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BIMA ARYA'S POLITICAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN EFFORTS FOR PERSONAL BRANDING ON INSTAGRAM SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract: : This study examines Bima Arya's political communication strategy in his efforts for personal branding on Instagram, using a pragmatism paradigm and a qualitative approach. In the rapidly growing digital era, social media has become an important platform for politicians to build and manage their public image. This research uses a qualitative method with a constructivism paradigm, as the aim of the study is to gain a deep understanding of how Bima Arya communicates his self-image through Instagram and how the audience responds to and constructs meaning from this communication. The findings show that content emphasizing direct engagement, transparency, and responsiveness to public issues has proven effective in increasing audience engagement and strengthening a politician's positive image. Bima Arya has successfully maintained his brand image as "Kang Bima," a politician close to the people, through four stages of political communication strategy on Instagram, with consistency in managing his image, visiting various places with different social issues, and demonstrating that he is still loved by the people of Bogor even after no longer serving as the mayor.

Keywords : communication strategy; personal branding; instagram social media; pragmatism.

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INTRODUCTION

The use of social media is no longer confined to personal interests alone but has evolved into a strategic tool across various domains, including the political sphere. Today, numerous political groups actively leverage social media platforms to explore and disseminate their activities and political information. In the context of political communication, the utilization of social media has become increasingly significant in line with the rising political engagement of the public, which is a direct consequence of the growing penetration and usage of the internet in Indonesia.

As stated by Agung, internet usage has surged since the 2014 general elections, indicating that the internet has become a crucial element in the process of political communication. Social media, in particular, serves as a medium through which the public expresses their political aspirations. This is especially pertinent in light of the declining trust in mainstream and conventional mass media, which are increasingly perceived as being subjectively controlled by market forces and political elites.(Indrawan et al., 2023)

The advancement of political campaigns today has reached a remarkable pace. Campaign efforts are no longer limited to face-to-face interactions but can also be conducted through various media platforms. One of the main advantages of online media is its ability to facilitate campaign activities without requiring physical meetings. The experience of other countries, such as the United States, serves as a compelling foundation to support arguments regarding the potential power of social media. Barack Obama's successful use of the internet and social media is a clear example of how

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such strategies contributed significantly to his victories in the 2008 and 2012 U.S. presidential elections. (Wiguna, 2014)

This also applies to the case of Bima Arya Sugiarto, a politician from the National Mandate Party (Partai Amanat Nasional – PAN), who has completed two terms as the Mayor of Bogor and is expected to continue his political journey. During his tenure, Bima Arya became widely recognized for his close relationship with the people of Bogor, as consistently portrayed through various social media posts—both photographs and videos—which served as tools for public communication and platforms for interaction with Bogor residents, particularly those active on social media. In his view, public officials have an obligation to be accessible and recognizable to the public through social media engagement.

Among the social media platforms used by Bima Arya are Facebook, with 67 followers, and Instagram, which has a significantly larger following of approximately 490,000. Therefore, this study focuses on his Instagram account as the primary subject of analysis, considering its more intensive and consistent presentation of his social and political activities. These Instagram posts, shared via the account @bimaaryasugiarto, reflect Bima Arya's efforts to showcase his political contributions and social engagement, which he has cultivated both during and after his time as Mayor of Bogor.

According to Atmoko (Harun & Karniawati, 2023), Instagram offers several key features, including a homepage, comments, explore, profile, and news feed. Additionally, it provides supplementary features that allow users to enhance their photos and videos with captions, hashtags, and geotags or location tags. Instagram users can also engage in various activities, such as following other accounts, liking content, leaving comments, and tagging other users. (Sugiarto, 2018)

In modern politics, personal branding has become a crucial aspect that can significantly influence the public image and acceptance of political figures. Social media, as one of the most popular digital communication tools, plays a vital role in the construction and reinforcement of personal branding. A concrete example of this can be observed in the case of Bima Arya, the Mayor of Bogor, who actively utilizes Instagram as a platform to shape his public image. Through Instagram, Bima Arya not only aims to gain public sympathy and establish a positive leadership image but also extends his communication reach beyond the geographical boundaries of his political constituency. This strategy aligns with political communication approaches that emphasize the importance of public engagement through social media in shaping perception and garnering political support.

