

ANALYSIS OF BIGETRON E-SPORT TEAM BRANDING STRATEGY VIA THE INSTAGRAM PLATFORM

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ABSTRACT

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This research aims to analyze the branding strategy used by the Bigetron E-Sport Team via the Instagram platform, with a focus on symbolic aspects of strategy, brand as a friend, nostalgia and event branding. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection through non-participant observation of feed posts and reels from the @bigetronesports account. The theory used in this research refers to branding strategy concepts in the book "Strategic Brand Management". The results obtained from this research are that the Bigetron E-Sport Team has succeeded in implementing an adaptive, idealistic and differentiated branding strategy through the Instagram platform. They utilize symbols such as the color red and silhouette images to build a strong brand identity and attract fans' attention. Apart from that, the Bigetron E-Sport Team also uses Event Branding as part of their branding strategy, by holding offline events to increase brand visibility, attract media attention, and introduce players and sponsors to fans. By selecting these aspects, this research provides a deeper understanding of how the Bigetron E-Sport Team utilizes branding strategies through the Instagram platform to strengthen brand identity, deepen relationships with fans, and increase their presence in the E-Sport industry. It is hoped that this research will provide valuable insight for branding practitioners and E-Sport fans in understanding effective branding strategies in the context of social media.

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1. Introduction

Instagram has become one of the most popular social media in Indonesia and even throughout the world. The number of Instagram users in Indonesia has reached more than hundreds of millions of users. According to data taken from the Napoleon Cat source, there were 106.72 million Instagram users recorded in Indonesia as of February 2023. Of this number, there was an increase of 12.9% compared to data in January which was only 94.54 million Instagram users in Indonesia. The highest users are women with an average age of 18-24 years and make up 37.8% of users (Novliana & Cahyani, 2024). In this modern era,

many content creators earn income through social media, one of which is Instagram. They earn income by collaborating with brand partners on one of Instagram's features, namely branded content and partnership advertising (Meta, 2023). The use of social media Instagram provides entertainment and information presented in visual form such as photos and videos. However, using Instagram social media is not just for entertainment, Instagram can provide enormous value for business activities. This shows that Instagram users in Indonesia are aware of the business things that exist on Instagram social media. Business people only need an effective platform to market their products with the aim of expanding the target market. In communication science, it is said that there is something called marketing communication. One example of marketing communication is promotion. Promotion is carried out with the aim that the product being marketed can be seen by everyone and as an effective message to attract consumer interest in buying a product (Puspitarini & Nuraeni, 2019) .

The large number of active users on Instagram in Indonesia has a very effective potential for business people, such as online game business players in Indonesia or what is usually called E-Sports . In Indonesia itself, there are many Instagram accounts for E-Sports teams which have many followers , including RRQ (5.1 million followers), Evos (6.9 million followers), Onic Esports (2.2 million followers), Alter Ego (1 million followers), Bigetron Esports (3 million followers), Boom Esports ID (291 thousand followers). They have a lot of fans and always provide full insight on the E-Sports team's Instagram social media (Kusuma, 2021) . Not only competing in competitions, E-Sports teams also compete in their social media branding to present interesting content and make their identity display the characteristics of the E-Sports team . Branding comes from the word brand in Indonesian which means brand. According to the definition, branding and brand have different meanings. The word brand means brand, while branding itself has the meaning of communication activities carried out by a company and has the aim of building and developing a brand or brands of that company (Bokir, 2021) .

Esports is one of the industries that is growing rapidly in Indonesia, because Indonesia has won several international competitions, for example in 2019 the MLBB (Mobile Legend Bang Bang) team from Evos won the first MLBB world championship tournament in Malaysia or what people call M1. And in the same year, namely in 2019, the PUBGM team from the Bigetron Esports team also won the international championship at the PMCO Global Final. These several examples can be evidence that the development of Esports in Indonesia can provide benefits for Esports business players (Faherty, 2018) . The object of this research refers to one of the Esports teams in Indonesia, namely Bigetron Esports. The Bigetron Esports team website states that this team was founded on March 28 2017. Since then Bigetron Esports has won 150 national wins and 2 international wins. Within the Bigetron Esports team there are several game divisions that are played, such as the PUBGM (Player Unknow's Battlegrounds mobile) division, the Mobile Legends Bangbang (MLBB) division, the FreeFire (FF) division. One of the Esports teams that has contributed many players to the Sea Games championship in Vietnam in 2022 and the Sea Games in Cambodia in 2023 (Haqi & Irsyada, 2022) .

