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ADOLESCENTS'S PERSONAL BRANDING ON *INSTAGRAM*

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Abstract

Keywords:
 adolescents;
Instagram; personal
branding

Personal branding is an individual effort to obtain the response and perception of public audiences through social media, including Instagram (IG). This study aimed to describe adolescents' experiences in personal branding through Instagram and the meaning of personal branding. It is qualitative research with a descriptive phenomenological approach. Data were analyzed using thematic phenomenological analysis techniques to understand the themes and patterns of personal branding. Data were collected using interviews and observation methods. Five participants were obtained through purposive sampling technique with criteria: adolescents aged 18-21 years and active Instagram users (with a consistent content theme). Results show that the personal branding process is built through stages that involve determining goals, conceptualizing content, and posting content. It is essential to concept and edit content uniquely and posts consistently at the right time and the right frequency, including the highlight menu setting. Personal branding has significant and strategic meanings for adolescents: as a medium to promote competencies, expand career opportunities, and be a useful person. Essentially, it is recommended for adolescents to do personal branding as an alternative activity that supports self-development and careers using Instagram.

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Kata kunci:

remaja; *Instagram;
personal branding*

Abstrak

Personal branding adalah upaya individu untuk menciptakan persepsi dan respons publik yang sesuai dengan apa yang diinginkannya. Saat ini *personal branding* melalui media sosial seperti *Instagram* (IG) menjadi fenomena yang menyeruak pada remaja sebagai generasi milenial dan menjadi pengalaman yang menarik untuk ditelisik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan pengalaman remaja melakukan *personal branding* melalui *Instagram* serta bagaimana maknanya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif fenomenologis. Untuk menganalisis data digunakan analisis tematik fenomenologis. Metode pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini dengan menggunakan wawancara dan observasi. Partisipan penelitian berjumlah 5 orang berusia 18-21 tahun dan kriteria pengguna aktif *Instagram* dengan konten yang temanya konsisten dan diperoleh melalui teknik *purposive sampling*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa melakukan *personal branding* melalui tahapan proses, yaitu menetapkan tujuan yang ingin dicapai, kemudian mengkonsep dan membuat konten, serta mengunggah konten. Hal yang penting diperhatikan tentang konten adalah harus memiliki keunikan, diedit lalu diposting secara konsisten, pada waktu dan frekuensi yang tepat serta diberi *caption* dan diatur dalam menu *highlight*. *Personal branding* melalui *Instagram* memiliki makna signifikan dan strategis bagi remaja yaitu sebagai ajang mempromosikan kompetensi diri, meningkatkan tawaran pekerjaan, dan menebar manfaat. *Personal branding* direkomendasikan bagi remaja sebagai alternatif kegiatan positif yang mendukung pengembangan diri dan karier.

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INTRODUCTION

Personal branding is the effort to obtain response and perception of public audiences as desired by an individual. This term was initially

introduced by Peters (1997) to perform self-promotion and support one's goal in the career. Today, personal branding is increasingly popular along with the rapid development of cyberspace in the digital era. Websites, blogs, and social media are among the most platforms to build personal branding (Belk, 2013). Social media, mainly, are the most effective and extensively used tool for building personal branding (Edmiston, 2014). It occurs since social media provide opportunities and facilities that encourage users to show and present themselves.

Meanwhile, Marshall (2010) argued that social media is a conducive platform for individuals to build a public image or public perception. Therefore, personal branding has a strategic meaning for the younger generation to communicate who they are, what competencies and preferences they have, and what career suits them the best. Even during employee recruitment, social media is also an essential concern for the recruitment team. Hood, Robles, & Hopkins (2014) suggests students organize their social media to show a complete and professional profile to support them in the employee screening process. While Edmiston (2014) argues that in order to be considered for a job, college students must generate a positive initial impression of their personality on social media.

Personal branding can lead to a person entering the professional world. A personal brand can consolidate and provide concise information about what makes a person unique in the professional sphere (Philbrick & Cleveland, 2015). In addition, Latiff & Safiee (2015) suggested that personal branding through the *Instagram* platform could be a start in building a business. It applies not only to a company but also to students, part-time workers, and those who are motivated to start their businesses. Without a brand, a business may vanish.

Meanwhile, technology has a significant effect on building personal branding via online platforms. Personal branding can also be enhanced by

self-promoting (Irma & Romina, 2019; Karaduman, 2013). Moreover, it requires a set of uniqueness and skills to exhibit strength and competence (Widiastuti, 2017). Personal branding entails the collaboration of values, characteristics, and ideas regarding individual ability or strength to obtain responses and perceptions of others. Such responses and perceptions are able to affect the relationship between the individual and the audience (Montoya, Vandehey, & Viti, 2002).

According to McNally & Speak (2010), there are three steps to build personal branding. First, identifying one's competencies. Second, checking one's standards and values. Third, determining one's style. Personal branding can present one's true identity. It can be a brand attached to an individual that distinguishes and differentiates her/him from others. Suherman and Lubis (2015) proposed three measures to build personal branding: showing existence, promoting self-confidence, and improving competencies.