Personal branding is strategically employed by celebrities, athletes, journalists, business leaders, entrepreneurs, students, and politicians to project an authentic character that distinguishes them from their competitors (Chen 2013; Cortsen 2013; Gehl 2011). In the political domain, personal branding is particularly significant, especially through social media platforms such as Instagram. Bima Arya exemplifies this through his active use of the Instagram account @bimaaryasugiarto, where he shares a wide range of political and social activities, amassing approximately 2,867 posts. Beyond fostering sympathy and a positive image, Instagram has helped Bima Arya gain recognition not only in Bogor but also beyond, in line with his political communication strategy. According to (Suryawati, 2021), personal branding refers to a personal identity capable of shaping audience perception regarding the individual's capabilities and values.

This study aims to explore the political communication strategy employed by Bima Arya in his personal branding efforts through Instagram. To support this analysis, the author refers to several previous studies. One such study is by Aidil Haris, entitled *Interactive Political Communication Strategies in the Era of Virtuality*, which seeks to examine interactive political communication strategies in the virtual era using a qualitative methodology and a subjective research approach. Data were collected through interviews with informants who understand and observe shifts in political communication in the digital age. The study concluded that creative, interactive political communication strategies in the virtual era could be achieved through social media, with content that is creative, massive, systematic, and provocative (Haris,

2022). While both studies share a focus on political communication strategies through social media in Indonesia, this research differs in that it specifically examines the Instagram account of Bima Arya. Haris's study focuses on general interactive strategies in the virtual age, whereas the present study focuses on Bima Arya's specific efforts in political communication for personal branding.

Another relevant reference is the study by Muhammad Adnan and Nailul Mona titled *Political Communication Strategies through Social Media by 2024 Indonesian Presidential Candidates*. This study aims to analyze the social media strategies used by candidates for the 2024 Indonesian presidential election. Using internet research and observation, the researchers collected and analyzed Instagram feed posts from three presidential candidates during the early campaign period starting on November 28, 2023. The findings indicate that consistency in posting schedules, caption writing, and hashtag usage did not have a direct impact on user engagement, such as likes and comments. All candidates used social media to communicate with and persuade voters, but they did not leverage interactivity to respond to comments or build conversations through their Instagram feeds (Adnan & Mona, 2024). Compared to that study, this research differs in terms of its subject, focusing on the Instagram account of Bima Arya, a politician from the National Mandate Party (PAN), rather than presidential candidates. In terms of research object, the previous study investigates political communication strategies through social media, while the present study specifically explores Bima Arya's communication strategy for personal branding.

This research provides an in-depth perspective on how a local political figure like Bima Arya constructs and maintains his public image on a digital platform, particularly Instagram. This is significant, considering that most prior studies have concentrated on national political figures. Employing a constructivist approach, this study not only analyzes communication from the sender's perspective (Bima Arya) but also seeks to understand how audiences construct meaning from these messages. Furthermore, this study enriches the understanding of the two-way relationship between politicians and the public on social media and strengthens the argument that social media is not merely a campaign tool during active office periods, but also a medium for sustaining political image after one's term ends. This opens the discussion around the importance of political afterlife, or the continuity of political identity in the post-office period.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a constructivist approach, as described by (Creswell, 2014) who posits that individuals construct subjective meanings based on their experiences with the social world. This approach was chosen to understand how the meaning of personal branding is constructed through the political communication strategies employed by Bima Arya on social media, particularly Instagram.

The research adopts a descriptive qualitative method, as the primary focus is to deeply understand and illustrate the political communication strategies implemented by the subject of the study, Bima Arya. In this method, the researcher functions as the main instrument in both the data collection and analysis processes (Safarudin. R, 2021).

Operationally, data collection was carried out using two main techniques:

a. Non-Participant Observation through Digital Documentation (Syifa, 2023)

The researcher conducted a non-participant observation of Bima Arya's official Instagram account (@bimaaryasugiarto). This form of observation implies that the researcher did not directly engage with the social media activity but systematically observed the content published. Documentation data were collected in the form of screenshots of Instagram posts over a specific observation period, namely from January to December 2024. Each post was classified based on content type (e.g., social activities, political opinions, or personal life), forms of communication (visual, verbal, or symbolic), and audience engagement (number of likes, comments, and other interactions).

b. Directed Literature Review (Kurniawan, 2013)

To support the analysis, the researcher also gathered data through a literature review of various academic sources such as scientific journals, online articles, seminar proceedings, and other official documents relevant to the topics of personal branding and political communication on social media. This review was used to build a theoretical framework, enrich contextual analysis, and compare field findings with previous research results.

Data analysis was conducted inductively, by examining each post in depth to identify patterns, themes, and communication strategies employed. The Instagram documentation was analyzed using qualitative content analysis techniques, including open coding to extract themes such as public closeness, transparency, and social engagement. The results of this coding were then interpreted to explain how Bima Arya constructs his image as "Kang Bima"—a figure perceived as close to the people and actively involved in public issues.