In the book strategic brand management (2018), Elliott, Percy, and Pervan state that there are 4 strategies in developing a brand, the first is symbolic brand strategies , personal meaning strategies, social differentiation strategies, social integration strategies . Symbolic brand strategies in this postmodern era, brands can become a symbolic source for the construction, communication and maintenance of a person. Brands acquire symbolic meaning in several ways, one of the most powerful of which is through advertisements conveyed through narratives and through the construction of meanings that are understood collectively by society. Personal meaning strategies are divided into 7 aspects including brand-as-a-person: aims to make the brand closer and more meaningful to consumers, promote loyalty, and differentiate the brand from competitors . brand-as-a-friend: like a friendship creating a personal and emotional connection between consumers and brands, striving to provide trust, empathy, comfort and presence in everyday life, with the aim of building long-term loyalty. Brands and romance; creating an emotional bond with consumers and creating a beautiful,

personal, and unique experience, similar to a romantic relationship, using romantic symbolism, and building long-term relationships to increase consumer loyalty. Nostalgia ; uses elements of the past to build emotional bonds with consumers, create positive memories, differentiate the brand, and enhance sentimental appeal to strengthen brand identity. Instant heritage; This strategy has almost the same definition as the previous Nostalgia strategy by highlighting history with the aim of differentiating the brand from a historical perspective . Brand experience; brands that put customer experience as the main focus. They strive to create memorable moments, influence consumer emotions, and build emotional connections . Brand as underdog : creates empathy, consumer loyalty, and motivational messages, while building an underlying image and portraying the brand as bold and innovative.

Social differentiation strategies are divided into 4 aspects, the first is Fashionization: brands adopt elements of style or fashion to differentiate themselves and attract certain market segments. Creates social distinction, follows fashion trends, and attracts groups that value a particular style and identity. Cool and cultural capital: brands create an attractive image by linking themselves to elements of cool and cultural capital. Attract target groups with cultural values, and differentiate yourself from competitors. Strategic cannibalization: introducing new products even within a certain period of time where the sales potential of old or current products has not yet been exhausted. This may seem counterproductive, but what it achieves is a sense of renewal and vitality that attracts buyers. This can also become a necessity, especially in conditions of very tight competition and dynamic markets . Gender identity: gender differences can influence the way people communicate and interact in society. Social and cultural values can also influence the expression of gender identity. Social integration strategies are divided into 4 aspects, the first is Brand Community: the brand's efforts to form and maintain a community around its products or services, as well as being a tool for consumers to interact, share experiences connected to the brand. Neo-tribes: not much different between Neo-tribes and Brand communities, both of these approaches both aim to form a platform or forum to convey experiences when using the brand's products. Sub-cultures : has a focus on brand recognition and integration among small groups in society who have certain identities or unique identities within them. Brand mythologies : refers to creating stories involving brands that aim to strengthen an identity and emotional connection with consumers. Referring to previous research, branding can create potential for a product that can be explored further and can improve a product's image (Fikri & Febriana, 2016) . In a branding strategy there must be a product that will be sold or introduced to everyone, and the form of promotion shown is also one of the branding strategies to introduce products from a brand, for example promotion in branding strategies in the current digital marketing era, brands use brands. Ambassadors (Influencers) to expand the marketing process of a brand (Agustin & Febriana, 2023)

Research results from Matt Ahlgren (2023) state that there are around 200 million business accounts on Instagram social media and 71% of users on Instagram admit to using the Instagram platform as a business destination. 90% of Instagram social media users follow one or more business accounts. . Business accounts have an average growth of 1.69% per month in their audience and 80% of Instagram users buy products promoted on business accounts (Matt Ahlgren, 2023) . Branding is not only for providing information, but currently Esports team fans are interested in things or posts that are interesting and not monotonous. Because branding is a process for users to strengthen brands and services. The results of previous research presented by Bintang Sania Putri and Endri Listiani with the title Branding Strategy for Based Clubs Through Instagram Social Media provide the results of the branding implemented by this based club which is an adaptive, idealistic and differentiated brand. Based club provides a branding strategy based on the internet culture theme. From this theme, based club provides an adaptive strategy so that it is relevant to the times and young people as their target market. (Putri & Listiani, 2022) . According to Bambang D. Prasetyo and Nufina S. Febriani in their book entitled "Branding Strategy" Communication theories and perspectives in business (2020). states that interrelated strategies are master strategies or

can be called grand strategies. In the grand strategy, it is stated that there is something called Business strategy, namely a strategy for developing a company or group's business in order to obtain high profits in its efforts to be able to compete with competitors in the same business.

