

Analysis of Hotel Visual Branding and Multimedia Utilization via Instagram Platform: A Case Study of Mercure Hotel Bengkulu

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Article Info

Article history:

Received: November 20, 2025

Revised: January 9, 2026

Accepted: January 26, 2026

Keywords:

Content Analysis;
Instagram;
Mercure Hotel Bengkulu;
Social Media;
Visual Branding.

Abstract

Background: The increasing competitiveness of the hospitality industry in the digital era has driven hotels to optimize social media as a strategic communication tool. Instagram, with its strong emphasis on visual branding and multimedia content, plays a crucial role in shaping customer perception, engagement, and brand attractiveness.

Aims: This study aims to analyze the visual branding and multimedia utilization strategies implemented by Hotel Mercure Bengkulu through its Instagram platform, focusing on how visual and multimedia elements are integrated to strengthen brand identity and audience engagement.

Methods: This research employed a qualitative approach using descriptive content analysis. Data were collected from 90 Instagram posts published by @mercure_bengkulu between January and June 2025, including photos, carousels, and reels. The analysis examined color schemes, composition, content themes, caption styles, and engagement metrics.

Results: The findings indicate that Hotel Mercure Bengkulu consistently applies warm color palettes and balanced visual compositions that convey comfort and luxury. Food and beverage content dominates the posts (33.3%) and achieves the highest engagement rate (3.4%). The use of diverse multimedia formats, including photos, carousels, and short videos, effectively increase algorithmic visibility and audience retention.

Conclusion: Consistent visual identity and strategic multimedia integration significantly strengthen Hotel Mercure Bengkulu's digital brand positioning. The results highlight the importance of expanding audience interaction and authenticity through user-generated content. Well-planned multimedia-based visual branding is essential for building engagement and brand loyalty in the hospitality industry.

To cite this article: Cempakasari, P., & Gushevinalti, G. (2026). Analysis of Hotel Visual Branding and Multimedia Utilization via Instagram Platform: A Case Study of Mercure Hotel Bengkulu. *IJOEM: Indonesian Journal of Elearning and Multimedia*, 5(1), 46-54. <https://doi.org/10.58723/ijoem.v5i1.514>

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INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation of the hospitality industry has significantly reshaped marketing communication strategies, shifting from conventional print and broadcast media toward interactive and visually driven social media platforms. Social media marketing has become an integral component of communication strategies in the tourism and hospitality sector, enabling brands to engage audiences more interactively and visually (Harrigan et al., 2021). Among various platforms, Instagram has emerged as a vital marketing tool due to its strong emphasis on imagery, storytelling, and audience interaction. It also plays an important role in tourists' decision-making processes when selecting accommodations or destinations (Martins et al., 2025).

In Indonesia's increasingly competitive hospitality market, digital branding has evolved from a promotional tool into a strategic asset that strengthens customer relationships and fosters long-term loyalty. As tourism trends continue to evolve, hotels increasingly rely on visual storytelling and multimedia integration to communicate authenticity, consistency, and experiential value (Almeida et al., 2021; Aydin, 2020; Leung et al., 2020; Wang & Li, 2023).

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Previous studies indicate that carefully curated visual narratives allow hotels to convey brand personality, emotional value, and cultural distinctiveness, which significantly influence consumer perception and purchase intention (Chen & Lee, 2023; Kumar & Sharma, 2024). Instagram's algorithm favors visually cohesive and highly engaging content, making visual consistency and multimedia diversity essential elements of effective hospitality branding (Chendra & Setiawan, 2024; Cheraghalizadeh et al., 2022; Chu et al., 2020; Ciasullo et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the credibility of online channels has been shown to shape consumer trust and engagement toward hotel brands (Dickinger, 2011). Recent research also emphasizes that integrating global branding standards with localized storytelling enhances brand authenticity and differentiation in competitive hospitality markets (Baraybar-Fernández et al., 2023; Pitanatri et al., 2024).

Despite the growing body of research on social media marketing and visual branding in the hospitality industry, most existing studies focus on hotels in major metropolitan areas or adopt cross-brand and cross-destination comparison approaches. Limited scholarly attention has been given to localized implementations of global hotel branding strategies in secondary cities or emerging tourism destinations.

