentials of self-branding practices among content creators.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Personal Branding

The concept of personal branding has evolved from traditional marketing practices into a personal communication strategy in the digital era. According to O'Brien (as cited in Jannah, 2020), personal branding refers to the deliberate process of shaping public perception about a person's values, personality, and skills. It involves strategically presenting oneself to gain public recognition and trust. Haroen (2014) also defines personal branding as a form of marketing communication used to create a distinct and favorable image of oneself, which is essential in a competitive digital environment.

The Eight Principles of Personal Branding by Peter Montoya

Peter Montoya's model (Haroen, 2014) presents eight core principles that form the foundation of a successful personal brand:

- a. Specialization: Focusing on a specific skill, strength, or niche that defines a person's identity.
- b. Leadership: Demonstrating the ability to lead, make decisions, and influence others.
- c. Personality: Being authentic and allowing personal traits, including imperfections, to show.
- d. Distinctiveness: Highlighting unique qualities that differentiate an individual from others.
- e. Visibility: Ensuring frequent and consistent appearance in public/media spaces.
- f. Unity: Aligning personal values and behavior both online and offline.
- g. Persistence: Showing consistent effort and commitment over time.
- h. Goodwill: Building a reputation based on positive values and contributions.

These principles guide the construction of Erika Richardo's personal brand on Instagram, particularly in the way she balances her artistic identity with social influence.

Social Media and Instagram as Branding Platforms

Social media is a key instrument in modern communication, defined by Van Dijk (as cited in Nasrullah, 2015) as a platform that facilitates user interaction and self-expression. Instagram, in particular, emphasizes visual content and interactivity. Its features such as feed, story, reels, and hashtags make it an ideal platform for personal branding. Wifalin (2016) explains that Instagram supports identity performance through curated content, where users express creativity and shape perceptions via photos, videos, and captions.

Instagram's design encourages users to develop their digital identity strategically, often using aesthetics and content themes. As a result, Instagram has become a tool for artists, entrepreneurs, and influencers to build brand awareness and audience engagement (Karin & Yuningsih, 2023).

Content Creator and Influencer Culture

A content creator is an individual who produces creative materials such as videos, photos, or written content for online distribution. According to Huotari et al. (2015), content creators not only inform but also engage audiences by presenting their personality, lifestyle, and creative work. Senft (2008) emphasizes that being a content creator requires originality, technical skill, and emotional resilience, especially in managing audience expectations and digital visibility. In the context of Instagram, creators like Erika Richardo use storytelling and visual strategies to establish credibility and aesthetic appeal. She exemplifies the role of an "artist-influencer"—someone who merges creativity with influence to build a loyal following.

Previous Studies on Personal Branding in Social Media

This research is supported by earlier studies exploring personal branding through social media platforms:

- a. Pertiwi & Irwansyah (2020) studied Ria Ricis's Instagram strategy, emphasizing the importance of planning and consistent self-presentation.
- b. Meta Chania (2023) examined Vina Muliana's TikTok branding, highlighting the application of Montoya's model in educational content branding.

Both studies affirm the significance of authenticity, specialization, and consistency in building an effective personal brand online. However, neither focused on the visual arts field, making Erika Richardo's case a valuable contribution to the literature.

METHODS

This study utilizes a qualitative descriptive approach with content analysis to examine the personal branding strategies of Erika Richardo on Instagram. A qualitative method is considered appropriate for this research because it allows for an in-depth interpretation of phenomena such as identity, creativity, and digital communication as they appear in social media content. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research emphasizes understanding human experiences in natural settings, enabling the researcher to interpret meanings behind visual and textual messages in an organic, non-manipulative context.

The research design follows a descriptive content analysis model. As explained by Krippendorff (2013), content analysis is a method that allows researchers to systematically analyze visual or textual data in order to make valid inferences. In this case, the analysis focuses on the content of Erika Richardo's Instagram account, particularly her visual storytelling, captions, and video content published throughout 2024. The theoretical lens used is Peter Montoya's eight principles of personal branding, which include specialization, leadership, personality, distinctiveness, visibility, unity, persistence, and goodwill.

The subject of the research is Erika Richardo, a digital content creator and visual artist, while the object is the content from her Instagram account (@erikarichardo). Twelve video posts were purposively selected based on their relevance to personal branding and their high engagement metrics (likes, comments, and views). These videos reflect Erika's artistic identity, interaction with followers, and strategic use of branding techniques.

