



## Marketing Strategies for Strengthening Personal Branding of Makeup Artists on Instagram

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### ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of makeup artist (MUA) services in Indonesia has intensified competition and encouraged service providers to develop a clear and credible personal brand. Instagram has become an important platform for communicating professional identity, displaying portfolios, engaging audiences, and converting online visibility into business opportunities. This study aims to analyze marketing strategies used to strengthen personal branding among MUAs, with emphasis on how digital communication, service quality, and customer interaction support competitiveness and long-term customer relationships. A qualitative descriptive design was employed. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of Instagram-based branding activities, and were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that effective MUA personal branding is supported by a coherent service identity, consistent visual presentation, high-quality portfolio content, responsive audience engagement, and collaboration with influencers or related brands. The 7Ps service marketing mix shows that product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence must be aligned to communicate professionalism and trust. Supporting factors include creative human resources, service consistency, professional networks, and word-of-mouth communication, whereas inhibiting factors include inconsistent internal communication and limited quality control in partnership-based work systems. The study concludes that integrated marketing communication through Instagram can strengthen visibility, credibility, and customer loyalty when implemented consistently and evaluated periodically.

## 1. Introduction

The service sector has expanded rapidly in response to changes in lifestyle, digital consumption, and the growing demand for professional appearance-related services. One service industry that has gained strong public attention is the makeup artist (MUA) industry. The increasing need for professional makeup for weddings, graduations, photo sessions, content production, and formal events has created wider business opportunities for independent MUAs and beauty service providers [1]. The MUA profession was previously perceived as informal and less prestigious; however, digital media has changed this perception. Makeup tutorial videos, online portfolios, and

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social media recommendations have made the profession more visible and accessible to younger generations [2]. Becoming a freelance MUA is also supported by several practical factors, including the availability of affordable cosmetic products, the possibility of operating without a physical studio, the use of Instagram as a free promotional channel, and the accessibility of makeup knowledge through online learning resources [3].

In this increasingly competitive environment, technical makeup skills alone are not sufficient to ensure business sustainability. MUAs need to communicate their expertise, style, values, and service quality to potential clients. Marketing communication strategies therefore become essential because they help service providers create market responses, shape audience perceptions, and differentiate themselves from competitors [4].

The digital era has transformed marketing practices from conventional promotion to integrated digital communication. Internet access has reduced geographical and temporal barriers, enabling small service businesses to reach broader customer segments through websites, online services, and social media platforms [5]. Creative industries and digital agencies have also contributed to the growth of branding practices by assisting business actors in developing visual identity, content planning, and audience engagement strategies [6]. In Indonesia, the number of internet users has increased substantially, creating a large potential market for digital service promotion [7].

Social media is particularly relevant for MUA businesses because the service outcome is highly visual. Instagram enables MUAs to display portfolios, publish before-and-after content, share testimonials, document work processes, interact with followers, and build trust through consistent visual communication. Previous studies on Instagram-based marketing and online consumer segmentation show that social media can support customer engagement, purchase intention, and brand recognition when used strategically [8], [9].

Personal branding refers to the deliberate process of presenting an individual's competence, character, values, and unique attributes in a way that creates a distinctive identity in the minds of audiences. For MUAs, personal branding is closely related to the ability to communicate makeup style, professionalism, service reliability, customer experience, and visual consistency. Integrated marketing communication can strengthen this process by ensuring that messages delivered through advertising, interactive marketing, public relations, sales promotion, and direct communication remain coherent [10], [11].

Although many MUAs use Instagram for promotion, not all of them understand how to develop a consistent personal brand, manage audience interaction, and integrate marketing activities into a sustainable business strategy. The research gap lies in the limited practical explanation of how service marketing elements and digital communication practices can be combined to strengthen MUA personal branding. This study is significant because it provides a structured analysis of marketing strategies that can help MUAs improve visibility, credibility, competitiveness, and customer loyalty. Therefore, this study aims to analyze marketing strategies for strengthening personal branding among makeup artists through Instagram-based communication and service marketing practices.

## **2. Method**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to examine marketing strategies used in developing personal branding among makeup artists. A qualitative approach was selected because the study focused on interpreting social practices, communication patterns, audience interaction, and branding meanings within the context of digital service marketing [12].

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to identify how MUAs presented their services, portfolios, and brand identity on Instagram. Interviews were used to obtain information about marketing planning, content development, customer engagement, pricing, promotional activities, and perceived challenges. Documentation involved collecting relevant branding materials, including Instagram posts, captions, promotional content, customer testimonials, and portfolio displays.

Data analysis followed the interactive qualitative analysis procedure consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing [13]. Data reduction was carried out by selecting information relevant to personal branding, digital marketing, and service marketing strategies. The reduced data were then organized according to the 7Ps service marketing mix and integrated marketing communication concepts. Conclusions were drawn by identifying recurring patterns, supporting factors, inhibiting factors, and strategic implications for MUA personal branding.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### **3.1. Results**

The findings show that MUAs develop personal branding by combining online and offline marketing activities. Instagram functions as the primary medium for displaying portfolios, communicating makeup style, sharing customer experiences, and interacting with followers. Offline activities remain important because customer trust is strongly influenced by direct service experience, punctuality, hygiene, communication, and the final quality of makeup results.

The personal branding strategy identified in this study can be explained through the 7Ps service marketing mix: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence [14]. These elements are interrelated and collectively shape customer perceptions of professionalism, credibility, and service value.

Product refers to the core makeup service and its supporting value. In the MUA context, the product includes makeup skills, makeup style, portfolio quality, consultation, service packages, and the ability to adjust the makeup result to the client's event, facial features, and preferences. A strong product identity helps MUAs become recognizable and differentiates them from competitors.