This study emphasizes the quality of meaning over the quantity of data, aiming to understand political communication processes in a contextual manner. By placing process at the center of the investigation, the research offers a richer understanding of how personal branding is consistently developed through digital platforms by a local political figure.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Bima Arya

Bima Arya Sugiarto, S.IP, is a prominent Indonesian politician who currently serves as the Chairman of the National Mandate Party (Partai Amanat Nasional or PAN) for the 2020–2025 term. Between 2021 and 2024, he also held the position of Chairman of the Executive Board of the Association of Indonesian Municipal Governments (Asosiasi Pemerintah Kota Seluruh Indonesia). Bima Arya served as the Mayor of Bogor for two consecutive terms: his first term ran from April 7, 2014, to April 7, 2019, and his second term extended from April 20, 2019, to April 20, 2024.

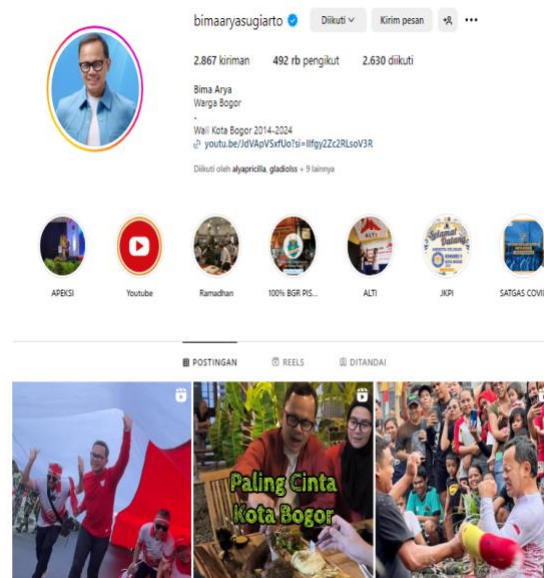


Figure 1. Instagram Social Media Account of Bima Arya Sugiarto (Arya, 2014)

Source: Instagram @bimaaryasugiarto

Throughout his career, he has received numerous awards, including the Social Media Award (2015), the Obsession Award (2015), recognition from the National Commission on Tobacco Control (2016), and the Adhyasa Bhumi Pura Award from the Ministry of Law and Human Rights (2016). By 2021, he had accumulated a total of 22 awards. Most recently, in 2024, he was granted the prestigious Satyalancana Karya Bhakti Praja Nugraha—a state decoration honoring exceptional service in governance.

Bima Arya is a political figure who actively leverages social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to build and maintain his public image and electability. However, this study focuses specifically on his use of Instagram, under the account @bimaaryasugiarto, where he consistently shares content related to both his political and social activities. At the time this research was conducted, Bima Arya had briefly been considered a prospective candidate for the 2024 West Java gubernatorial election, representing the National Mandate Party. However, this candidacy was withdrawn following his official statement of resignation from the nomination process.

As of the writing of this study, Bima Arya's Instagram account (@bimaaryasugiarto) in Figure 1 had gained approximately 492,000 followers and featured 2,867 posts. Several examples of content shared by Bima Arya on this platform include the following.

Bima Arya's Political Communication Strategy

In analyzing one of Bima Arya's Instagram posts, this study aims to explore his political communication strategy as part of his personal branding efforts on Instagram within the context of his political journey. To examine this strategy, the author refers to the framework proposed by Anwar Arifin (as cited in Haris, 2022), which outlines essential steps for achieving active and targeted political communication, particularly in the virtual era. These strategic steps include: *First, Understanding the Audience*. Bima Arya's political communication on Instagram appears to be primarily directed toward the people of Bogor, particularly during his tenure as Mayor of Bogor for two terms. His objective is to engage with the public and disseminate information, not only to the citizens of Bogor but also to a wider audience. Based on the comments on his posts, it is evident that many of his followers are from outside Bogor. Several posts document his visits to various cities across West Java and even beyond Java Island, such as Sorong, Papua. This suggests that his public persona and political image are recognized both within and beyond West Java, portraying him as a charismatic politician with strong community ties. *Second, Crafting the Message*. In each of his Instagram posts, Bima Arya carefully constructs persuasive political messages tailored to resonate with his audience, aiming to capture their attention and communicate his values and initiatives effectively. For example, in one post, he visited a local custom sneaker production house in South Bogor (@bogorsneaker) and captioned it with the following message:

"The models are really cool. You can custom design your own style. Customers aren't just from Bogor but from all over Indonesia—private companies, government institutions, state-owned enterprises, even political parties. I gave a message to Kang @rizkifauzi.id, keep innovating, keep contributing to the local community, and maintain the excellent waste management system. Let's continue to support our local pride."