Data were collected through three methods: observation, documentation, and literature study. Observation was conducted virtually and non-participatively by reviewing Erika's Instagram posts without direct interaction or intervention. Documentation involved saving

screenshots, captions, and engagement data from each selected post for further analysis. In addition, a literature review was conducted to support the theoretical and analytical foundation of the study. Sources include scholarly articles, books on personal branding, and studies on social media communication.

The data analysis follows the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of four key steps: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the first step, relevant Instagram content was collected. Then, the data were reduced by identifying parts that correspond to Montoya's branding principles. Next, the findings were displayed in a narrative format supported by visual documentation and interpretative commentary. Finally, conclusions were drawn to identify patterns and verify consistency in Erika's personal branding strategy.

This research also adheres to ethical considerations. As the data were publicly available and no private interactions were involved, the study respects the subject's privacy. The analysis avoids speculation or misrepresentation, and all references to the subject are strictly based on observable and documented public content.

RESULTS

This research analyzes Erika Richardo's personal branding strategy through her Instagram account using Peter Montoya's eight principles: specialization, leadership, personality, distinctiveness, visibility, unity, persistence, and goodwill. From the analysis of 12 selected video posts uploaded throughout 2024, it is evident that Erika implements all these principles in a consistent, strategic, and highly engaging manner. The posts chosen reflect not only artistic content but also reveal the construction of a powerful personal narrative and identity that resonates with her audience.

Specialization

Specialization refers to focusing on a specific area of expertise. Erika Richardo exemplifies this principle through her consistent emphasis on painting as the core of her content. Rather than diversifying into unrelated areas for the sake of reach or trends, Erika chooses to stay rooted in visual art. Her Instagram videos often showcase the full process of her artwork—starting from conceptual sketches, the choice of unconventional media such as shoes, galon (water jugs), and even cars, to the final product. In a post dated July 1, 2024, titled *"Lukisan ini akan dilelang hari ini"*, Erika not only showcases her art but embeds meaning and storytelling by connecting the painting to a charitable cause. Such content strengthens her image as a serious artist with a clear purpose. This specialization makes her brand memorable and distinct within a highly saturated digital space.

Leadership

Leadership in personal branding involves demonstrating influence, initiative, and the ability to inspire others. Erika does this in multiple ways. In a post from October 27, 2024, she announced the official opening of a school she helped establish, expressing gratitude and hope for its future impact. This shows leadership beyond the digital realm—translating her influence into tangible, community-based actions. In another video titled *"Ketika Erika ajarin Owen melukis"* (February 13, 2024), Erika is seen mentoring her partner through a painting session, gently guiding him step by step. These contents reinforce her position as a creative leader—not just someone who produces art, but someone who empowers others through creativity.

Personality

Erika's personality is arguably one of the strongest elements in her branding. She displays a blend of sincerity, playfulness, and humility, which make her relatable. In a post dated

December 11, 2024, where a follower criticized her art as "too ordinary," Erika responded by turning the feedback into motivational content. Her caption—"*Biasa aja bukan berarti berhenti berkarya*"—invited her followers to embrace criticism with resilience. Erika also frequently includes moments of self-doubt, humor, and behind-the-scenes bloopers, offering a multi-dimensional personality that transcends the curated perfection often seen on Instagram. This transparency invites emotional investment and deepens the audience connection.

Distinctiveness

Erika sets herself apart from other content creators through unique visual and thematic choices. While many artists stick to traditional canvas work, Erika explores bold new territories. For example, her post "*Kalo gak dilukis bukan Erika namanya*" (December 23, 2024), shows her painting on unexpected objects like a car hood and school wall. These visually striking and unconventional projects underscore her creativity and courage. The uniqueness in medium, color palette, and presentation style contributes to her brand identity. This distinctiveness not only captures attention but also makes Erika's content instantly recognizable without even needing to mention her name.

Visibility

Consistent visibility is key to sustaining a digital brand. Erika maintains a high posting frequency, regularly updating her feed, Stories, and Reels. She interacts with comments, uses trending sounds, and participates in social conversations—all while keeping the focus on her core theme: painting. Her engagement numbers (some videos garnering over 3.6 million views) reflect the effectiveness of this strategy. Erika's use of the Instagram Live feature and Q&A sessions also increases audience interaction, reinforcing her presence not just as a content producer but as an active digital persona.