Moreover, many studies emphasize engagement outcomes without sufficiently explaining how multimedia elements such as media formats, visual coherence, and storytelling techniques are systematically designed and applied in daily content practices. This limitation highlights the need for in-depth, platform-specific research that integrates qualitative visual interpretation with quantitative engagement analysis.

Mercure Hotel Bengkulu, a property under the Accor Group, presents a relevant yet underexplored context for examining digital visual branding practices. While Accor applies standardized global branding guidelines across its properties, Mercure Hotel Bengkulu adapts these standards to reflect local cultural narratives and regional identity. This adaptation is expressed through consistent color palettes, structured visual compositions, and storytelling that highlights Bengkulu's cultural heritage.

Studying this localized adaptation provides valuable insights into how global branding frameworks can be operationalized effectively at the local level through social media communication.

This study aims to analyze how Mercure Hotel Bengkulu implements visual branding and multimedia strategies through its official Instagram account to enhance brand visibility and audience engagement. Specifically, this research seeks to: Examine how visual branding is implemented through multimedia content on @mercure_bengkulu. Identify which types of multimedia content and visual elements generate the highest audience engagement. Analyze how visual coherence and storytelling strategies contribute to brand perception and digital engagement in the hospitality context.

The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically by bridging marketing communication theory with applied digital branding practices and offering strategic insights for hospitality practitioners operating in competitive markets.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design using content analysis to examine digital visual branding practices, aligning with organizational digital adoption perspectives in hospitality communication (Krippendorff, 2018; Pateli et al., 2020). Content analysis allows for systematic interpretation of visual meaning, storytelling patterns, and multimedia engagement embedded in social media posts. This study was complemented by descriptive quantitative engagement metrics to strengthen interpretation.

Participant

The participant in this study was the Marketing Communication Manager of Mercure Hotel Bengkulu. A semi-structured interview was conducted to validate branding strategies, content planning, and alignment with Accor Group digital branding guidelines.

Population and Sampling

The population consists of all Instagram posts published on the official account @mercure_bengkulu. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select ninety (90) posts published between January and June 2025. The sampling criteria focused on content relevant to visual branding and multimedia utilization, including photo posts, carousel posts, and reels.

Instrumentation

The study employed qualitative research instruments consisting of an observation sheet, an engagement tracking sheet, and a semi-structured interview guide. The observation sheet included indicators such as color palette, visual composition, media format, caption tone, and content theme. Engagement data were recorded using observable metrics (likes, comments, and shares).

As this study uses qualitative content analysis, psychometric properties such as statistical validity and reliability were not calculated. Instead, analytical rigor was ensured through consistent coding categories, clear operational definitions, and data triangulation (Krippendorff, 2018).

Instruments

The instruments used in this study included:

1. Observation sheets for systematic coding of Instagram content.
2. Engagement tracking sheets for calculating engagement rates.
3. A semi-structured interview guide for the Marketing Communication Manager.

Supporting documents included the Hotel Social Media Guidelines 2024 (Mercure Hotels, 2024).

Procedures

The research procedure began with a literature review and preliminary observation of Mercure Hotel Bengkulu's Instagram activity. Data collection involved documenting and categorizing Instagram posts based on content type, color composition, and multimedia format. Interviews were conducted to confirm strategic intent and brand direction.

The research was conducted in Bengkulu, Indonesia, from January to August 2025, encompassing data collection, analysis, and validation stages. This study also adopts the organizational digital adoption perspective proposed by Pateli et al. (2020), which emphasizes structured social media use within hospitality communication strategies.

Analysis Plan

Data analysis followed Krippendorff's (2018) content analysis framework, consisting of unitization, coding, interpretation, and validation. Each Instagram post served as a unit of analysis and was coded using predefined indicators:

1. Color palette,
2. Composition,
3. Media type,
4. Caption tone, and
5. Subject matter.

Quantitative engagement performance was measured using a commonly applied engagement rate formula:

$$\text{Engagement Rate (\%)} = \frac{(\text{Number of Likes} + \text{Comments} + \text{Shares})}{\text{Total Number of Followers}} \times 100\%$$

Engagement data were recorded seven days after posting to allow sufficient audience interaction. Frequencies and percentages were used to compare engagement across content categories and media formats.