Rampersad (2009) suggested the eleven characteristics of personal branding, including: 1) Authenticity—a personal brand must be built on true personality by initially determining the personal ambition; 2) Integrity—the individual must adhere to the moral and behavioral code; 3) Consistency—the contents must be consistent; 4) Specialization—the individual must focus on one area of specialization; 5) Authority—the individual should show authority to be recognized as an expert in the field; 6) Distinctiveness—the contents must be unique compared to others; 7) Relevance—the contents should be in accordance with the target audience; 8) Visibility—personal branding must be built continuously, repeatedly, and consistently; 9); Persistence—the individual must ensure and focus on the specific field; 10) Goodwill—a good relationship will bring better results; 11) Performance—the owner should constantly improve themselves continuously. A personal branding that is consistently and continuously built will represent a distinguished figure in the media.

Yunitasari & Japarianto (2013) affirmed the factors contributing to personal branding: competencies, specialization, uniqueness, existence, reputation, and segmentation. Among these factors, competencies are the most dominant factor in building personal branding. Meanwhile, Kholisoh & Wahyuni (2017) reaffirmed components that make up personal branding: uniqueness, goals, strengths, competencies, appearance, achievement, authenticity, and values. Effective personal branding is indicated when an individual is able to show off who they are, what they do, and what uniqueness they have, as well as to build the perceptions of others about who they are (Widiastuti, 2017).

Social media is currently used by almost every millennial. They present themselves through social media as represented by the preferences of fashion, food, and favorite places. According to Sitanggang & Dharmawan (2016), the popularity of social media is related to technological advances that bring efficient, interactive, and assorted options of media platforms. The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology reports that UNESCO states 4 out of 10 Indonesians are active users of social media, including *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Instagram*, and *Twitter* (Kominfo, 2018). In 2019, approximately 150 million or 56% of the total population of Indonesia use social media (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2019; Riyanto, 2019). They are dominated by people aged 18-24, of which 15% are female while 18% are male. Of this percentage, 80% of them are *Instagram* users. In 2018, Indonesia was the third-largest *Instagram* user in the world, with 53 million users. The Kantar research institute carried out a study on March 14-23, 2020, and involved 25,000 participants from 30 countries, exposing the fact that the users of *Instagram* had increased by 40% during the corona pandemic (Kantar, 2020).

Instagram is a popular photo and video sharing application. This application is widely used to display oneself (Mutia, 2017). The users can capture photos and videos using a mobile phones or selecting saved

items on the gallery, then post them on their *Instagram*. In addition, it offers various effect features. It is equipped with a black and white effect, saturation, frames, and similar features (Miles, 2013). Adolescents, mainly, use *Instagram* as a medium to exhibit their activities, which are mostly private or personal. They usually post contents that suit themselves and focus on self-expression and actively post expressive photos on a daily basis (Jang, Han, Shih, & Lee, 2015).

Instagram is a platform for fulfilling emotive, cognitive, entertainment, personal integration, and social integration needs. Personal integration demands are related to the urge to recognize one's own identity. People can use *Instagram* to show off their fashion, hobbies, meals, and even favorite places to visit. It can be a medium to express happiness, sadness, disorientation, and anxiety. Meanwhile, social integration need is the need to communicate and share experiences with others. In this context, *Instagram* provides opportunities to meet new people and communities with the same interests or hobbies, for example, photography community (Frison & Eggermont, 2017; Huang & Su, 2018; Prihatiningsih, 2017; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; Sheldon & Newman, 2019; Syahreza & Tanjung, 2018).

According to Chen (2018), *Instagram* is used for three purposes: *first*, as a medium to express oneself, digital albums, and to gain recognition from others. *Second*, as a medium to spend leisure time. *Third*, as a medium to connect with others. *Instagram* has a feature of sharing links and tags in the photos, allowing people to stay connected and gain attention from other users at the same time. When posting content, users will make an effort to create interesting content and attract other users (Zulli, 2018).

Similarly, Sheldon & Bryant (2016) argued the four purposes of *Instagram*. *First*, to know the personal situation of others, including relationships, socio-economy, and circle of friends through the profile page. Such information can be identified by clicking and scrolling one's

page. *Second*, to document memories or as a digital photo album. *Third*, to gain popularity as indicated by the number of likes on posted content. *Fourth*, to express one's creativity through photos, videos, and status updates. Liu & Suh (2017) claimed that among the most popular photos on *Instagram* were upright-standing models, friends or family gatherings, and scenery-themed pictures. *Instagram* is equipped with filters that allow users to accentuate and use specific *hashtags* on their photos. The effort to create attractive content is aimed to increase the number of followers (Thelander & Cassinger, 2017).

