

EXPLORATION OF PERSONAL BRANDING ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT SELF-IDENTITY

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Abstract

In today's digital era, social media has become an integral part of students' lives. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are not only used for communication and entertainment, but also become a strategic means in building personal branding. Personal branding is the process of individuals promoting and forming a desired self-image in the eyes of the public, which is increasingly important to support self-confidence, self-actualization, and future career opportunities. This phenomenon is growing along with the increasing penetration of the internet and the use of social media among the younger generation of Indonesia, where social media has become the main space for self-actualization and identity formation. However, behind the opportunities offered, there are challenges in the form of pressure to always appear perfect and maintain consistency between digital image and self-reality, which can trigger identity conflicts and impact students' mental health. Therefore, it is important to understand how students use social media in building personal branding and its implications for brand identity. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation of a number of active students who use social media. Data analysis was carried out thematically to identify patterns of personal branding formation and their implications for students' self-identity. The results of the study showed that students use social media to consistently display their uniqueness, interests, and personal values. Personal branding built through social media can increase self-confidence, expand friendship networks, and open up opportunities in academic and professional fields. However, challenges are also found in the form of pressure to always appear perfect and consistency between digital image and self-reality, which can trigger identity conflicts. In general, personal branding on social media plays a significant role in the formation of students' self-identity in the digital era, but it needs to be balanced with awareness of authenticity and mental health.

Keywords: Personal branding, social media, self-identity, students, digital era

1. Introduction

In today's digital era, social media has become an integral part of everyday life, especially among college students. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok are not only used to interact with friends and family, but also to build personal branding. Personal branding is a process by which individuals promote themselves in a strategic way, creating a desired image and reputation in the eyes of the public. Personal branding is a type of activity that aims to express self-actualization in order to form an image that is in accordance with the individual's desires (Takzia et al. 2023) . The formation of strong personal branding will also create a strong brand personality.

Personal branding or self-image is increasingly growing among social media users. Personal branding is defined as the process of building a unique identity that reflects the values, advantages, and characteristics of an individual, which is displayed to the audience as a form of self-marketing strategy (Pohan et al. 2023) . According to (Irwansyah et al. 2020) personal branding creates a



personal identity that can create emotional bonds with others. In the era of social media, personal branding has become easier to do because of the features that support users in consistently displaying their achievements, interests, and personalities (Witarti et al. 2020) . Social media with various features such as Insta Stories, Reels, and Highlights, allows users to build and maintain their self-image in a form that is visible to many people (Wahid et al. 2020) .

Personal branding is formed through a person's personality, character, and uniqueness to create a strong identity so that it can get a positive perception from the community so that it can be used as a marketing tool (Mita & Tiara et al. 2022) . By forming a personal brand, a person can highlight the advantages that distinguish them from others. in other words, personal branding is about how someone wants others to see and understand someone. Personal branding can also be interpreted as a person's activity in creating a personal brand (Rini & George et al. 2021) .

Personal branding is a strategy to build self-image in the eyes of others. (Mega et al. 2020) . Personal branding makes us known as individuals who have a positive self-image. Because, personal branding is an opportunity for anyone to pursue a better career. (Efrida et al. 2020) . Personal branding has been built by an individual from a job or profession that he does, to build a positive perception in society. Different from personal branding which is connected to social media. Social media is considered a new media and is considered practical and easy to use for socializing and communicating in forming perceptions. (Hanifah et al. 2021) .

The difference between personal branding and imaging can be seen from the nature that is displayed. If imaging is usually what is displayed does not match reality. (Widi et al. 2024) . Meanwhile, personal branding displays a value or benefit that truly exists and is inherent in the person doing the personal branding. (Sutoyo et al. 2020) . From this, of course there are benefits and objectives. from personal branding that is carried out, including: 1) Media can influence other people with a person's self-perception, while also trying to position themselves to compete to look unique, distinctive and better than their competitors. (Kozinets & Robert et al. 2020) . 2) Telling others about who a person is, what their activities are, what makes them different from others, how to make the person look valuable to them, and what others expect when establishing a relationship with them . 3) Making others make the person the best reference as the only solution to solving their problems. (Tania et al. 2023) . 4) Making sure of the meaningful perception of the quality of self-image that one has (Amartha et al. 2021) .