Table 1. Content Category and Average Engagement Rate

Content Category	Type of Media	Average Engagement (%)
Food & Beverage	Photo / Reel	3.4

Content Category	Type of Media	Average Engagement (%)
Event Highlights	Carousel	2.8
Room Promotions	Photo	2.3
Staff & Service Stories	Reel	2.1
User-Generated Content	Carousel / Reel	2.0

Source: Processed Data from @mercure_bengkulu (2025)

As shown in Table 1, food and beverage-related posts receive the highest engagement levels, followed by event coverage and promotional content. This suggests that visually appealing and emotionally relatable themes enhance audience interaction and algorithmic visibility.

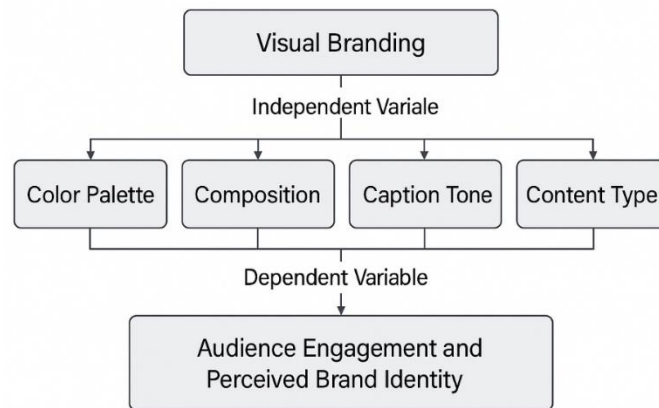


Figure 1. Research Framework of Visual Branding Strategy

Figure 1 shows the conceptual flow of this study, illustrating the relationship between multimedia elements (visuals, captions, and engagement metrics) and their impact on brand identity and audience trust. The model combines theoretical insights from visual marketing and digital branding studies (Chen & Lee, 2023; Kumar & Sharma, 2024).

Scope and Limitations

This study is limited to Instagram content published by Mercure Hotel Bengkulu and does not include other Accor Group properties or social media platforms. The six-month observation period provides a representative snapshot of digital branding practices but does not capture seasonal variations or long-term engagement trends. The analysis focuses on visual and strategic communication aspects rather than operational or financial performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results demonstrate that Mercure Hotel Bengkulu has effectively utilized Instagram as a digital marketing platform to strengthen its visual brand identity. A total of 90 Instagram posts were analyzed, consisting of 43 photo posts (47.7%), 27 carousel posts (30%), and 20 reels (22.3%). These posts were classified into five content categories: Food & Beverage, Event Highlights, Room Promotions, Staff & Service Stories, and User-Generated Content (UGC).

Engagement analysis shows that Food & Beverage content achieved the highest average engagement rate (3.4%), followed by Event Highlights (2.8%) and Room Promotions (2.3%). Motion-based content, particularly reels and carousels, consistently generated higher interaction levels than static images, reflecting Instagram's preference for dynamic multimedia formats (Chendra & Setiawan, 2024; Chu et al., 2020; Silva et al., 2024). This finding supports Ying (2024), who emphasized the role of visual aesthetics in shaping guests' experiential impressions in lifestyle hotels.

Table 2. Engagement Performance by Content Category and Media Format

Content Category	Type of Media	Average Engagement (%)	Dominant Visual Element
Food & Beverage	Reels/Carousel	3.4	Warm color tone, close-up detail
Event Highlights	Carousel/Reel	2.8	People-centered, dynamic motion
Room Promotions	Photo/Carousel	2.3	Symmetrical layout, lighting tone
Staff & Service Stories	Reel	2.1	Human-centric, friendly posture
User-Generated Content	Carousel/Reel	2.0	Authentic customer visuals

Source: Processed data from @mercure_bengkulu, January–June 2025

The content analysis further shows that Mercure Hotel Bengkulu consistently applies warm, earthy color palettes (cream, beige, terracotta) that evoke a sense of hospitality and comfort. These color choices align with Accor's global brand visual identity, while incorporating local cultural motifs such as Bengkulu batik and traditional cuisine.