The personal branding phenomenon on *Instagram* among adolescents was confirmed during a preliminary study with survey and interview methods. The survey involved 82 participants, showing the most participants (63.4%) regularly checked on *insta-stories*. In addition, 61% of participants claimed that they spent 3-5 hours scrolling on *Instagram*, while 58.5% of participants felt inspired by *Instagram* posts (Jurj, 2019). A preliminary study that involved two participants aged 18 and 21 years showed the activities on *Instagram* that were intended to influence the perceptions of others. The first subject is keen on traveling hence the contents of *Instagram* are mostly about traveling. The subject stated:

> "My hobby is traveling. Therefore, I always take pictures during travelling and post them on *Instagram*. Usually, the objects are natural or urban landscapes. I have been consistently posting such objects since late 2015. It was purely a hobby, but then I got more and more responses from others. They even ask for the locations and I am happy to share such information with them. It feels good when people visit the places that I post since it helps local traders selling their goods." (Interview 1).

The research subject has built a personal branding as a person who likes traveling and consistently posts travelling-themed photos on *Instagram*. To encourage people visiting places, the subject provides information

about these places. The subject is contended while sharing information on tourist attractions.

The second subject is a dancer and keen of introducing the activities of dancing. The subject stated:

> "I have been a dancer since I was little and started to have *Instagram* since I was a student at senior high school. Since I often post my pictures while dancing, I get the benefits from it. People recognize me as a dancer hence I become more popular and get more job offers." (Interview 2).

The second subject successfully paves the way to introduce a brand as a dancer by consistently posting the content of dancing activities. Therefore, the subject becomes more famous and can expand career opportunities.

The results of survey and interviews imply the function of *Instagram* as a medium for socializing and for building public perception (Hermana & Listiani, 2017). In addition, *Instagram* can also function to build personal branding for its users (Susilowati, 2018). Personal branding through *Instagram* as an alternative of using social media with positive impact that very supportive in building a mature self-identity, is an interesting phenomenon. Therefore, it is important to study how personal branding is created and what it means for adolescents.

Previous studies revealed personal branding built by politician Hari Tanoesoedibyo through television and newspapers, and Ridwan Kamil through *Twitter* (Sitanggang & Dharmawan, 2016; Widiastuti, 2017). In addition, the characteristics of personal branding used by several bloggers, i.e. Diana Rikasari, Risa Stellar, and Ibrahim Risyad and Prabowo Mondardo, were also analyzed (Imawati, Solihah, & Shihab, 2016; Rachmawati & Ali, 2018; Susilowati, 2018; Butar & Ali, 2018). Meanwhile, Franzia (2018) involved 50 higher education students in a study, revealing the references of adolescents in building personal branding through social media such as

Instagram, *Facebook*, *Path*, *Twitter*, *Google+*, *YouTube*, *LinkedIn*, *Snapchat*, and *Line*.

Previous studies have discussed the strategies used by several politicians and bloggers in building personal branding through their social media. Nevertheless, none especially involves adolescents and explores how they build personal branding by posting content on *Instagram*. Therefore, this study aimed to figure out the experiences of adolescents in building personal branding through *Instagram*. For this purpose, several participants from different talents and professions (i.e., photographer, trainer, model, and beauty contest winner) were involved. In this context, their experiences are explored to obtain an overview of successfully building personal branding. Subsequently, to describe the experiences of each participant in building personal branding based on their profession, a descriptive phenomenological approach was employed. In addition, phenomenological thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected data (Sundler, Lindberg, Nilsson, & Palmér, 2019).

It is expected that this study will provide new insight into personal branding on *Instagram*. Furthermore, this insight can be a source of knowledge for adolescents as *Instagram* users to be motivated and inspired in building personal branding through *Instagram*. In addition, this study offers endeavors to improve knowledge, skills, and experiences regarding effective ways to build personal branding (Johnson, 2017). Therefore, this study is emphasized in creating personal branding and the meaning of personal branding for participants. This phenomenological research aims to describe the experiences of adolescents in building personal branding through *Instagram* and the meaning of personal branding for adolescents.

METHODS

The present study is a qualitative research with phenomenological descriptive approach that attempts to describe the experiences of

participants (Creswell, 2014). The data were collected through interviews and observation methods. A semi-structured model was used for interviews. The interview guideline was prepared to explore the process and meaning of personal branding for participants. The observation was used to complete the interview data focusing on the contents posted by participants on *Instagram*. The collected data were analyzed using the phenomenological thematic method. It was done by determining the patterns of the meanings of data and subsequently organizing them into structured and interrelated themes, so participants' experiences could be described thoroughly (Sundler et al., 2019). The member checking procedure confirmed the trustworthiness data, and all participants were asked their opinion about the accuracy of the final description of the findings. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. This technique involves selecting participants who meet predetermined criteria and considerations and is carried out deliberately based on research objectives (Creswell, 2014; Hadi, 2016; Sugiyono, 2019b, 2019a). The criteria of the participants included: adolescents aged 18-21 years and active users of *Instagram* who have specific and consistent theme of *Instagram* contents as an indicator in building personal branding. The criteria were considered based on the characteristics of personal branding: consistency and distinctiveness. Adolescents aged 18-21 were selected since the group dominated *Instagram* users in Indonesia and could be categorized as late adolescents.