This research focuses on the branding strategy of the Bigetron Esports team on Instagram social media, and the research focus is aimed at feed posts on Instagram social media from the @bigetronesports account. Where Bigetron Esports is one of the Esports teams in Indonesia which has a large number of followers, namely 3 million people on Instagram. Bigetron Esports has a strong visual identity on Instagram, especially in the use of the striking red color and silhouette images that are characteristic of their brand. The Bigetron Esports team uses offline events as part of their branding strategy to introduce products and services to their consumers or fans. By organizing offline events, they create opportunities to interact directly with consumers and expand the reach of previously unreached markets through online marketing. This can be an interesting point to study because not all E-Sport teams use event branding as the main strategy in building their brand identity. This helps differentiate their content from other Esports teams and reinforces a consistent brand impression. Followers or followers on social media can be defined as someone who follows an account or basically someone who chooses to receive updates, posts, or content from the account they follow on social media. The relationship between the follower and the owner of the account they follow does not involve emotional ties or strong commitment (Jannah, Abdullah, & NS, 2023) . Fans or what could be called fans often show a higher level of emotional involvement. A person can be called a fan having positive feelings and strong support for a particular person, group, or brand. Fans have involvement and can follow the works or activities of their idols with great enthusiasm. Fans' relationships are more tied to the subjects they enjoy with the special values or characteristics represented by those subjects (Mihardja & Paramita, 2018) .

The large number of followers and fans makes Bigetron Esports an E-Sports team that has an influence on business strategy in the world of E-Sports. Bigetron Esports actively interacts with their fans through comments, direct messages and interactive features on Instagram. They listen to feedback and feedback from fans, and provide relevant and interesting content to keep their followers engaged. For example, when there is a transfer window which is held every season, Bigetron Esports always gives surprises when announcing players. Taken from a tweet from the owner of Bigetron Esports on his X or Twitter account, it is stated that there are several players and coaches who will join the Esports team from the PUBGM and Mobile Legend Bangbang divisions. In this tweet, many Esports fans were curious about this announcement (Edwin Chia, 2023). This culture already occurred when Bigetron released a player from the PUBGM division named Microboy or Nizar in 2021 and joined the Evos team. With Microboy's move, the flow of the competitive world is getting more exciting. So, Bigetron Esports management used this opportunity to create a business strategy.

With this background, researchers are interested in finding out the branding strategy used by the Bigetron Esports team via the Instagram platform. By referring to the explanation of the four branding strategies from Elliott, Percy, and Pervan's book (strategic brand management , 2018), to answer the problem formulation, the method chosen in this research is descriptive qualitative.

2. Method

This research use descriptive qualitative approach. According to Moleong (2005:4) a qualitative descriptive approach is an approach that collects data in the form of words, images, not numbers. This data is generated from photos, personal documentation and other documentation. Researchers use a qualitative approach aimed at finding out the branding strategy of an esports team in Indonesia. The research subject is, Bigetron Esports team feed and reels posts via the Instagram social media account @bigetronesports . Using a qualitative approach can show data regarding the branding strategy of the subject.

The theory used in this research uses the branding strategy theory put forward by Elliott, Percy, and Pervan in their book entitled (strategic brand management , 2018). In collecting data, researchers collect data through non-participant observation or what could be called a process of observing without direct participants. In the final results, researchers can explain the results of the data and information that are appropriate to the subject under study. The primary data source was obtained from observations on the social media account @bigetronesports . To support data authenticity or data validity, researchers also use secondary data sources from previous research journals and findings on the internet to answer the problems in this research. This research was conducted from December to February and several pieces of evidence of post feeds and reels from the Bigetron Esports team's Instagram have been collected which have the potential to be used as a branding strategy.

In data analysis, researchers used data analysis techniques modeled by Miles and Huberman (1984) in Sugiyono (2016). The data analysis process using this technique has three stages, namely, data reduction or simplifying data according to themes and needs, and making it easy to obtain information. So that the data obtained presents a clear picture, and makes things easier for researchers. The second is, data display or data presentation. At this stage the researcher presents data that has been simplified in the first stage. The next stage is the conclusion drawing stage. The simplified data presented in the first and second stages can be drawn to conclusions and can be understood clearly.

3. Results and Discussion

This research was conducted from December 2023 to February 2024 with a focus on feed posts and reels from the @bigetronesports account. This research was conducted using data collection techniques through non-participant observation and in the form of photo and video documentation which was analyzed. This research is to find out about the branding strategy used by the Bigetron esports team in building a brand.