Personal branding on social media is the process by which individuals shape and promote their image and reputation on digital platforms. In this fast-paced information era, social media provides a powerful platform for individuals to express themselves, build connections, and strengthen their identity (Rahman et al. 2024) . Here are some important elements of personal branding on social media: Personal branding begins with understanding who you are and the values you want to convey. This includes determining the skills, interests, and goals you want to achieve (Dimas et al. 2023) . Consistency is key in building personal branding. Uploading content that is relevant and in line with your identity regularly can help strengthen your image in the eyes of your audience (Kemala et al. 2023) .

Social media allows direct interaction with the audience, so it is important to communicate and engage with followers. Responding to comments, answering questions, and participating in discussions can increase connectedness and build trust. (Christalica et al. 2022) . Each social media platform has unique features that can be utilized to strengthen personal branding. For example, using

Stories on Instagram to share everyday moments or Live Streaming to interact in real-time with the audience (Hasiholan et al. 2020) . Social media provides an opportunity to build connections with other professionals, influencers, and target audiences. Joining relevant groups or communities can help you expand your network and increase visibility (Azizah & Tanto, et al. 2021) .

The role of social media is very important in forming and strengthening a person's personal branding. There are several ways in which social media can contribute to the formation of personal branding, such as increasing visibility, building networks, conveying messages and stories, building authority and expertise, and being able to manage reputation (Salam et al. 2020) . By utilizing social media effectively, a person can build a strong personal branding for their career or business. According to Montoya & Vandehey (2022) It is important for a person to be consistent in conveying their messages, values, and expertise on social media in order to achieve the desired personal branding goals. With the emergence of personal branding in students, it can certainly make them more confident with what they have in themselves.

This is supported by research conducted by Fitria and Theresia (2022) regarding Personal Branding Travel Bloggers Through Instagram Social Media (Analysis of Message Content on the @her_journeys Account). The results of this study indicate that the phenomenon of personal branding through social media is useful in forming certain perceptions. This has an impact on a person's performance and productivity in the field they are engaged in.

The development of technology and increasing internet access have changed the way people interact and communicate. Especially among the younger generation, the internet has become an important part of everyday life. (Junedi Agustian et al. 2022) . Based on data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) in 2017, internet user penetration in Indonesia reached the highest figure in the 13-18 age group, which was 75.5%. This shows that the younger generation is the main user of internet technology, with social media as the most widely accessed type of content (97.4%) (Widia et al. 2021) . Social media is not only a means of entertainment, but also a medium for self-actualization and identity formation, especially in the current digital era which allows individuals to create and share their image with the world (Abidin & Soegiarto et al. 2021) .

In general, media can be interpreted as a tool used to communicate. While "social" is a word derived from English, namely society. In simple terms, social can be interpreted as something about society and society. This opinion is in line with that put forward by Daviz in (Aprilia et al. 2020) . According to Usman, RP, & Kurniasari (2021) online media that can be used by its users in various activities such as sharing, joining, and creating are usually called social media. In sharing activities, users can share information or content from their social media.

Social media can be understood as a digital platform that allows every user to socialize easily. There are several activities that people usually do on this social media such as communicating with others, providing information or posts in the form of photos and short videos. Social media itself is basically part of the evolution of the internet. A few decades ago, social media was as widespread and fast as it is today. This allows people who use social media to connect with an internet connection to communicate with each other or it could be in the form of providing information to others (Astuti et al. 2021) .

The rapid development of social media has also left conventional media such as television, radio and newspapers far behind, because of the advantages of social media in making it easier for

users to access information (Maharani & Djuwita et al. 2020) . The research results from We Are Social (Mahdi et al. 2022) . The number of active social media users in Indonesia was 191 million people in January 2022. And that number increased by 12.35% compared to the previous year which was 170 million people. Looking at the trend, the number of social media users in Indonesia continues to increase every year. However, its growth has fluctuated since 2014-2022. In 2017, social media users experienced the highest increase reaching 34.2%. However, the increase slowed down to 6.3% in 2021. The figure only increased again in 2022. This proves that social media has become a necessity that cannot be abandoned or denied by anyone.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and TikTok play a significant role in adolescents' lives, offering a means for self-expression, social connection, and information sharing (Khalaf et al. 2023) . Although these platforms allow adolescents to form their identities and engage in virtual communities, there are concerns about the potential negative impacts on adolescent mental health (Marquez & Karlin et al. 2022) .