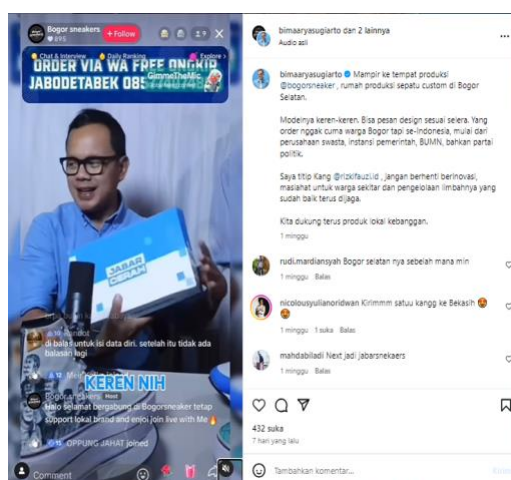


Figure 2. Bima Arya's Visit to a Shoe Production Facility in South Bogor (@bogorsneaker)
Source: Instagram @bimaaryasugiarto (Arya, 2014)

This example demonstrates how Bima Arya delivers messages that are both promotional and politically strategic—highlighting local empowerment, sustainability, and his commitment to community development—while reinforcing his image as a socially engaged and forward-thinking leader.

Third, Determining the Method of Message Delivery. Through creative approaches, Bima Arya demonstrated a distinctive communication strategy—particularly in a post announcing his withdrawal from the candidacy for Governor of West Java. He began the message by adopting a popular viral trend, accompanied by the background song “Ga bisa” by Yura Yunita, and featured himself running away from the camera, visually symbolizing retreat. The message accompanying the video was reflective and emotionally charged, stating: “We are not meant to determine the outcome, but to fulfill our duty in meeting destiny.” This creative storytelling served as an introduction to the official announcement of his withdrawal from the gubernatorial race.

The post garnered significant public engagement, receiving 6,864 likes and 424 comments. Many of the responses were positive and supportive, though some expressed disappointment over his decision. The main caption conveyed a persuasive and respectful tone, underscoring loyalty to party decisions:

"As I have stated, if the party instructs us to move, we move. But when the party asks us not to proceed, I will listen and obey. God willing, I fully support the decision of the leadership of the National Mandate Party to be part of the 'Koalisi Indonesia Maju' and to support the candidacy of Kang Dedi Mulyadi. I will continue to support this effort and extend my heartfelt gratitude to all who supported my initial steps toward Gedung Sate, including volunteers spread across various cities in West Java. God willing, the endeavor to be meaningful will never cease... West Java, keep shining."

This message reflects a political strategy that combines emotional appeal, personal humility, and alignment with broader party objectives—demonstrating a nuanced understanding of how to communicate effectively with constituents through digital media.



Figure 3. Bima Arya's Instagram Post on August 15, 2024
Source: Instagram @bimaaryasugiarto (Arya, 2014)

In one of his posts, it is evident that the content was carefully curated, following contemporary trends in content creation to garner sympathy and capture the audience's attention. The political message was thoughtfully packaged in a meaningful and symbolic manner, aiming to maintain continuous public support for his political journey, regardless of the direction or assignment he undertakes.

Fourth, Selecting the Appropriate Medium. The consistent use of Instagram as a communication tool—evidenced by a total of 2,859 posts—demonstrates that Bima Arya's political

communication strategy has been implemented routinely, effectively, and strategically. His use of Instagram indicates a deliberate and sustained effort to engage with the public through a popular digital platform, aligning with the demands of modern political communication.

Personal Branding of Bima Arya on the @bimaaryasugiarto Instagram Account

In each of his Instagram posts, Bima Arya successfully cultivates a strong personal brand in the eyes of the public. The process of building a personal brand can be analyzed using the Personal Branding Pyramid, as proposed by Rangkuti (2013) at (Romadhan, 2018), which consists of four stages of personal brand development. Bima Arya's approach to personal branding through his Instagram account can be seen in the following process: *First, Determine who you are*. At this stage, Bima Arya consistently presents himself not only as the Mayor of Bogor but also as a politician known for his humility and charisma. Through his Instagram content, he portrays himself as a beloved leader, especially among communities across West Java.