Price refers to the service fee and perceived value offered to customers. The findings indicate that pricing is commonly arranged in packages based on event type, makeup complexity, location, and additional services. Higher prices can be accepted when customers perceive that the MUA provides reliable quality, professional tools, hygienic procedures, and satisfying service experiences.

Place refers to the channel through which services are accessed and delivered. Instagram serves as the main digital place where potential clients discover the MUA, review portfolios, read testimonials, and initiate booking communication. Physical service delivery may occur at the client's location, event venue, studio, or salon. Therefore, accessibility and clarity of booking information are important parts of personal branding.

Promotion is implemented through Instagram posts, reels, stories, testimonials, portfolio highlights, paid promotions, discounts, giveaways, seasonal packages, and collaborations with influencers or related brands. Promotional content is most effective when it is visually consistent, informative, and aligned with the intended brand image. Sales promotion during special events such as Ramadan, wedding seasons, or year-end periods can increase audience attention and stimulate booking decisions.

People include the MUA, assistants, clients, and collaborative partners. The findings indicate that interpersonal communication, responsiveness, friendliness, discipline, and professionalism strongly influence client satisfaction. In service businesses, people are part of the brand experience

because customers evaluate not only the final makeup result but also the interaction process before, during, and after service delivery.

Process refers to the sequence of service delivery. The observed process generally includes consultation, schedule confirmation, package selection, preparation of products and tools, service execution, documentation, follow-up communication, and publication of portfolio content with client permission. A clear and reliable process strengthens trust because customers can understand what they will receive and how the service will be delivered.

Physical evidence includes visible proof of service quality, such as portfolio photos, video documentation, studio appearance, makeup tools, product cleanliness, testimonials, brand logo, feed design, and visual consistency on Instagram. Because makeup services are intangible before purchase, physical evidence plays a key role in reducing customer uncertainty and reinforcing credibility.

Several supporting factors were identified. First, creative human resources enable MUAs to produce attractive content and respond to changing beauty trends. Second, consistent service quality strengthens reputation and encourages repeat orders. Third, professional networks with photographers, wedding organizers, fashion designers, and influencers expand promotional reach. Fourth, word-of-mouth communication remains influential because recommendations from previous clients often create higher trust than direct advertising.

Inhibiting factors were also found. Partnership-based work arrangements may cause inconsistent communication among team members, especially when assistants, photographers, or content creators are involved in different projects. Limited internal coordination can reduce quality control and affect service consistency. In addition, irregular evaluation of Instagram performance may cause MUAs to rely on intuition rather than data when planning content and promotional strategies.

### 3.2. Discussion

The findings confirm that personal branding in the MUA industry must be understood as an integrated service marketing process rather than merely a visual display on social media. Instagram is important because it provides visibility, but visibility alone does not create a strong brand. A strong personal brand is developed when visual identity, service quality, communication style, customer experience, and promotional messages are consistently aligned.

The 7Ps framework is useful for explaining how MUA personal branding is formed. Product and physical evidence communicate competence; price communicates value; place determines accessibility; promotion expands reach; people shape service experience; and process ensures reliability. These findings support the view that service marketing strategies influence consumer decision-making because customers evaluate both tangible and intangible aspects before purchasing a service [14].

Integrated marketing communication also plays a central role. MUAs need to maintain message consistency across captions, stories, reels, direct messages, testimonials, and offline communication. When communication is consistent, audiences can more easily understand what the MUA offers, what visual style characterizes the service, and why the service is trustworthy. This strengthens brand recall and helps potential customers distinguish one MUA from another [15].

The role of social media in this study is consistent with previous findings that Instagram-based marketing can improve online sales, audience engagement, and customer relationship development [15], [16]. However, the results also indicate that social media management should not focus only on frequent posting. Content quality, audience relevance, response speed, testimonial management, and visual coherence are more important for long-term brand development.

Customer trust emerges as a key outcome of effective personal branding. In the beauty service industry, customers often rely on visual evidence, recommendations, and previous client experiences before making decisions. Therefore, word-of-mouth, brand image, and perceived service quality become important determinants of purchasing decisions [17]. Consistent Instagram exposure can also influence consumer behavior by increasing familiarity and perceived desirability of a service [18].

Overall, the findings suggest that MUAs should evaluate their marketing strategies periodically. Instagram analytics, customer feedback, booking conversion data, and testimonial patterns can be used to determine whether the current personal branding strategy is effective. Continuous evaluation enables MUAs to adapt to beauty trends, audience preferences, and market competition while maintaining a coherent brand identity.

#### **4. Conclusions**

This study concludes that marketing strategies play an important role in strengthening personal branding among makeup artists. The rapid growth of the MUA industry has increased competition, making it necessary for MUAs to communicate their competence, service identity, and professional value more clearly. Instagram functions as a strategic communication platform because it enables MUAs to display portfolios, interact with audiences, publish testimonials, and build credibility through consistent visual content. The findings indicate that effective MUA personal branding is formed through the alignment of the 7Ps service marketing mix: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. Supporting factors include creative human resources, consistent service quality, professional networks, and word-of-mouth communication. Inhibiting factors include weak internal communication, inconsistent coordination among partners, and limited evaluation of digital marketing performance. The study contributes to the field of vocational and applied service marketing by providing a practical framework for developing Instagram-based personal branding in the makeup artist industry. Future studies may examine customer perspectives quantitatively to measure the influence of personal branding on booking decisions, loyalty, and willingness to recommend MUA services.

#### **Conflict of interest**

The author declares no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results.

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