Instagram, as one of the visual-based social media, is a popular platform among teenagers and young adults. Instagram allows its users to share photos and videos, create self-images, and interact with the wider community (Yusanda et al. 2021) . According to Suharso (2020), the age group of Instagram users ranges from 18 to 24 years, which is an active period for individuals as students.

Facebook is one of the most popular social media platforms in the world, founded in 2004. It is a social networking site that allows users to create profiles, interact with friends, share content such as text, images, and videos, and join groups and pages (Nurmansya et al. 2022) . According to (Hidayat et al. 2021) Facebook attracts users from a wide range of age groups, but is most widely used by those aged 25 to 54. By Number of Users In 2023-2024, Facebook has around 130 million active users in Indonesia.

TikTok is a short video sharing platform launched in 2016. Users can create and share videos with various effects, music, and challenges. TikTok is very popular among the younger generation because of its creative and interactive format (Hadi et al. 2021) . According to (Buana & Maharani et al. 2020) . Age Group TikTok is mostly used by individuals aged 16 to 24, but also attracts users from older age groups. Number of Users In 2023-2024, TikTok had around 125 million active users in Indonesia. Instagram of course. The need to appear in the digital public space, gain recognition, and create a positive image among friends or followers makes Instagram, Facebook and TikTok the main media in Personal branding .

Personal branding is a process in which a person displays his/her attributes to form the perception desired by the public, which includes personality, skills, and values. This concept is increasingly relevant in today's digital era, where social media has become the main platform for individuals to build and market their self-image widely and effectively. Social media provides a space that allows every user, including students, to express themselves and build a unique personal brand through the visual content and narratives they share.

The rapid development of information and communication technology has changed the way individuals present themselves. Social media not only functions as a means of two-way communication, but also as a strategic tool in building a strong and authentic self-identity. For students, personal branding on social media can be a way to show their uniqueness, interests, and

values, which in turn can influence how they are perceived by the social environment and the professional world in the future.

In addition, personal branding built on social media also has significant implications for students' self-identity. This process can strengthen self-existence and increase self-confidence, while opening up new opportunities in various aspects of life, such as academics, careers, and social relations. However, on the other hand, inappropriate or inconsistent personal branding can also cause identity conflicts or inconsistencies between the image built and the reality of the student's self.

2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative research method design. Qualitative research methods are a process of investigation in understanding human and social problems that are built in a complex, holistic manner, reporting the informant's point of view and in a natural setting (Murdiyanto et al. 2020). This study uses a lot of qualitative data. Several approaches are used by researchers to collect data for this investigation. In qualitative investigations, where data is the main way to verify the findings of the investigation, the use of data collection strategies is the most important thing. Data are obtained by researchers through the use of several tools, including interview questions, observation sheets, and documents. The following are the techniques used in this study to obtain data (Fiantika et al. 2022).

Participants in this study were obtained through a purposive technique, namely being selected with certain considerations and purposes, with adolescent subjects who use social media. Inclusion criteria identify the study population consistently, reliably, uniformly and objectively. Exclusion criteria include factors or characteristics that make the recruited population ineligible for the study (Adlini et al. 2022). The inclusion criteria in this study were adolescents aged 15-20 years, using social media for personal branding or who are active in uploading videos or photos

The data collection techniques used by the researcher are interviews, observations, and documentation. In this study, interviews were conducted directly at the subject's home. The observation method used was non-participant observation, the researcher was not directly involved and was only an independent observer. In this study, observations were conducted while the interview was in progress. Documentation in this study was conducted offline.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

3.3.1 Students' Understanding of Personal Branding on Social Media

Students' understanding of personal branding on social media shows a fairly deep awareness of the importance of building a self-image online. Most students understand personal branding as a way to show who they are through content uploaded on social media, so that others can recognize their character, skills, and values. ESW, a student of the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Education Science, stated that “*Personal branding is how we show who we are on social media, so that others know our character and skills.*” This is in line with the view of DEV from the Faculty of Sharia who stated *that personal branding is “how we show who we are to others via the internet, for example through photos, videos, or writings that we upload.”*

Their main motivation in building personal branding is the desire to be known positively and open up new opportunities, both in the academic world and career. NTH

from the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Philosophy added that *personal branding is the process of forming a consistent self-image to be known according to the values and expertise one has*.