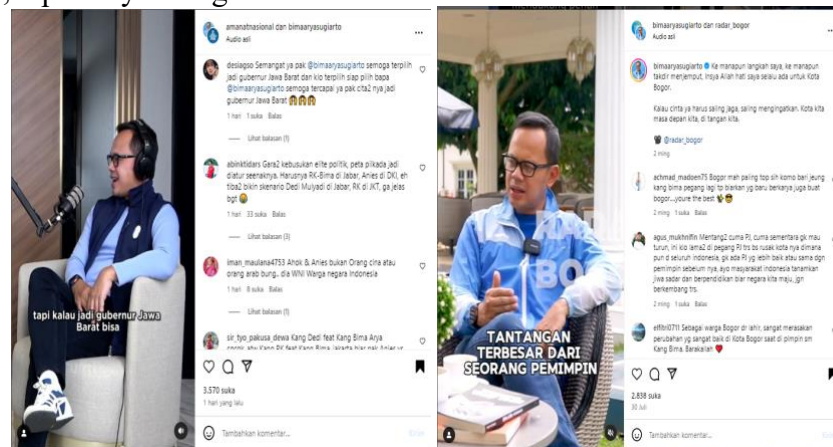


Figure 4. Post Published on August 16, 2024
Source: Instagram @bimaaryasugiarto (Arya, 2014)

This is illustrated in Figure 4, which shows one of Bima Arya's Instagram posts during an interview with PAN TV titled "Why Did Bima Arya Withdraw from the West Java Regional Election?" The post received 144 comments and was liked by 3,570 of his followers. The comments reflect the public's perception of Bima Arya—not only as a successful mayor who has contributed significantly to the development of Bogor, but also as a figure whose withdrawal from the gubernatorial race was both unexpected and regrettable. In the content of the post, Bima Arya expressed a statement that resonated strongly with his followers: "Wherever my steps take me, wherever destiny calls, God willing, my heart will always be with the City of Bogor." This heartfelt message further strengthened the emotional connection between Bima Arya and the people of Bogor, garnering widespread sympathy and support.

Another example can be seen in a subsequent post, in which Bima Arya is featured in an interview covered by Radar Bogor, captioned "If we truly care, we must protect and remind each other. Our city, our future, is in our hands...@radar_bogor." This post received 93 comments and was liked by 2,838 followers, further indicating his strong engagement with his audience and the effectiveness of his personal branding approach on Instagram.

In the subsequent post, as illustrated in Figure 5, Bima Arya is seen taking a moment of rest, enjoying a peaceful morning by the riverside in Pangalengan. The caption reads: "Wilujeng enjing.. Ngeteh sisi cai ☺ Selamat hari Senin, selamat bekerja. @luxcamp.bandung" (which translates to "Good morning, having tea by the riverside. Happy Monday, have a productive day."). This post illustrates Bima Arya's attempt to craft a personal brand that emphasizes simplicity and authenticity, as portrayed through his modest attire and the act of drinking tea from a tin cup while enjoying nature.

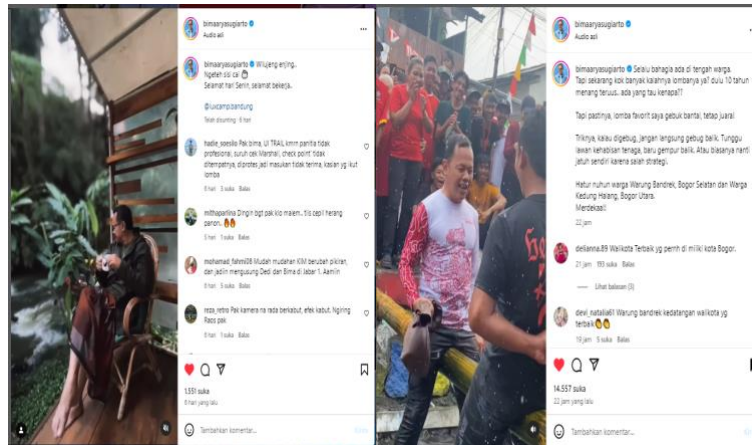


Figure 5. Post During a Break in Pangalengan and Participation in a Commemorative Event for Indonesia's Independence Day 2024
Source: Instagram @bimaaryasugiarto (Arya, 2014)

Another post shows Bima Arya participating in community celebrations for Indonesia's Independence Day on August 17, 2024, alongside residents of Warung Bandrek, South Bogor, and Kedung Halang, North Bogor. The caption reads: "Always happy to be among the people. But lately, I've been losing more competitions—ten years ago, I used to win all the time. Anyone know why? Still, my favorite game is 'pillow fight'—always the champion! The trick? When hit, don't strike back immediately. Wait until your opponent is tired, then counterattack. Or they might fall on their own due to a wrong strategy. Thank you to the residents of Warung Bandrek and Kedung Halang. Merdekaa!!!"(Arya, 2014)

These images and captions reflect Bima Arya's efforts to present himself as an approachable and relatable public figure who blends in seamlessly with the community. His portrayal through these Instagram posts demonstrates a conscious effort to differentiate himself from other political figures by highlighting traits such as intellectual depth, humility, and a strong connection with the people, while consistently presenting himself in a modest and down-to-earth manner.

