

## Social Media Utilization by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in Building Tourism Image in the Digital Communication Era (Case Study: Instagram Account @Pesona.Indonesia)

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### Abstract

This study explores the utilization of the Instagram account @pesona.indonesia by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) in building Indonesia’s tourism image in the digital communication era. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the research analyzes visual content, narratives, and user interactions over the past three months. The findings reveal that the account effectively applies new media principles such as digitalization, interactivity, and democratization. The content strategy goes beyond merely delivering information; it creates compelling visual experiences, reinforces cultural identity, and fosters audience engagement. High levels of user participation through comments, likes, and content sharing indicate successful two-way communication that shapes a positive perception of Indonesia as a tourism destination. These findings emphasize the strategic role of social media in tourism promotion and cultural diplomacy within the digital sphere.

**Keywords:** *Digital Communication; Social Media; Instagram; Tourism Image*

### INTRODUCTION

The global communication landscape has undergone a fundamental transformation that is unavoidable, triggered by the acceleration of digitalization and massive internet penetration in all aspects of life. The digital era has brought us into a communication ecosystem that is highly connected, interactive, and dynamic, where information flows at the speed of light and geographical boundaries become blurred (Kietzmann et al., 2021). In this swirl of change, social media has established itself not only as a platform for social interaction, but has transformed into a dominant force that shapes public opinion, builds collective narratives, and even drives the wheels of the global economy (Mangold & Faulds, 2020).

Various platforms — from Instagram with its immersive visual strength, Twitter with its rapid information dissemination, to TikTok with its viral short videos — have now become the main arena for individuals, brands, and even government entities to communicate and interact. This phenomenon has deep and significant implications for various sectors, especially the tourism industry, whose basic characteristics depend heavily on public perception, destination attractiveness, and shared experiences. In this fast-paced era of digital communication, a tourism destination’s image is no longer formed only through conventional promotional strategies, but is increasingly influenced by narratives that are organically or strategically woven in the virtual space, by content uploaded and shared millions of times, and by unlimited interactions between users (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2023).

The importance of destination imaging in attracting tourist flows cannot be underestimated, and even becomes increasingly crucial amid the increasingly intense and dynamic global competition. A strong, positive, and authentic destination image is a priceless strategic asset, serving as a key differentiator that sets a destination apart from its competitors. This image directly influences travel decisions of prospective tourists and builds long-term loyalty for visitors who have experienced it (Prayag & Ryan, 2021). In the context of modern

tourism marketing, social media has evolved into an ideal canvas offering unlimited space to paint destination images more vividly and attractively. These platforms allow tourism organizations to tell stories, showcase stunning natural beauty, deep cultural heritage, authentic local hospitality, as well as various attractions and unique experiences offered by a place visually and interactively.

More than that, social media facilitates direct interaction with potential tourists, answering questions, responding to feedback, and building communities loyal to the destination (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Therefore, strategic, dynamic, and planned digital presence is no longer merely an option, but an absolute requirement for the sustainability and competitiveness of a country's tourism industry in an increasingly fragmented global market (WTTC, 2022).

The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) of the Republic of Indonesia, as the main driving force in the development and promotion of the national tourism and creative economy sector, has shown progressive and responsive adaptation to the challenges and opportunities presented by this digital era. With an in-depth understanding of the transformative power of social media, Kemenparekraf has systematically integrated various digital platforms into the core of its communication strategy in its continuous efforts to build and strengthen Indonesia's tourism image globally. Among the many digital channels extensively used, the Instagram account @pesona.indonesia stands out as one of the main pillars with wide reach and extraordinary visual potential. This Instagram account functions like a digital showcase open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, consistently displaying enchanting natural beauty, rich cultural diversity, and various tourism attractions spread from Sabang to Merauke (Kemenparekraf, 2023). Through careful content strategies involving high-quality photos and videos, strong narratives, and active interaction with followers, this account strategically aims to spark travel interest from both potential domestic and competitive international markets.