They also realize that building a personal brand requires consistency in uploading relevant content and interacting with the audience, as well as facing challenges such as maintaining consistency and the pressure to appear perfect.

From the interview, it can be concluded that students do not only see personal branding as merely an image, but also as a means of self-development that has an impact on their self-confidence and social networks.

Social media has a huge influence in building students' personal branding. Based on the results of interviews with several students from various departments and faculties, it can be seen that social media is the main means to display identity, expertise, and values that they want to highlight to the public. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn were chosen because they have extensive users and features that support effective content distribution.

Students use social media to introduce themselves, share their activities, skills, and thoughts consistently. For example, ESW said that she routinely uploads content that suits her interests and maintains the way she communicates in each upload so that the self-image she builds remains positive. DEV and NTH also emphasized the importance of consistency in sharing educational, inspiring, and personality-appropriate content, so that the audience can recognize them as positive and productive individuals.

The influence of social media on personal branding can also be seen from the changes in how students view themselves. Many of them feel more confident, more motivated to develop, and more responsible for what they share. NTH, for example, admitted to being more aware of her potential and more responsible in behaving in cyberspace after building her personal branding. Similar things were also expressed by NFZ and FF, who felt that personal branding made them more focused on their own qualities and more disciplined in their actions.

In addition, social media also opens up new opportunities for students, both in academics, organizations, and careers. Many claim to be better known by lecturers and friends, often trusted to participate in campus activities, and even get opportunities for collaboration or work. The environmental response is generally positive, where friends provide support and appreciation for the content uploaded.

However, building a personal brand on social media also has its own challenges, such as maintaining consistency, dealing with the pressure to appear perfect, and managing criticism or negative comments. Even so, most students still try to overcome these challenges in order to build a strong and authentic self-image in the digital world.

Overall, the interview results show that social media is very influential in the process of forming students' personal branding. Social media is not only a tool for self-expression, but also forms identity, increases self-confidence, expands networks, and opens up various opportunities in the future.

Social media has a huge influence in the process of building personal branding, as reflected in the various answers from the informants. Through social media, individuals can display their self-image, personality, values, and expertise more broadly and consistently. Respondents realized that personal branding is not just about popularity, but also about how they want to be known and remembered by others, whether in the scope of friendship, lectures, or professional opportunities.

One of the main influences of social media is its ability to expand networks and open new opportunities. Many sources said that through the content they uploaded on Instagram, TikTok, or LinkedIn, they became better known, more trusted, and even got the opportunity to collaborate or get involved in campus activities. Social media also makes it easier for them to build a reputation as a positive, active, inspiring, and professional person according to their respective fields or interests.

In addition, social media encourages users to be more consistent and responsible in every upload. They feel the need to maintain the quality of content, pay attention to how they communicate, and adjust to audience expectations. This indirectly forms a character that is more disciplined, confident, and aware of the self-image that is built. The challenges faced are quite diverse, ranging from maintaining consistency, dealing with criticism, to the pressure to always appear perfect.

The response from the surrounding environment is also very influential. Many respondents received positive support from friends and lecturers, which ultimately motivated them to continue developing their personal branding. Not infrequently, strong personal branding makes them more trusted to represent groups, be invited to seminars, or be involved in campus projects.

Social media has become a very effective tool in building and strengthening personal branding. Its influence is not only limited to the virtual world, but also has a real impact on everyday life, both in terms of self-development, socializing, and career opportunities. However, the success of building personal branding on social media depends heavily on consistency, authenticity, and the ability to adapt to the dynamics and needs of the audience.