Caption analysis revealed a dual-language communication strategy, using Bahasa Indonesia and English, to enhance accessibility and inclusivity for both local and international audiences. Captions often carry emotional or experiential storytelling, with persuasive yet warm tones such as "Discover moments of comfort" or "Taste the local charm." The hashtags #MercureBengkulu and #DiscoverMercureMoments were consistently employed to maintain branding consistency and optimize discoverability.

Interview findings from the Marketing Communication Manager confirmed that the hotel's social media strategy follows Accor's digital framework, emphasizing visual coherence, local cultural integration, and consistent post scheduling. The integration of local identity within global branding successfully creates a sense of authenticity while maintaining corporate professionalism.

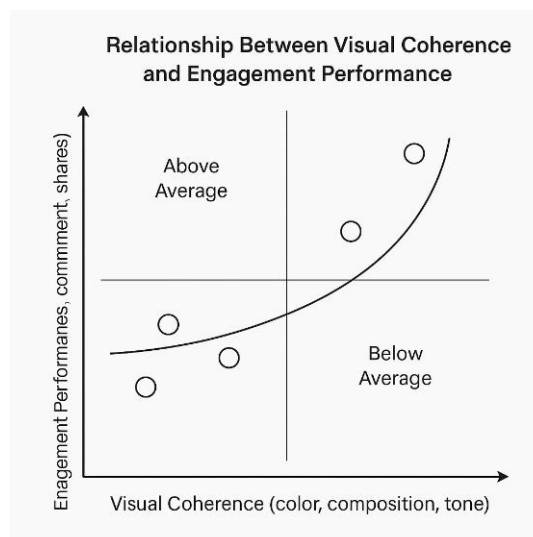
**Figure 2.** Relationship Between Visual Coherence and Engagement Performance

Figure 2 illustrates the correlation between visual coherence (consistency in color, composition, and tone) and engagement performance (likes, comments, and shares). The diagram shows that posts with high visual coherence tend to achieve above-average engagement rates. This supports the argument that aesthetic consistency and emotional storytelling positively influence user interaction and brand trust (Chen & Lee, 2023; Kumar & Sharma, 2024).

Discussion

The findings reinforce existing literature emphasizing visual storytelling and content consistency as key drivers of audience engagement and brand loyalty in the hospitality sector (Chen & Lee, 2023; Wang & Li, 2023). Mercure Hotel Bengkulu's strategic use of reels and carousels demonstrates an understanding of Instagram's algorithmic preference for dynamic and interactive content, enhancing reach and engagement (Chendra & Setiawan, 2024).

The dominance of Food & Beverage content aligns with Chu et al. (2020), who argued that sensory-rich and emotionally evocative visuals stimulate stronger audience responses. The aesthetic coherence reflected in Figure 2 further supports Kumar & Sharma's (2024) conclusion that visual consistency strengthens brand perception and user trust, contributing to emotional attachment and long-term brand relationships (Ciasullo et al., 2020; Kumar & Sharma, 2024; Lin & Choe, 2022).

The integration of local cultural elements within a global branding system serves as an effective differentiation strategy. This approach aligns with Almeida et al. (2021), who emphasized that localized adaptation within standardized branding enhances authenticity. Similar findings were reported by Skawanti & Suparto (2021) in Indonesian hotel contexts.

However, Table 2 also shows relatively lower engagement for User-Generated Content, indicating an opportunity for improvement. Iglesias-Sánchez et al. (2020) described Instagram as a co-creation space where users contribute to brand narratives. Encouraging guest participation could enhance community engagement and trust (Bigne et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2022).

Overall, Mercure Hotel Bengkulu's strategy reflects a balance between global branding discipline and local emotional appeal, demonstrating how digital storytelling can strengthen brand equity in competitive hospitality environments. Emotional resonance through visual engagement further supports long-term loyalty and advocacy (Wu, 2025).