Nevertheless, the actual effectiveness of social media use by government institutions like Kemenparekraf in shaping and strengthening tourism image still requires careful, systematic, and evidence-based evaluation. The fundamental question that must be answered is: To what extent has the digital communication strategy consistently implemented by Kemenparekraf through the Instagram account @pesona.indonesia succeeded in building positive perceptions, significantly attracting tourist interest, and ultimately contributing to the achievement of national tourism targets amid the flood of digital information and tight image competition among global destinations?

This study aims to thoroughly explore these crucial questions by comprehensively analyzing the utilization of Instagram @pesona.indonesia by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in building Indonesia's tourism image in the digital communication era.

## METHOD

In this study, the researchers applied a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The qualitative approach produces data in the form of descriptions. According to the opinion of Kriyantono, 2014 in Mita (2022), qualitative research can now be conducted online, considering that technological advancements have brought significant changes to qualitative research practices. (Saputra & Astari, 2024)

This study uses a qualitative approach to reveal in depth the digital communication strategies implemented by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy through the Instagram account @pesona.indonesia. This account was chosen as the research object because it is an official channel actively used in national tourism promotion.

This approach allows the researchers to understand the meaning behind visual and narrative content, as well as to observe the role of social media as a strategic space for public

communication representation.

Data collection was carried out through observation of Instagram content over the past three months, including types of posts, captions, logos, and destination representations. Collecting data through literature studies from journals, official reports, and supporting articles was also used to strengthen the analysis.

The analysis was conducted inductively using a qualitative content approach to reveal communication patterns. Lev Manovich's New Media Theory became the foundation, highlighting digitalization, interactivity, and democratization as characteristics of modern social media.

The data was analyzed using a qualitative content analysis approach to interpret patterns and communication messages conveyed. Data validity was maintained through triangulation between observation results, literature, and theories used, so that the interpretation of results would be more accurate and accountable (Sugiyono, 2019).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The researchers will present the analysis results in this section, which were carried out using information collected from content observation on the Instagram account @pesona.indonesia. The goal is to present accurate and relevant analytical results that explain how this account shapes public perception of Indonesia's culture and image.

The use of a bird-shaped emblem with five distinctive colors on its feathers further strengthens Indonesia's cultural identity in the "Pesona Indonesia" campaign. The bird was chosen because of its nature of flocking, symbolizing harmony and unity. Additionally, Indonesia is home to a large number of birds, one of which is even a national symbol. The bird with outstretched wings represents freedom and the ambition to transcend national boundaries.

The five feather patterns of the bird hold deep symbolic meanings: orange symbolizes the spirit of innovation and openness; blue symbolizes tranquility, firmness, and global reach; magenta symbolizes balance, common sense, and practicality; and green symbolizes creativity and harmony with nature. Purple also symbolizes imagination, spirituality, and inner unity. Meanwhile, the color contrast between the words "Pesona" and "Indonesia," with "Indonesia" given a darker shade, highlights the resilience and strength of the nation's identity in facing international challenges.

To understand the benefits used on social media as part of technological developments, they are viewed through new media theory such as digitalization, interactivity, and democratization. In these three factors, it can be seen that Instagram @pesona.indonesia by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy is used as a strategic communication tool in building Indonesia's tourism image.

Every piece of content on @pesona.indonesia is created digitally, including photos, short videos (reels), and graphic designs showcasing tourist destinations, local customs, and various events. The rapid and wide dissemination of information is made possible by this digital format, which is also accessible to the general public. By combining text, audio, and visual components, digitalization also facilitates a more dynamic creative process that engages the audience both visually and emotionally.

On Instagram, which follows trends and constantly updates interesting new features, the account utilizes features such as comments, likes, and user content reposts, showing a high level of engagement. Story elements, polls, and Q&A sessions are also often used by the account managers as tools for two-way communication. This shows that the communication created is not only one-way, but also encourages user involvement in creating a shared image of the promoted tourist destinations.