3.3.2 Motivation and Goals of Building Personal Branding

The main motivation of students in building personal branding on social media comes from the desire to provide more value to their online presence. As expressed by ESW, *she was motivated because she wanted her social media to not only be a place of entertainment, but also a means to develop and be known as a person who has goals and is able to provide useful content for others*. Something similar was also expressed by DEV, *who wanted to be known as a positive and inspiring figure, so that she could have a good impact on her surroundings*. NTH added that her motivation was *to be known as an inspiring person who has a positive influence in the field she is pursuing, as well as build trust and expand professional relationships*. Meanwhile, NFZ sees *personal branding as a way to increase self-awareness and reputation, while increasing opportunities for networking and collaboration*. FF also said that *her motivation was to increase visibility, expand networks, and open up career or business opportunities*.

In terms of goals, students generally hope that the personal branding they build can bring them recognition, trust, and wider opportunities, both in the academic and professional worlds. ESW " *emphasized her goal to be known as someone who has goals and is able to spread benefits through content .*" DEV wants her personal branding to open up opportunities for collaboration and learning opportunities. NTH *targets trust and professional opportunities, and to be remembered for her positive contributions .* NFZ specifically mentioned the goal of *building a positive and professional self-image, as well as increasing career and business opportunities .* Meanwhile, FF *wants to be known as an expert in a particular field and build audience trust.*

These statements show that the motivation and purpose of building personal branding on social media is not only for existence, but also as a strategy for self-development, building reputation, expanding networks, and opening up various opportunities in the future. Personal branding is a means for students to show their uniqueness, value, and potential, while building trust and credibility in the eyes of the public.

Students' motivations in building personal branding on social media are very diverse, but are generally rooted in the desire to be known positively and to have a wider impact. Many students feel that social media is not just a place for entertainment, but also a means to develop, express themselves, and build a reputation. Other motivations include the desire to inspire others, increase self-confidence, and expand their network of friends and professionals. In addition, the urge to use social media as a place to show expertise, interests, and values that are believed in is also a strong reason for students to build personal branding.

The main purpose of building personal branding on social media is so that students can be known as individuals who have clear character, principles, and life goals. Through personal branding, students hope to open up various opportunities, both in the academic world, organizations, and future careers. Personal branding is also expected to be able to increase trust from the surrounding environment, expand relationships, and strengthen one's position in various communities. Ultimately, students want the personal branding they build to provide benefits not only for themselves, but also for others, for example by sharing educational content, motivation, or experiences that are relevant to the lives of young people. Thus, personal branding is an important strategy for students to prepare themselves to face challenges and opportunities in the digital era.

3.3.3 Implications of Personal Branding on Self-Identity

Personal branding on social media has a significant impact on the formation and development of students' self-identity. Based on the interview results, almost all of the informants stated that efforts to build self-image online made them more aware of their potential, uniqueness, and values. ESW, revealed *that the personal branding she built made her "more enthusiastic to develop because she knows that there are people who pay attention and follow what I share ."* This shows that personal branding not only functions as a tool to

introduce yourself to others, but also as an internal motivation to continue to improve and develop yourself.

In addition, personal branding also increases students' self-confidence. DEV stated, "*I have become more confident and understand more about who I really am .*" A similar statement was also expressed by NTH *who felt that personal branding made her "more confident and more aware of my own potential ."* The process of building a self-image on social media encourages students to be more reflective of their strengths and weaknesses, thus helping them in the process of finding their identity.

Not only that, personal branding also brings about changes in behavior and social responsibility. NTH admitted that *she felt "more responsible for the behavior and words I convey on social media,"* while ESW felt "*more mature in conveying something, and more careful in acting, because she is aware of having responsibility for what I share ."* This shows that personal branding can form a more mature and responsible self-identity, both in cyberspace and in real life.