Implications

The findings provide practical and academic implications. For practitioners, maintaining visual consistency, multimedia diversity, and cultural integration is essential for sustaining engagement and customer loyalty. Emotionally driven visual storytelling strengthens brand recall and trust, consistent with findings by Manyanga et al. (2024).

The integration of complementary digital strategies such as search engine optimization (SEO) can further enhance visibility and reach beyond social media platforms, particularly in Indonesian hotel markets (Purnomo & Setiawan, 2025; Suwitri et al., 2025). From an academic perspective, this study confirms that visual coherence, algorithmic adaptation, and narrative authenticity are interrelated factors in successful digital branding.

Additionally, sustainability-oriented digital engagement may enhance brand appeal among environmentally conscious consumers (Uludag et al., 2024).

Research contribution

This study contributes to the literature on visual marketing, brand communication, and multimedia engagement in the hospitality industry. By examining Instagram-based branding at a single Accor property, it demonstrates how global digital branding strategies can be localized through visual storytelling and multimedia adaptation. The study also offers a practical framework for assessing visual coherence using content analysis, bridging marketing communication theory and applied hospitality branding practice.

Limitations

This research is limited to a single case study (Mercure Hotel Bengkulu) and one social media platform (Instagram) which may limit generalizability. The six-month observation period may not capture seasonal promotional variations or long-term engagement trends. Furthermore, the study relies on descriptive statistics without advanced inferential analysis.

Suggestions

Future research should expand the scope to include multiple hotels or cross-brand comparisons to enhance generalizability. Quantitative techniques such as regression analysis, sentiment analysis, or audience perception modeling could provide deeper insights into engagement drivers. Practically, hotels are encouraged to increase the use of user-generated content, influencer collaborations, and interactive formats such as reels and stories to enhance authenticity and emotional connection.

Further studies may also explore AI-based visual analytics to assess brand tone consistency and audience response more precisely, enriching future hospitality digital branding research.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that visual branding and multimedia integration significantly strengthen digital brand identity and audience engagement on Instagram. Analysis of 90 posts from Mercure Hotel Bengkulu shows that consistent visual presentation, warm color harmony, and narrative-driven multimedia content led to higher interaction levels. Food and Beverage content generates the highest engagement, while motion-based formats such as reels and carousels outperform static images. The use of bilingual captions enhances accessibility for diverse audiences. Additionally, the integration of local cultural elements within a globally standardized brand framework reinforces brand distinctiveness without reducing visual consistency. These findings confirm that cohesive visual design, multimedia diversity, and localized storytelling are effective strategies for improving digital engagement in the hospitality sector and can be applied to similar hotel branding contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors wish to express their sincere gratitude to all who contributed to this research. The authors' foremost thanks are extended to their esteemed lecturer, Dr. Gushevinalti, S.Sos., M.Si., for her expert supervision, constructive feedback, and continuous encouragement. Her guidance was a cornerstone of this study. We are also grateful to the University of Bengkulu for its institutional support, which provided the essential resources and a supportive environment for our work. We extend our thanks to all the participants in this study, whose cooperation and willingness to share their perspectives were vital to the insights we gained. Finally, to our colleagues and everyone who offered their support, thank you for making this work a reality.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

This research is the result of a structured collaboration between two authors, each contributing specific expertise to ensure the scientific and practical quality of the study. PC was responsible for formulating the research background and problems, conducting the literature review, collecting and coding data from the @mercure_bengkulu Instagram account, and performing both qualitative and quantitative content analyses related to multimedia utilization and visual branding. She also prepared the draft of the manuscript and developed the visual tables and figures included in the Results and Discussion section.

Meanwhile, G provided academic supervision throughout the research process, including conceptual direction, methodological refinement, and analytical validation. She also reviewed and provided critical input on the structure, theoretical integration, and overall clarity of the manuscript to ensure alignment with scientific standards and research ethics.

This collaborative division of roles ensured that the research process from design and data collection to analysis and reporting was conducted systematically and yielded valid, reliable, and academically sound results.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author used Gemini Pro during the preparation of this work for language assistance tools during the preparation of this manuscript, specifically for improving clarity, grammar, and academic writing quality. After using the tool/service, the author thoroughly reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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