Second, Determine What You Do. At this stage, Bima Arya utilizes Instagram as a medium to portray and distinguish himself from other political figures. Although he currently does not hold any official governmental position, Bima Arya seeks to project the image of a politician who remains humble, consistently close to the people, and beloved by the community—particularly the residents of Bogor. This narrative is evident in nearly all of his Instagram posts. One such post that exemplifies this approach is as follows:



Figure 6. Frequently Receiving Personal Stories and Concerns from the People He Encounters
Source: Instagram @bimaaryasugiarto (Arya, 2014)

As illustrated in Figure 6, during a casual morning run in the Sentul area, Bima Arya was stopped by a local resident who took the opportunity to share her concerns regarding overlapping land ownership issues in her neighborhood. The post was titled, “While jogging in Sentul, I was stopped by Mrs. Nurfahira Amira, a resident of Bojong Koneng, Babakan Madang, Bogor Regency.” Although no longer serving as the Mayor of Bogor, Bima Arya responded in a manner that reflects his continued commitment to public service, stating, “God willing, we will forward this aspiration to Minister @agusyudhoyono.” This moment reflects how Bima Arya differentiates himself from many other politicians by consistently demonstrating closeness to the people, a characteristic that becomes a key strength in his personal branding as conveyed through his Instagram content.

Third, Position Yourself. At this stage, Bima Arya utilizes Instagram to assert both his presence and the quality of his personal brand, regardless of his official governmental role. This intention is reflected in the following image:

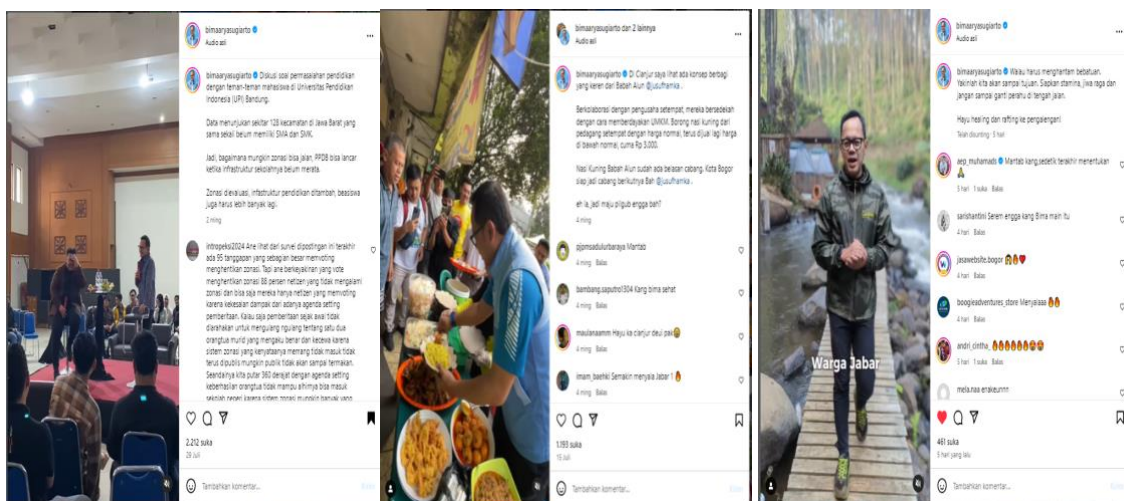


Figure 7. Visit to Bandung, Cianjur, and Pangalengan

Source: Instagram @bimaaryasugiarto (Arya, 2014)

As shown in Figure 7, several posts made by Bima Arya document his visits to various locations, including his engagement at the Indonesia University of Education (UPI) in Bandung. One post, titled “Discussion on educational issues with fellow students at Indonesia University of Education (UPI) Bandung,” features Bima Arya engaging in a conversation with students regarding the zoning system in student admissions (PPDB). Through this post, Bima Arya demonstrates his sensitivity and responsiveness to social issues, actively participating in dialogues that encourage the exchange of perspectives with university students.

Another post depicts his activity in Cianjur, where he promotes the concept of charity through MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) empowerment. The post is titled “In Cianjur, I witnessed a great concept of sharing from Babah Alun @jusufhamka,” showing him humbly and calmly enjoying meals served by local MSME vendors. This gesture reflects his effort to align with the community and support the local economy.