From the social environment side, personal branding also has a positive impact on the interactions and opportunities that students get. Many sources mentioned that they became better known by lecturers and friends, and were often trusted to be involved in various campus activities. As expressed by DEV, "*I am often trusted to participate in campus activities or group work because I am considered active,"* and NTH who was once "*asked to give a seminar because of the content I created ."*

Overall, personal branding on social media not only shapes self-image in the eyes of others, but also strengthens students' self-identity internally. This process encourages students to be more confident, responsible, and open up new opportunities in their academic and professional lives. However, challenges such as maintaining consistency, dealing with criticism, and the pressure to appear perfect remain part of the journey of building a healthy and authentic personal brand.

3.3.4 Challenges in Building Personal Branding

Building personal branding on social media is not easy. The main challenges faced by students in this process are very diverse, ranging from finding content ideas, maintaining consistency, to facing social pressure. ESW, one of the students who is active on social media, said that she often finds it difficult to find new ideas and feels pressure to always appear perfect according to other people's expectations. She stated, "*Sometimes it's hard to find new ideas, then there is pressure to appear perfect or according to other people's expectations.*" This shows that the demand to always be creative and maintain a good self-image in front of the public can be a burden in itself.

In addition, DEV, a student from the Faculty of Sharia, also highlighted the challenges in maintaining consistency and self-confidence. She said, "*The challenge is maintaining consistency, sometimes feeling inferior, and still being yourself.*" This statement emphasizes that maintaining continuity in uploading relevant content while remaining authentic is often a dilemma. Many students worry whether the content they share is interesting enough or whether it will cause negative judgment from others.

NTH, a KPI student, added that another challenge faced was overcoming doubts about other people's judgments. She said, "The challenge is consistency and overcoming doubts about other people's judgments." This shows that social pressure and fear of negative comments from the audience can affect students' courage to express themselves freely on social media.

Meanwhile, NFZ from the Faculty of Sharia highlighted the importance of maintaining the quality and consistency of content, as well as dealing with criticism and negative comments. She said, "The challenge I face is to maintain the consistency and quality of content, as well as dealing with criticism and negative comments." This challenge is increasingly felt when students begin to be widely known and receive attention from many people, so that every upload becomes a highlight and has the potential to cause various reactions.

Not only that, FF also emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance between personal and professional life on social media. She mentioned, "Consistency of content, negative criticism, and maintaining a balance between personal and professional" as the main challenges in building personal branding.

From these statements, it can be concluded that the challenges in building personal branding on social media include creativity in creating content, maintaining consistency, managing social pressure, dealing with criticism, and maintaining a balance between personal and professional life. These challenges require students to continue learning, adapting, and developing the right strategies so that the personal branding that is built can survive and have a positive impact, both for themselves and the surrounding environment.

3.2 Discussion

The exploration of personal branding on social media by students can be seen from how they consciously and actively build their self-image through various platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Facebook. Students use social media to show their personality, skills, values, and daily activities that they want to highlight. They do not only share moments or entertainment, but also strive to create content that is useful, inspiring, and relevant to their target audience. This process is carried out with various strategies, such as consistency in uploading content, maintaining interaction with followers, and choosing visuals and messages that are in accordance with the self-image they want to build.

From the interviews, it is clear that the main motivation of students in exploring personal branding is the desire to be known positively, expand their network, and open up opportunities in academic and professional fields. They hope that strong personal branding can increase self-confidence, provide a positive influence on others, and open the way for collaboration or job opportunities. In addition, students also realize the importance of maintaining consistency and authenticity so that the self-image that is built remains credible in the eyes of the public.

The implications of this personal branding exploration are very much felt in students' self-identity. Many claim to be more confident, more aware of their potential and personal uniqueness, and more responsible in every action and statement on social media.

Personal branding also encourages students to be more disciplined, creative, and selective in choosing the content to be shared. In fact, some students feel positive changes in their daily lives, such as being better known by lecturers and friends, often trusted to represent groups, and getting the opportunity to participate in campus activities or seminars.

However, exploring personal branding also brings its own challenges, such as the pressure to appear perfect, maintain consistency, deal with criticism, and overcome feelings of inferiority. However, this experience actually helps students in the process of forming a more mature and adult identity. They learn to accept feedback, manage expectations, and remain themselves amidst the flow of social media trends.