Bigetron Esports is an Esports organization that was founded on March 28 2017. Bigetron Esports has won competitive national and international Esports leagues. The Bigetron Esports team is known for winning two world titles at the PUBGM (PMCO) world championship in 2019 and PMWL West in 2020. Based on the shareablee website , Bigetron Esports is more than just an esports organization. This team is widely recognized as the team that has the best social media performance in the world. This recognition validates Bigetron as a creative and innovative brand that is able to produce content that consistently attracts the attention of the audience (Shareablee, 2021) .



Figure 1 : Bigetron Esports Team Logo
(Source: *liquipedia.net* and *bigetron.gg*)

The image above is the logo of the Bigetron Esports team which has undergone changes, the left logo is the initial Bigetron logo and the logo on the right is the Bigetron logo, which now means the Bigetron Esports team logo is a robot head. With a robot head logo, the Bigetron Esports team has the nickname "The Red Robot", Red is the typical color of the Bigetron Esports team. In terms of the futuristic logo shape, it is in line with the vision to make Indonesia the center of the global esports scene, and the mission to develop young talents to develop in the competitive esports arena. The name Bigetron originally came from the CEO of Bigetron who joined the Outron team and a team called Bige. From the experience of the CEO of Bigetron, he finally founded his own Esports Team and named it Bigetron. Symbolic Brand Strategies means that brands acquire symbolic meaning in several ways, one of which is through the construction of meanings that are understood collectively by society. The symbolic meaning of the Bigetron logo shows an identity that is validated by the public or esports fans in Indonesia, that the logo with the shape of a robot head is the Bigetron esports team.

Personal Meaning Strategies is a branding strategy that aims to form an emotional connection between a brand and consumers by utilizing the personal or emotional meaning associated with the brand. Bigetron utilizes this strategy for their branding strategy through Instagram social media. This strategy is divided into 6 aspects including, Brand As A Person, Brand As A Friend, Brand And Romance, Nostalgia, Experience Brand, Brand As Underdog.



Figure 2 : @bigetronesports Instagram feed post

Brand As a Friend

Like a friendship relationship that creates a personal and emotional connection between fans and followers of a brand to provide comfort and presence in everyday life with the aim of building long-term loyalty. Bigetron implements a personal meaning strategy: Brand As a Friend. As in Figure 2, a post from the @bigetronesports Instagram feed shows the interaction between the Bigetron esports team and their fans as shown in Figure 2. Each post mentions a question in the feed post, such as the post uploaded on January 3 2024 with interaction between the team. bigetron esports with fans using the question "Who Will Announce First?" with these posts identifying a personal and emotional connection between fans and followers to provide a presence with the aim of building loyalty. From the picture above, Bigetron Esports shows that a brand can become a friend by providing interaction with consumers or fans and followers in order to create loyalty between the brand and consumers in the long term.

Nostalgia In the context of strategic branding, *nostalgia* refers to the use of elements from the past that have emotional or sentimental meaning for consumers to build a connection with a brand or product. This strategy aims to trigger positive memories or feelings related to past experiences, which can then inspire consumer loyalty towards the brand.