Unity

Unity refers to the coherence between one's online presence and real-life values. Erika's content does not depict a persona different from her actual lifestyle. Her audience sees the same Erika—whether painting, sharing meals, visiting her painting school, or interacting with her sister and boyfriend. In the video "*Buat kalian terimakasih, sekolah kita sudah resmi!!!*", Erika shares a heartfelt narrative about her journey, community support, and gratitude, revealing the emotional continuity of her personal brand. This alignment makes her brand more trustworthy and authentic in the eyes of her followers.

Persistence

The principle of persistence is reflected in Erika's long-term dedication. Her journey started in 2018 when she posted her first painting content. Initially, her work received minimal engagement, but she continued creating, experimenting, and improving. In the video "*Lukisan Erika biasa aja*", she discusses her past failures and the struggle to gain recognition. Despite these challenges, Erika never stopped posting or evolving. Today, with over 3 million followers, her success serves as proof of how persistence strengthens brand integrity. Her daily uploads and active responses to comments show not only commitment but also respect for her audience.

Goodwill

Erika's brand is not just about self-promotion; it is also about giving back. She often incorporates messages of hope and social awareness. In a post from December 19, 2024, titled "*Pertama kali ke Panti Jompo*", Erika visited a retirement home and created personalized artworks for its residents. The video garnered emotional responses and demonstrated how

Erika uses her platform for meaningful impact. Moreover, she frequently encourages young followers to pursue their artistic dreams regardless of background or criticism. Her efforts to promote inclusivity, mental health awareness, and education contribute to a personal brand rooted in compassion and social responsibility.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research affirm that Erika Richardo successfully implements the eight principles of personal branding as formulated by Peter Montoya—namely specialization, leadership, personality, distinctiveness, visibility, unity, persistence, and goodwill—through her content on Instagram. This section discusses how these findings align with existing theoretical frameworks and relevant prior research, as well as the broader implications for digital identity and self-branding in the creative economy.

To begin with, Erika's clear specialization in visual art, particularly her focus on unconventional painting media, is consistent with Montoya's emphasis that a strong personal brand must be built on a well-defined area of expertise. This strategic focus distinguishes Erika from other generalist influencers or lifestyle content creators, validating O'Brien's (in Jannah, 2020) claim that effective branding begins with clarity in purpose and core skills. Furthermore, her commitment to this niche strengthens her credibility and memorability—two vital components for audience retention in digital spaces.

In terms of leadership, Erika exhibits both implicit and explicit influence through her content. Not only does she teach and mentor others, but she also actively initiates community-based projects, such as opening a painting school. This reflects what Haroen (2014) describes as brand leadership—the ability to inspire change and contribute beyond oneself. Her leadership extends beyond mere digital presence into the physical world, reinforcing the idea that a personal brand thrives when online actions are matched by offline impact.

The demonstration of personality in Erika's Instagram content plays a critical role in building emotional resonance. Unlike influencers who rely on idealized self-presentation, Erika displays vulnerability, humor, and sincerity. This supports Kapitan and Silvera's (2016) notion that authenticity is essential in fostering trust. By incorporating behind-the-scenes footage, addressing criticism, and maintaining a conversational tone, Erika positions herself as relatable and approachable, further increasing audience loyalty.

Moreover, Erika's brand is marked by strong distinctiveness, which is crucial in a platform like Instagram that is saturated with visual content. The unique visual elements she employs—such as painting on unexpected objects and using vibrant, nontraditional palettes—highlight her creative identity. Montoya's concept of distinctiveness emphasizes the need to stand out without being disingenuous, and Erika's brand embodies this perfectly. Her originality is not manufactured, but rather stems from her artistic drive, making her visual branding consistent and genuine.

Visibility is another area where Erika excels. Her frequent posting, use of Reels, Stories, and Live sessions show an understanding of Instagram's algorithmic preference for active creators. This aligns with Montoya's principle that visibility must be managed intentionally, not left to chance. Erika's strategy shows she is not only a content creator but also a brand strategist who understands the platform mechanics and user behavior.