Exploring personal branding on social media has a positive impact on students' self-identity. This process not only strengthens their self-image in cyberspace, but also shapes their character, self-confidence, and readiness to face challenges in the real world. Personal branding is one of the important assets for students to develop personally, socially, and professionally in today's digital era.

Social media allows students to showcase the best version of themselves through consciously selected and curated content, such as photos, achievements, and activities that reflect the personality and values they want to highlight. This process helps students build an ideal self-image and expand their social network, whether with peers, lecturers, or the wider community.

In addition to being a means of self-expression, social media is also an arena for identity exploration where students can experiment with various self-representations that they may find difficult to show directly in the real world. This provides greater freedom of expression, while also encouraging them to manage the impression they want to show to the public in accordance with Erving Goffman's concept of impression management. However, the pressure to display this ideal image can also cause identity confusion and affect mental health, especially when students feel they have to adjust to the aesthetic standards and social norms that apply in the digital space.

Interviews show that students are aware of the role of social media in shaping their identity, where social media is not only a means of communication, but also a medium for constructing and reconstructing identity. They feel that social media helps them show who they really are while expanding their social relations, although interactions on social media sometimes feel shallower than direct interactions. Therefore, social media contributes significantly to the formation of students' self-perception, both positively and negatively, depending on how they manage the use of the media and the support of the social environment they receive.

Social media plays a very significant role in shaping and influencing students' personal branding. Based on interviews, almost all sources stated that social media is the main means to present themselves, build an image, and introduce their personality and expertise to the public. Through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Facebook, students can show their positive side, creativity, and the values they want to highlight.

The role of social media can be seen from how students actively manage the content they upload. They try to be consistent in making posts that are relevant to their personal interests and goals, such as sharing their college experiences, organizational activities, study tips, and motivational content. This not only makes them better known on campus, but also opens up opportunities for collaboration, networking, and even future job opportunities.

In addition, social media also provides a space for students to get feedback from their surroundings. Positive responses from friends, lecturers, and audiences are a motivation in themselves to continue developing themselves. Not infrequently, strong personal branding on social media makes students more trusted to represent groups, be invited to campus activities, or be an inspiration to others.

However, social media also brings its own challenges. Students must be able to maintain consistency, face the pressure to appear perfect, and manage criticism or negative comments. However, this experience actually forms a more mature, confident, and responsible personality for every action in cyberspace.

Personal branding or self-image is increasingly growing among social media users. Personal branding is defined as the process of building a unique identity that reflects the values, advantages, and characteristics of an individual, which is displayed to the audience as a form of self-marketing strategy (Pohan et al. 2023). According to (Irwansyah et al. 2020) personal branding creates a personal identity that can create emotional bonds with others. In the era of social media, personal branding has become easier to do because of the features that support users in consistently displaying their achievements, interests, and personalities (Witarti et al. 2020). Social media with various features such as Insta Stories, Reels, and Highlights, allows users to build and maintain their self-image in a form that is visible to many people (Wahid et al. 2020).

Personal branding is formed through a person's personality, character, and uniqueness to create a strong identity so that it can get a positive perception from the community so that it can be used as a marketing tool (Mita & Tiara et al. 2022). By forming a personal brand, a person can highlight the advantages that distinguish them from others. In other words, personal branding is about how someone wants others to see and understand someone. Personal branding can also be interpreted as a person's activity in creating a personal brand (Rini & George et al. 2021).

4. Conclusions

Based on the results and discussion of the study, it can be concluded that personal branding on social media plays an important role in the formation of students' self-identity in the digital era. Students utilize various social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to showcase their uniqueness, interests, and values. Through the content they share, students can build a positive self-image, expand their network of friends, and increase their self-confidence.

Personal branding that is carried out consistently and authentically has been proven to provide positive impacts, such as strengthening self-existence, opening up opportunities in academic and professional fields, and increasing student self-confidence. However, this study also found

challenges, such as the pressure to always appear perfect and the risk of identity conflict if the digital image that is built does not match the reality of the self.

Overall, personal branding on social media contributes significantly to the formation of students' self-identity, as long as it is done with awareness of authenticity and balance between digital image and real life. Therefore, it is important for students to build personal branding that is not only visually appealing, but also reflects their true values and personality.

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