Table 1.
Characteristics Of Research Participants

No	Initials	Age	Gender	Occupation	Theme of content	Number of followers
1	MR	± 20	Male	Student & photographer	Natural landscape	5.480
2	MNA	± 21	Male	Student & trainer	Training activities	3.372

No	Initials	Age	Gender	Occupation	Theme of content	Number of followers
3	AM	± 21	Male	Student & photographer	Natural landscape	1.047
4	HFLJ	± 20	Female	Student, 1st winner of Putri Solo Beauty Contest, & model	The duties of Putri Solo & modeling	3.286
5	ASYR	± 19	Female	Student, 1st winner of Tourism Ambassador of Central Java, & model	The duties of tourism ambassador and modeling	5.985

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study answer the research objectives, which include how adolescents underwent the process of building personal branding on *Instagram* and the meaning of personal branding for them. The interview data were analyzed to identify the meanings and then identify the pattern of the meanings to be conceptualized into the themes. Subsequently, organizing them into structured and interrelated themes, so the experience of personal branding could be described thoroughly. The emergence themes in the unique branding process include determining goals, creating *Instagram* content, and posting *Instagram* content. Furthermore, related to the strategic meaning of personal branding for adolescents, they perceive a personal brand as a medium to promote one's competencies, expand career opportunities, and be useful to others.

The Process Of Building Personal Branding On Instagram

First, determining the goals. In building personal branding, all participants in this study initially set up the goals to be achieved. Among the goals are to share and promote tourist attractions (participant MR), to provide information about pieces of training (participant MNA), to

introduce and encourage unique tourist attractions (participant AM), to endorse goods and widely recognized as beauty contest winners and model (participant HFLJ), and to communicate with others and share the activities of tourism ambassador and model (participant ASYR). The participants elaborated on these goals:

> "The reason (for posting on *Instagram*) is to share information since people frequently ask about tourist attractions that I posted. I am happy to help" (Interview MR/348-351).

> "My intention (for posting on *Instagram*) is to build my own brand. I need it since I offer services (of trainings). The more I display my activities as a trainer, and the more people will notice my experiences, capacities, and capabilities." (Interview MNA/363-369).

> "I want to introduce and promote unique, potential places to visit. Therefore, I create content for a specific place (and post them on *Instagram*)" (Interview AM/423-426).

> "(Through *Instagram*), I can promote my brand and events. Since I am the ambassador of Solo city, I regularly post content related to the city (Interview HFLJ/214-217). "In addition, I want to share my talents to others. It is a means of self-promotion, showing my capabilities as a photo, video, or music video model. (Interview HFLJ/466-470).

> "*Instagram* can be a starting point to be recognized by others. We can post our activities and share them to others" (Interview ASYR/98-101). "In addition, *Instagram* is rather as a 'stage' for me, I build and show off my personality through the contents. I have hundreds of maybe thousands of people virtually stalk at me through *Instagram*. While they may not meet me in person, they can meet me via *Instagram*." (Interview ASYR/237-243).

Second, creating *Instagram* content. The contents of *Instagram* are created and edited to conceptualize and highlight the uniqueness of the posting. Participant ASYR displayed her talent and uniqueness as the first winner of the contest at the provincial level, and top 5 contestants in national contest. In addition, ASYR also exposed the process behind her success.

> "If you are unique and odd in positive ways, people will be curious about you." (Interview ASYR/688-690).

> "I put myself as tourism ambassador who can be a role model and inspirator for my followers/others." (Interview ASYR/706-708).

Moreover, the participants performed editing of contents before posting them as implied on the interview:

> "Yet we have no absolute control on what netizen write on our posts. Therefore, we must accept when they make unfavorable comments about our skin, body mass, and similar negativity since *Instagram* is our stage." (Interview ASYR/435-440).

Participant MNA created and posted content with the theme of positive vibe-related training. He juxtaposed his *Instagram* contents with his real world:

> "(Since) I focus on trainings; I continuously post stories about good deeds and positivity. I avoid posting despair and similar kinds of stuff, as it implies my inability in practicing my expertise" (Interview MNA/225-232).

In addition, he also testified to use photo editing feature:

> "It is possible to have satisfying photos all the time, so I use the filter for improving the quality of photos particularly to make them vivid and brighter" (Interview MNA/187-190).

Participant HFLJ created content with the themes of Solo city, etiquette, and how to dress appropriately. She also juxtaposed her virtual image with her real-life:

"It is important to pay attention to etiquette and how we dress up, especially when I serve as Putri Solo" (Interview HFLJ/518-519).

Participant also edited the *Instagram* contents before posting them:

"The contents must be attractive with adequate lighting, instead of a dime, blurry or redundantly bright. Editing is also done on imprecise images that make them less attractive" (Interview HFLJ/304-308).

Participant MR also carried out editing process before posting contents:

"To make sure the content has the optimal result, (editing is important) since an image must be attractive to make people curious about the place" (Interview MR/113-116).