The subsequent post, which is shown in Figure 7, captures Bima Arya participating in a rafting activity in Pangalengan. The caption reads: “Even if we must hit the rocks, believe we will reach our destination. Prepare your stamina, mind, and spirit—never switch boats midstream. Let’s go rafting and unwind in Pangalengan!” This post illustrates how Bima Arya combines leisure with work, promoting local tourism by participating in activities such as rafting, thereby signaling to the public that such destinations are both safe and enjoyable.

At this stage, Bima Arya has engaged in personal branding by portraying his unique character and qualities to distinguish himself from other public figures. His consistent presence and

engagement across cities in West Java and even outside of Java reflect an intentional effort to build and maintain a positive public image.

Fourth, Manage Your Brand. In this stage, it is evident from all his Instagram postings that Bima Arya manages his personal brand primarily through the moniker "Kang Bima", a familiar and approachable identity. Despite no longer serving as the Mayor of Bogor, he remains closely associated with that role due to his consistent public engagement. He has maintained the personal brand he cultivated during his tenure and continues to develop it through sustained activities and presence, reinforcing his image through word of mouth among the public.

His branding approach can be classified as a personal brand, focusing on his individual persona rather than any institutional affiliation. As seen in previous images, the public still feels comfortable sharing their concerns with him, despite his formal term as mayor having ended—indicating the strength and authenticity of his personal branding efforts.

Discussion

This study aims to analyze the political communication strategies employed by Bima Arya through the Instagram platform. Throughout the research process, four key patterns emerged that characterize his communication approach: consistency of personal image, responsiveness to public issues, visual and narrative communication, and transparency of activities. These findings are then compared with two previous studies—conducted by Aidil Haris (2022) and by Muhammad Adnan and Nailul Mona (2024), to situate the results within the broader landscape of digital political communication research.

1. Comparison of Research Objectives and Focus

Aidil Haris' (2022) study, "Interactive Political Communication Strategies in the Era of Virtuality," focuses on interactive political communication strategies through a qualitative-subjective approach. Its main objective is to examine how political actors creatively, systematically, massively, and provocatively utilize social media to convey political messages in the digital era.

In contrast, the study by Adnan and Mona (2024), titled "Political Communication Strategies through Social Media by Indonesian Presidential Candidates in 2024," aims to identify the social media strategies adopted by presidential candidates during the 2024 general election. This research employed digital observation of Instagram posts during the initial campaign period, focusing on scheduling consistency, caption writing, hashtag usage, and how these elements influenced user engagement, such as the number of likes and comments.

Unlike these two studies, the present research centers on a local political figure, Bima Arya, by analyzing his Instagram content to uncover how he constructs his political image through visual and narrative communication. Using an observational and content analysis approach, this study maps out a political communication strategy grounded in daily routines, information transparency, and responsiveness to public concerns.

2. Comparison of Methodologies and Data Collection Techniques

Haris (2022) adopts a qualitative-subjective approach, using interviews with informants knowledgeable about digital political communication trends. Meanwhile, Adnan and Mona (2024) employ internet observation by analyzing Instagram feeds of three presidential candidates. Neither study delves deeply into the visual narrative or personal content of the figures involved.

This study, by contrast, specifically analyzes Bima Arya's Instagram posts using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The analysis includes post types, thematic proportions, caption styles, visual quality, and interactive features such as Highlights and engagement metrics (likes and comments). This approach enables the identification of a consistent and targeted communication strategy, while also illustrating how a political figure builds a strong self-narrative through social media.

3. Comparison of Communication Strategy Findings

This study identifies four major patterns in Bima Arya's political communication strategy: *First, Consistency of Personal Image*. Approximately 38% of posts depict informal personal activities, such as cycling, relaxing with residents, and daily life moments. These portrayals construct the image of "Kang Bima" as a grounded and approachable leader; *Second, Responsiveness to Public Issues*. Roughly 27% of the content reflects active engagement with public issues, including education, environment, and health. Informative and solution-oriented captions reinforce his image as a responsive and pragmatic leader; *Third, Visual and Narrative Communication*. The use of high-quality photographs accompanied by personal and emotional narratives is a core strength of his communication strategy. For instance, an Independence Day-themed post on August 17, 2024, garnered 22,000 likes and 500 comments, demonstrating the persuasive power of emotional storytelling; and *Fourth, Transparency of Activities*. Around 21% of the posts provide informative updates about both official and post-office activities. The Highlights feature is effectively used to archive thematic content, such as "Warga Bicara" (Citizens Speak) and "Kabar Kota" (City Updates), exemplifying a commitment to transparency and public accessibility.