The principle of unity is evidenced in Erika's brand consistency across digital and real-life contexts. Her online posts reflect her real-world values, including family, education, and art. This coherence ensures that her audience perceives her as trustworthy, a crucial trait in influencer marketing. Erika doesn't just "act" artistic online—she lives the identity she projects. According to Montoya, such unity creates brand harmony, which is vital for long-term reputation management.

Erika also demonstrates persistence, a trait that is often undervalued in fast-moving digital culture. Her years of posting—even during periods of low engagement—prove her dedication to her craft and brand. This is supported by empirical studies (e.g., Pertiwi & Irwansyah, 2020) which found that long-term consistency is more influential than viral spikes in building durable personal branding. Erika's growth from obscurity to over three million followers is a testament to her sustained effort and strategic resilience.

Finally, goodwill is reflected in Erika's acts of social responsibility, such as engaging in charitable work, promoting educational access through her art school, and spreading messages about mental health. In contrast to purely commercial influencers, Erika's platform carries a moral tone, which strengthens audience connection on an emotional level. As Montoya states, a personal brand without goodwill risks being seen as self-serving or opportunistic. Erika avoids this trap by embedding altruistic values into her content.

These findings also align with prior research on branding in the digital era. For instance, the study by Meta Chania (2023) on TikTok influencer Vina Muliana concluded that combining content expertise with value-based messaging yields stronger audience engagement. Similarly, Erika's case underscores that branding success is not only determined by aesthetics but also by meaning and purpose.

Moreover, Erika's Instagram branding demonstrates that visual artists can transcend traditional gallery spaces by using social media as a platform for both artistic expression and economic sustainability. This expands the notion of the "influencer" beyond beauty or fashion content into educational and cultural domains. Her example provides a replicable model for young creatives who aim to monetize their craft without compromising artistic integrity.

In conclusion, Erika Richardo's branding approach affirms the continued relevance of Montoya's model in contemporary digital communication. However, it also shows that these principles must be contextualized—adapted to personal values, audience expectations, and platform dynamics. Erika's personal branding is not merely a result of technical execution, but of strategic self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and consistent value alignment. This discussion suggests that successful personal branding, particularly on visual platforms like Instagram, requires a synthesis of creativity, clarity, and character.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the personal branding strategies of Erika Richardo through qualitative content analysis of her Instagram posts using Peter Montoya's eight personal branding principles as an analytical framework. The findings reveal that Erika consistently applies all eight principles—specialization, leadership, personality, distinctiveness, visibility, unity, persistence, and goodwill—through a strategic and authentic use of social media content.

Erika's specialization as a painter with a unique creative identity sets her apart in a highly saturated digital landscape. Her ability to lead, inspire, and educate others, both online and offline, further strengthens her personal brand and positions her as a role model in the creative industry. Her content reflects a genuine personality, combining sincerity, humor, and resilience, which enhances audience trust and loyalty.

Distinctiveness is maintained through her choice of unconventional media and visual storytelling techniques. Meanwhile, her consistent visibility, active interaction with followers, and use of various Instagram features ensure that her brand remains relevant and accessible. Unity between her online persona and real-life values adds coherence and credibility to her brand, while persistence and goodwill demonstrate her long-term commitment and sense of social responsibility.

In conclusion, Erika Richardo exemplifies how a personal brand can be built not only through creative expression but also through consistency, authenticity, and purpose. Her

success provides valuable insights for other young content creators and digital entrepreneurs aiming to establish meaningful personal brands in the digital era.

LIMITATION

While this study offers meaningful insights into Erika Richardo's personal branding on Instagram, it is not without limitations. First, the research focuses exclusively on content published in the year 2024 and is limited to twelve purposively selected video posts. Although these posts were chosen for their engagement level and relevance, they may not fully represent the entirety of Erika's branding journey or the nuances of her audience interaction over time.

Second, the study relies solely on public content analysis and does not incorporate direct interviews with Erika Richardo, her team, or her audience. As a result, the findings are based on researcher interpretation and may not capture the full intentionality behind each branding decision or the deeper psychological motivations of the creator and her followers.

Third, this research is constrained to a single platform—Instagram—while Erika also maintains a presence on TikTok, YouTube, and other media that may contribute to her overall brand image. A multi-platform analysis could provide a more comprehensive understanding of her digital identity. Lastly, as a qualitative study, the findings are context-specific and not generalizable to all content creators or influencers. Future research could involve comparative case studies, interviews, or mixed-method approaches to enhance validity and broader applicability.

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