MR focused on color and lighting of the photos:

"I prefer rather dark-themed photos. They tend to be less bright and less colorful. I prefer soft instead of bold dark, the color tends to be plain, calm and comforting" (Interview MR/158-161).

Similarly, participant AM claimed:

"I do edit mostly for color grading" (Interview AM/217).

The participant also conceptualized the contents by themselves:

"I have to make concept (for my content). As there are three rows for a feed, I also make three concepts: for today, for the day after today, and for 2 days after today" (Interview AM/266-269).

Third, posting the contents. As the participants finalized the contents, they posted them on *Instagram* with several considerations, namely consistency, frequency, time, and caption. Consistency implies the regularity in posting specific content. Participant MR usually updates his *Instagram* at specific time:

> "I usually post content in the morning, around 6 and 7 p.m. as I notice that I gain more likes in the morning, and in the weekend Saturdays or Sundays as most people have a day off" (Interview MR/290-311).

In addition, MR also utilizes the features available on *Instagram*, such as highlight, to allow people view his stories any time:

> "(Highlight) is useful for new follower since it can save particular information that can be viewed any time, while story disappears within 24 hours" (Interview MR/263-267).

Similarly, participant MNA is consistent in posting contents:

> "My life revolves around training, so I post contents about devotion in trainings…" (Interview MNA/44-46).

MNA also allocates specific time for it:

> "I usually update my activities on Saturday and Sunday, assuming people have a leisure time for scrolling down social media" (Interview MNA/101-102).

> "I think it is important to post at specific hours, for me, it is between 6 p.m. too 7:30 pm" (Interview MNA/113-114).

Participants also regularly show off their existence on *Instagram* by posting *stories*:

> "I schedule myself to post a story about my activities, at least once or twice a day" (Interview MNA/118-119).

"It is a strategy to show people that my IG is active as I learn that there is an algorithm in IG, the more frequent we update stories and post contents, the higher the possibility we get on *Instagram* explore" (Interview MNA/122-126).

In addition, participants also write caption:

"I usually summarize the material that I convey at an event in the caption, I provide brief information about it. On the last line, I write the date and the location of the event as a reminder" (Interview MNA/156-163).

Participant AM is also consistent in posting contents:

"My hobby is traveling. Therefore, I mostly take pictures about nature, especially landscapes" (Interview AM/137-139).

AM allocates specific time to post contents:

"I usually upload contents after sunset to 7:30 p.m. It is a perfect time as most people are free, so they have time to scroll down IG" (Interview AM/240-245).

"I also prefer Monday to Friday to post contents, considering people are preoccupied on weekdays and they need entertainment during a break, such as scrolling down IG" (Interview AM/314-318).

AM uses highlight feature for stories:

"I use highlight to save stories, so people can view my stories when they are interested on them" (Interview AM/391-393).

AM also writes attractive captions on his feeds:

"Most people cannot 'read' photo. Therefore, it is essential to make caption for the content. It helps viewers to understand a photo and get the message of our content" (Interview AM/201-205).

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Participant HFLJ is consistently posting contents on her *Instagram*:

"Recently, I participated in Solo City Anniversary, so I posted the event on my IG. When I am invited to an event, I usually make a content about it" (Interview HFLJ/209-211).

Meanwhile, HFLJ prefers to rarely post photos in order to prevent her followers for getting bored:

"I don't update my feed too often. I think people will get bored instead of curious about us. They tend to skip our contents when we post them too often" (Interview HFLJ/327-330).

In addition, HFLJ also uses *highlight* feature to create stories:

"I highlight my videos to inform people about my skills" (Interview HFLJ/466-468).

In addition, HFLJ uses *close friend* feature to only allow particular people see her private stories:

"I prefer 'close friend' setting for my IG as I feel more comfortable with it. I can post anything that I want to share without having to worry about what people will think of me. So, I think the feature suits me" (Interview HFLJ/454-458).

Participant ASYR is also consistently posting contents in her *IG*:

"I used to initiate Q and A about being tourism ambassador and being me in general back then when I served as tourism ambassador (of Central Java)" (Interview ASYR/248-250).

"Nowadays, I post more about my activities as model and jury to inform people about my profession. While for stories, I use it to expose and promote new tourist attractions in Central Java" (Interview ASYR/547-550).

ASYR allocates specific time to update her IG:

"I usually upload new content on Saturday, between 5 p.m. to 8 p.m." (Interview ASYR/380-383).

ASYR uses *highlight* feature to archive her stories:

"To save information missed by some viewers, I highlighted some stories to be seen later" (Interview ASYR/762-763).

ASYR also writes inspiring captions to attract viewers:

"When I wore the sash and was on duty (as tourism ambassador), it is my call to inspire others" (Interview ASYR/392-394).

"It is such a pleasure to write captions that motivate others" (Interview ASYR/413-414).