These findings suggest that effective political communication strategies extend beyond technical aspects like scheduling or hashtag usage—as emphasized in Adnan and Mona's (2024) study—and rely heavily on the depth and quality of narrative delivery. Compared to Haris (2022), although Bima Arya's strategy does not heavily emphasize two-way interaction such as replying to comments, it nonetheless achieves effective political communication through emotionally resonant and relatable content.

4. Contribution to Political Communication Studies

This study offers a significant contribution to the growing body of literature on digital political communication at the local level. While previous studies have primarily focused on technical or normative aspects, this research provides a deeper understanding of how local political figures shape political identities and foster emotional connections with the public through social media platforms. By demonstrating that high engagement can be achieved through compelling visual storytelling and personal proximity—without relying on interactive comment responses—this study presents an alternative perspective on understanding the effectiveness of digital political communication strategies.

CONCLUSION

Instagram has become a strategic platform for Bima Arya in shaping and maintaining his personal branding as a populist, responsive, and transparent leader. The four communication strategy patterns identified—image consistency, responsiveness to public issues, visual-narrative strength, and transparency—collectively form a cohesive narrative that is received and reconstructed by the audience as a representation of Bima Arya's political persona. This study underscores the critical role of social media in contemporary political communication practices, particularly in fostering emotional closeness and direct public engagement. Bima Arya's political communication strategy through Instagram involves ensuring that the public continues to recognize him as a representative of the people—someone who remains approachable and attentive to public concerns. This is achieved through the creative curation of messages and content that portray him as emotionally connected to the community. His content is strategically designed to attract audience attention and engagement, thereby reinforcing his visibility and relevance through the chosen social media platform. In his efforts to conduct political communication and personal branding through Instagram, Bima Arya has successfully carried out four key stages that sustain the brand image he has built since serving as Mayor of Bogor. This includes consistently managing his brand as "Kang Bima"—a leader who stays close to the people, makes frequent visits to various regions with different social

issues, and demonstrates that he remains loved by the public, particularly in Bogor, even after leaving office.

This research affirms the importance of integrating pragmatic approaches with qualitative methods in designing and evaluating political communication strategies on social media. Such an approach not only aids in understanding the effectiveness of the implemented strategies but also helps in identifying best practices for building a positive and authentic public image. The findings of this study offer several important implications for various stakeholders involved in the practice and study of political communication in the digital era. For political practitioners, the results indicate that social media should not merely serve as a promotional tool or a short-term campaign platform. Instead, a strategic approach is required—one that emphasizes the construction of authentic, humanistic, and sustainable narratives. Such an approach can strengthen a credible political image and organically foster emotional proximity with constituents. For future researchers, this study opens opportunities for further research with a broader methodological scope. It is recommended to adopt a triangulated data approach, such as combining content analysis with in-depth interviews of audiences, as well as considering the analysis of social media engagement algorithms. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of digital communication strategies in shaping public opinion. For governments and public institutions, the findings suggest the need to adopt more transparent, open, and interactive communication strategies through social media. This approach can not only enhance public trust in government institutions but also encourage greater citizen participation in democratic and participatory governance processes.

This study provides an in-depth illustration of political communication strategies on social media, using a local political figure, Bima Arya, as a case study. While the findings are significant in helping to understand digital communication patterns, several methodological and conceptual limitations should be acknowledged. *First*, this research is a single case study focusing solely on one subject, Bima Arya. Although this approach enables an in-depth exploration of individual communication strategies, it simultaneously limits the generalizability of the findings. The strategies employed by Bima Arya may not necessarily be applicable to other political figures, particularly those operating in different regions or levels of political engagement. Therefore, the findings are contextual and should not be interpreted as representative of broader trends in digital political communication in Indonesia. *Second*, this study does not incorporate the perspectives of the audience or social media users directly. The analysis was limited to publicly available Instagram posts, without primary data from interviews or surveys involving Bima Arya's followers. Yet, audience perception and response to content are essential to assess the effectiveness of communication strategies. The absence of audience engagement as a data source means that the impact analysis is constrained to quantitative indicators such as the number of likes and comments. *Third*, the study does not explicitly examine the role of social media platform algorithms, which significantly influence content visibility and reach. Technical factors such as posting time, initial interactions, or the use of platform features (e.g., reels, stories, or hashtags) can substantially affect engagement. Without an analysis of algorithmic dynamics, the understanding of a communication strategy's success remains superficial. These limitations should serve as considerations for future research, which may expand the scope of inquiry and integrate more comprehensive approaches—encompassing the subject, audience, and technical aspects of the digital platforms being studied.

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