The public is now more involved in the information delivery process due to developments in digital communication technology. This can be seen from the

@pesona.indonesia account, which frequently reposts user-generated content, including photos of popular tourist attractions. Thus, the institution's position as the exclusive creator of knowledge is shifted to being a community partner. This phenomenon reflects democratization, as social media provides space for the public to participate in creating more inclusive and engaging tourism narratives.

According to new media theory, the emergence of digital technologies such as social media and the internet has transformed communication patterns into more real-time and interactive forms, and has given audiences the opportunity to become producers and consumers of information (prosumers). A specific illustration of how the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) uses new media to promote Indonesian tourism and culture is the Instagram account @pesona.indonesia.

This account is able to maximize the potential of new media to create a positive image of Indonesia by combining engaging visual content, educational stories, and interactive social media elements. One example is the use of Instagram Highlights, which display archived content categorized by regions such as Nusa Tenggara, Central Java, Jakarta, Lampung, Lake Toba, and Labuan Bajo. This feature serves as a thematic navigation tool that makes it easier for users to find information about specific locations, as well as functioning as a collection of stories.

In the feeds section, Pesona Indonesia's Instagram content consistently showcases cultural diversity and local wisdom. Visual icons specific to each region are displayed in each highlight, reinforcing the visual identity and connection between local culture and its tourist destinations. In accordance with the government's goal of encouraging inclusive and equitable travel across Indonesia, this approach supports region-oriented tourism promotion initiatives.

Furthermore, by presenting visual narratives of cultural festivals, natural tourism, culinary events, and other regional activities, the highlight feature contributes significantly to digital destination imaging and enhances local storytelling.

From various regions across the archipelago, these contents showcase cultural aspects such as traditions, performing arts, culinary traditions, languages, and traditional crafts, as well as natural scenery. This content aims to show domestic and international audiences the cultural potential of Indonesia as a whole through beautiful images and informative stories.

Positive opinions about Indonesian tourism have increased rapidly thanks to these visual communication techniques. This account serves as both a promotional tool and a cultural education tool that fosters public pride in their own cultural heritage by highlighting the uniqueness of each location. Meanwhile, viewers from other countries also see Indonesia as a nation rich in deep cultural values in addition to its natural beauty. Therefore, this account is very important for enhancing cultural diplomacy and shaping national identity online.

Active public engagement in discussing and responding to content is also shown through the interactions that occur in the comment sections of each post. Many of them contribute, share personal stories, or express pride in their hometowns. This high level of engagement indicates an emotional bond between users and the Pesona Indonesia account, which ultimately builds trust and positive perceptions toward the account as a reliable and motivating source of information in the travel industry.

Positive reactions also spark constructive and active discussions, showing that this account has now become an inclusive platform for engagement, not merely a one-way messaging system. The online community formed from these interactions also supports initiatives to preserve regional cultures while expanding tourism marketing reach. Therefore, it can be said that the new media communication strategy of the Pesona Indonesia account has succeeded in creating a strong, proud, and competitive national image on the international stage.

## CONCLUSION

The Instagram account @pesona.indonesia has proven to be very effective in utilizing new media theory principles such as digitalization, interactivity, and democratization to build and strengthen Indonesia's tourism and cultural image. With engaging visual content, strong philosophy behind its emblem and logo, and the ability to interact actively with its followers, this account functions not only as a promotional tool. Instead, @pesona.indonesia has successfully created a cultural education platform that inspires national pride while empowering the public to participate in shaping positive narratives about Indonesia. The high level of user engagement, seen from comments, likes, and public content reposts, proves the account's success in creating an inclusive and dynamic community, placing Indonesia in a competitive position in the global tourism arena. The communication strategies implemented by @pesona.indonesia have produced very positive public opinion toward Indonesia's tourist destinations and cultural richness. This account has succeeded in building a strong emotional bond with its audience, reflected in the high interactions in the comment sections and frequently shared expressions of pride. This shows that @pesona.indonesia not only delivers information but also effectively shapes strong and positive perceptions, portraying Indonesia as a country rich in cultural values and natural beauty in the eyes of the world. This success is an important key in enhancing the nation's attractiveness and image at the international level.

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