Based on observation, the participants apply the feature of *highlight* on their *stories* thus people who had not seen their stories can view through the *highlights* as the stories only lasted 24 hours. *Instagram* allowed the users to save stories using themes and titles as desired by the users and displayed at the bottom of the user's profile in which people can see the stories any time (Kertamukti, Nugroho, & Wahyono, 2019). The highlight feature helps the participants become more famous because the highlight feature saves *Instagram* story uploads so that more people will be able to see the upload than if it is not stored in highlights. When more people can see the uploads stored in highlights, the more people will have a certain perception of the participants. At this point, the personal branding of the participants is formed.

The participants also edit their contents before posting them on *Instagram*. Editing enables the users to create eye-catching and vivid photos. The editing process is carried out to give a more profound impression

of the results of the posted photos (Liu & Suh, 2017). The impression is also a supporting factor in personal branding (Thompson-Whiteside, Turnbull, & Howe-Walsh, 2018). When the uploaded photo is interesting because it is edited/edited so, it will create a positive impression on the individual who sees the photo. When the impression formed is positive, the personal branding that is formed is also positive.

Furthermore, four of five participants compose interesting captions to attract followers. As demonstrated by their posts, they wrote story about a trip, summarized training activities, informed an event through photos, as well as motivated and inspired others. Caption is a part of creativity in composing words. It confirms Sheldon & Bryant (2016) in which *Instagram* may serve as a medium to express creativity. The more attractive the caption is written, the more it helps individuals form personal branding in the public's eyes. According to Angelika & Setyanto's research (2019), an interesting and not boring caption will produce a positive impression and personal branding.

Regarding time, four of the five participants of this study allocate specific times to post content on *Instagram*. Three participants post photos on weekends. MR posts content on Saturday or Sunday between 6 and 7 a.m., MNA on Saturday or Sunday between 5:30 and 7:30 p.m., ASYR on Saturdays between 5 and 8 p.m., while AM on weekdays after sunset to 7:30 p.m. Such differences occur since they have diverse characteristics of viewers/followers. Therefore, they adjust the characteristics of the viewers/followers by posting content at certain time in order to obtain more likes and range of viewers.

In overall, data analysis reveals three steps in building personal branding. First step is to determine goals as the target to be achieved. Second step is to conceptualize a unique content and editing process. Third step is to consistently post contents in terms of time, frequency, and caption as an extra point.

All participants' goal in personal branding is related to express and present their identity and personality, which is in line with the previous research (Park, Williams, & Son, 2020). In addition, it can also be concluded that the participants' personal branding is related to the achievement of self-actualization, as research by Allison, Blair, Jung, & Boutin, Jr. (2020). *Instagram* is a means to publish self-actualization that has been achieved by the participants (Hendrawan & Nahdiah, 2019). As suggested by McNally & Speak (2011), setting the standards and values of an individual is one of the main steps to build personal branding. Norms and values include the specific goals to be achieved.

Conceptualization of the contents as done by participants is suggested by McNally & Speak (2011): a step to build personal branding determines one's style. Uniqueness is one of the elements in building personal branding (Kholisoh & Wahyuni, 2017). Likewise, Widiastuti (2017) also reaffirmed uniqueness as an essential component in building personal branding. Participants attempt to adjust their *Instagram* concept with their reality. They emphasize the importance of gaining trust from others. The participants upload activities or things that are not only interesting but are also considered unique by others. The more unique the upload, the easier it is for the participants to form personal branding. When their posts are unique, it encourages other people who see the post to form a unique perception of the participants.

Both surveys and interviews unveil that the participants of this study are consistent in posting specific content. It is in line with the characteristics of personal branding developed by Rampersad (2009) that personal branding must be built continuously, repeatedly, and consistently. All participants consistently show off their existence by posting *story* according to their schedules. Most of them prefer afternoon to evening, after working hours. They also perceive that caption are essential to inform or inspire others. Posting a content to show off one's existence is a strategy to build personal branding (Lubis & Suherman, 2015). Adolescents employ

Instagram to share videos or photos. They also post contents that display their dispositions and are expressive when presenting themselves (Jang et al., 2015).

Based on this, we can understand that the participants not only want to show their existence by uploading activities or something related to themselves. However, the participants also wanted to inspire with the caption written along with the upload. Thus, the participants have the ability to harmonize uploads with captions that are inspiring and related to the lives of many people today. This means that participants can capture something from the uploaded content and then relate it to the lives of many people, thus giving rise to the idea of making captions that are not informative but also inspiring.

The Meaning Of Personal Branding On Instagram For Adolescents

Adolescents define personal branding as the effort to promote their competencies, advertise abilities/services, and be useful to others.

First, promoting one's competencies. All participants in this study define personal branding to exhibit their competencies. MR and AM are professional photographers of the natural landscape, MNA is an expert personal trainer, while HFLJ and ASYR are professional models and beauty, contest winners.

> "(I get) a higher number of followers, higher likes, and higher visitor. When our content is reposted, more viewers will visit our page" (W.MR/402-405).

> *Instagram* is defined as a medium to promote competencies:

> "Through IG, more people will recognize me and my skills." (Interview MR/173-174).
> "The more I display my activities, the more people will notice my experiences, capacities, and capabilities" (Interview MNA/366-369).

"(IG helps me) to gain trust of others through reputation. In my opinion, people will not pay attention to me if I show no skills. People will neither recognize nor invite me as a trainer if I do not build my reputation and promote myself as trainer" (Interview MNA/376-382).

"It is such a self-motivation to have a verified IG account as indicated by high number of followers and a broad range of viewers. It means more people notice your skills" (Interview AM/455-457).

"It also means that more people visit our page and see our profile, as well as higher number of followers. Significant increase in the number of followers, make us a *celebgram*" (Interview AM/461-463).

"As I offer my service as a photographer, my page is mostly about my works" (Interview AM/752-753).

"As I am frequently hired as a model for clothing and make-ups, I always take pictures during the sessions and post them on my IG" (Interview HFLJ/653-656).

"(People frequently ask me) about my proficient public speaking. It requires a lot of practices" (Interview ASYR/133-134).

Observations also reveal that number of *likes* and *followers* of the participants. The number of likes and followers is an indicator of popularity, as well the success in self-promotion. Popularity is directly proportional to the number of likes. Shortly, the higher the number of likes, the more popular the individual is. ASYR obtains the highest number of likes as she has the greatest number of followers: she gains approximately 1.100-1.500 *likes* for a post. Meanwhile, MR, HFLJ, MNA, and AM receive approximately 600—700, 700, 200—300, and 300 likes for a post, respectively.

Based on the number of *followers*, ASYR has the highest number of followers, followed by MR, MNA, HFLJ, AM, respectively. Having *IG* account since 2014, ASYR has 5.985 followers in which the number significantly elevates since her involvement in a beauty contest in 2018. Likewise, MR recently has 5.480 followers since opening an account in 2017. While despite having an account since 2013, MNA currently has 3.372 followers in which number dramatically increases since he became a famous trainer in 2016. HFLJ created *Instagram* account in 2012, and recently, she has 3.286 followers in which number notably increases since she participated in a beauty contest in 2019. Meanwhile, AM had approximately 2.000 followers in 2016, but the account was hijacked by an irresponsible party. Therefore, he created a new account in 2017, and recently has 1.047 followers.

Second, expanding career opportunities. Having promoted their competencies, the participants of this study claim they have become more popular and well-known as professionals. Popularity affects them in terms of career opportunities. Briefly, personal branding has a meaning as a strategy to expand the range of job offers. People start to hire them via *Instagram* based on their competencies.

> "(As people view my works on IG), some are interested in being photographed. It provides me a medium for business" (Interview MR/358-359).

> Moreover, "Some also ask for collaboration. Once, it was two hundred thousand rupiah for one story" (Interview MR/370-373).

> "Occasionally, they just direct message me for discussion or invitation to an event" (Interview MNA/248-250).

> Subsequently, "People may recognize my works on IG for a period, and finally, invite me to an event (as a photographer)" (Interview MNA/273-275).

"Some of my clients contact me via *Instagram*. It is usually for wedding and prewedding events"(Interview AM/572-573).

"It includes an endorsement of a waist bag brand" (Interview AM/487-488).

"People contact my business inquiry via *Instagram* to hire me as a model, usually for clothing and make-up" (Interview HFLJ/653-656).

"In addition, I was the model in several videos made by communication sciences students, Komfi Fest, Katon Bagaskara, as well as for the competition of learning media at Senior High School and advertisement for the school" (Interview HFLJ/662-665).

Subsequently, "I am also the model of a beauty clinic, thrift clothing brand, shoes brand, shoes cleaning service, home dress, batik, and skirt brand" (Interview HFLJ/886-890).

"Via *Instagram*, I have accepted various lines of work, including as jury, model and resource person" (Interview ASYR/767-768).

Third, being useful to others. Posting specific content on *Instagram* is also used by users to share information and solution for others. Therefore, the participants of this study define personal branding as a way and medium to be a helpful person according to their competencies. They are contented when they can benefit others. People have sent messages, thanking them for providing valuable information related to the locations and routes to natural tourist attractions, psychological knowledge, history of cities, self-development, and inspirational quotes.

"Just for sharing (my experiences). As my hobby is traveling, I want to perpetuate a particular moment by taking a picture and uploading them on IG. For sharing information about tourist attractions to others" (Interview MR/64-68).

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"I post contents to promote a cause. Training itself is about psychology in a general context, so it is less or more like tips" (Interview MNA/143-145).

"While most people are not familiar to a particular place, I have visited that place and posted it on my IG. As a result, and they are curious about it" (Interview AM/173-176).

"I just want to be a prolific one in my field of interest (photography)" (Interview AM/407-409).

"When people repost our story, it feels good since we can give benefit to others" (Interview HFLJ/635-637).

"I love modelling. I want to be a professional in this field" (Interview HFLJ/570-571).

"I create a content about public speaking and discuss the requirements as tourist ambassador contestant in the following month, accompanied by how to dress appropriately in special occasions" (Interview ASYR/251-255).

Subsequently, "I am not interested in the idea of buying followers. I know some people do it to increase endorsement level. That is not my target. Instead I need a real trust" (Interview ASYR/842-846).

Subsequently, "I realize that many small business owners have no links and less popular. Therefore, I want to help them" (Interview ASYR/782-784).
"As they are still in the phase of starting up a business, we help according to our capacity such as promoting their items" (Interview ASYR/794-796).

According to the examination of the meaning of personal branding created on *Instagram*, personal branding has significant and strategic meanings for adolescents: it is a platform for promoting one's abilities, a link to expanding job options, and a way to be valuable to others.

Competencies are a factor in building personal branding and the most dominant one (Yunitasari & Japarianto, 2013). Lubis & Suherman (2015) and McNally & Speak (2011) suggested that improving one's competencies can be a step to build personal branding. Competence is an essential aspect in building personal branding because competence causes participants to have skills and can actualize themselves in the form of various activities and achievements. When participants are able to make various achievements with their activities, it will cause others to form positive perceptions of themselves. At this point, the personal branding of the participants is formed.

According to Sheldon & Bryant (2016), *Instagram* serves as a means of popularity. Through *Instagram*, people can promote themselves to gain popularity. For some users, popularity is directly proportional to the number of likes on posted contents. The more the likes, the more popular the individual is. As suggested by Thelander & Cassinger (2017), *Instagram* users always create works to enhance the number of followers on a weekly basis. The findings in this study indicate that social media does not always have a negative impact on an individual's mental state. Social media can actually be a means for individuals to display their achievements. In addition, feedback or responses obtained from social media, such as the number of followers or the number of likes/loves, help individuals achieve satisfaction and become reinforcement for creating positive content and other forms of achievement.

Career opportunities obtained by the participants of this study confirm Latiff & Safiee (2015) on the function of personal branding on *Instagram* in facilitating a business to earn income. It applies not only to a company but also to students, part-time workers, and those motivated to improve their businesses, including adolescents. The job offers for the participants include a photographer of natural landscape or special events, trainer or keynote speaker, model, and endorsement. Of the five participants, ASYR has the most career opportunities in modeling and

celebrity endorsement due to her popularity as a contestant in a beauty contest at the national level.

These findings illustrate that *Instagram* can be a medium for self-promotion through uploaded content. Content that describes the participants themselves is then read by others with business and career interests. This then causes the other person to have a certain perception of the participants, so that the personal branding of the participants is formed. This condition attracts other people who have business and career interests to use the services of the participants due to the created personal branding. In addition, *Instagram* has a facility in the form of participants mentioning accounts related to the business and careers that the participants are involved in. In addition, *Instagram* also has a hashtag facility. These various facilities further help the participants to form personal branding to support their careers because more and more people are aware of their capacities through these mentions and hashtags.

According to Kholisoh & Wahyuni (2017); Firmansyah, Budiwaspada, & Sachari (2017); and Raftari & Amiri (2014), one of the elements to build personal branding is values. The participants associate the value of being valuable to others with the concept of personal branding. Through their experiences, all participants in this study perceive the benefits of developing personal branding in terms of being useful and helpful to others.

Nevertheless, this study has some shortcomings, including a limited number of participants involved in the study and a limited range of professions. They only consist of photographers, trainers, models, and beauty contest winners. Therefore, the collected data is less comprehensive in the context of the variety in building personal branding.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The present study aims to describe adolescents' experiences in building personal branding through *Instagram* and the meaning of personal branding for adolescents. For adolescents, building personal branding entails three main steps: to determine goals, conceptualize and create unique content, and consistently post content. The first step is done by focusing on personal branding goals: sharing information, performing self-promotion, gaining popularity, and expanding career opportunities. The second step is done by creating contents with unique concept and finalizing them with the editing process to achieve such goals. The virtual image of an individual as symbolized by *Instagram* content is synchronized with one's real-life to maintain the trust of others. Subsequently, the third step is to post content consistently in terms of time and frequency, activate the highlight feature, and write a caption to attract more viewers.

For adolescents, personal branding built on *Instagram* embodies three strategic meanings. They are a medium to promote one's competencies, expand career opportunities, and become a useful person to others. Personal branding is a positive activity to show one's competencies according to their respective fields and preferences. In addition to the pride of being famous, popularity may lead to higher job offers and income. Adolescents may have amusing experiences while they engage in activities that benefit others, such as sharing information and inspiring others.

Furthermore, as personal branding is perceived as a medium to be a useful person, there is an outstanding act carried out by a participant of this study. The participant views personal branding as a way to promote competencies, but not necessarily to earn money. Instead, the participant uses it to spread kindness by voluntarily endorsing small enterprises that begin their business.

Suggestion

Adolescents can optimize the function of *Instagram* to carry out personal branding and engage in virtual reality through social media. Personal branding is an alternative to use social media positively, which can support personal and career development. For further research, it is recommended to expand the number of participants and increase the variety of participants' professions. It is necessary to enrich the data and gain more comprehensive results.

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