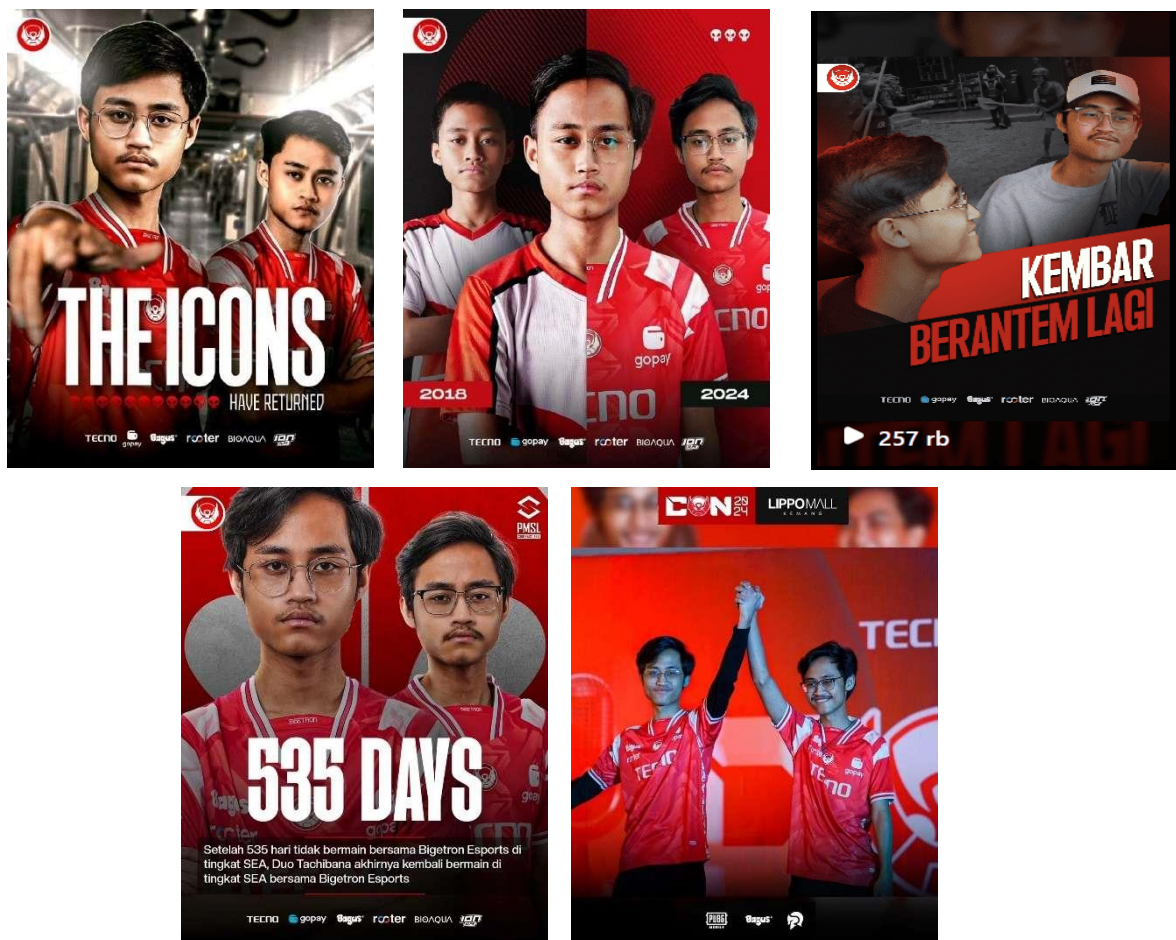


Figure 3 : @bigetronesports Instagram feed and reels posts

Bigetron esports is famous for one of its favorite games, namely PUBG (Player Unknown's Battleground), which won a world competition in 2019. The players in the spotlight are Made Bagus "Luxxy" Prabaswara and Made Bagus "Zuxxy" Pramudita. They are familiarly known as *the Twin Duo, Duo Tachibana*. When they joined in 2018, they are known as legendary Bigetron Esports players in the PUBG division. The feed post identifies the *personal branding strategy meaning the nostalgic* aspect shown in the post which was uploaded to coincide with the player announcement event at the offline event on February 2 2024 with the caption " I REALLY MISS SEEING THEM WEARING BIGETRON RED JERSEYS AGAIN 🥰🥰 Who else misses them too and remembers their stories at Bigetron Esports in the past? 😊 ". The meaning of the caption in the post can implement a branding strategy in the nostalgic aspect. In the post dated 10 February 2024 "2018-2024 ONCE A RED ALWAYS A RED " from the meaning of the caption quoted on Bigetron Esports' Instagram feed post shows that Bigetron gives a nostalgic impression with the return of their old players. And from this post there is a photo when they first joined in 2018 and returned again with a photo in 2024. After 5 years with Bigetron esports, they decided to leave Bigetron esports in 2023. And right at the beginning of the year and at the start of the transfer window , the PUBG scene was shocked by *Luxxy and Zuxxy joining* Bigetron esports again . "After 535 days of not playing with Bigetron Esports at SEA level, Duo Tachibana is finally back playing at SEA level with Bigetron Esports," quoted from the @bigetronesports Instagram feed post on February 18 2024. Their joining the Bigetron Esports team creates nostalgia for fans long time member of the Bigetron Esports team. This is also a branding strategy used by Bigetron Esports with the aim of building emotional and loyalty among Bigetron Esports fans and building connections between consumers and the brand.

Symbolic brand strategies This strategy is an approach in brand management to focus on the use of symbols and images to strengthen a brand's identity and influence consumer perceptions. In this strategy, the brand not only considers itself as a product or service, but also as a symbol, aspiration, or social status desired by consumers. The aim of this strategy is to build an emotional connection between the brand and consumers, as well as creating a strong and memorable brand image for consumers. There are several key elements of symbolic brand strategies which include logos and visual identities, brand associations, endorsements and sponsorships, emotional marketing, and brand experiences.

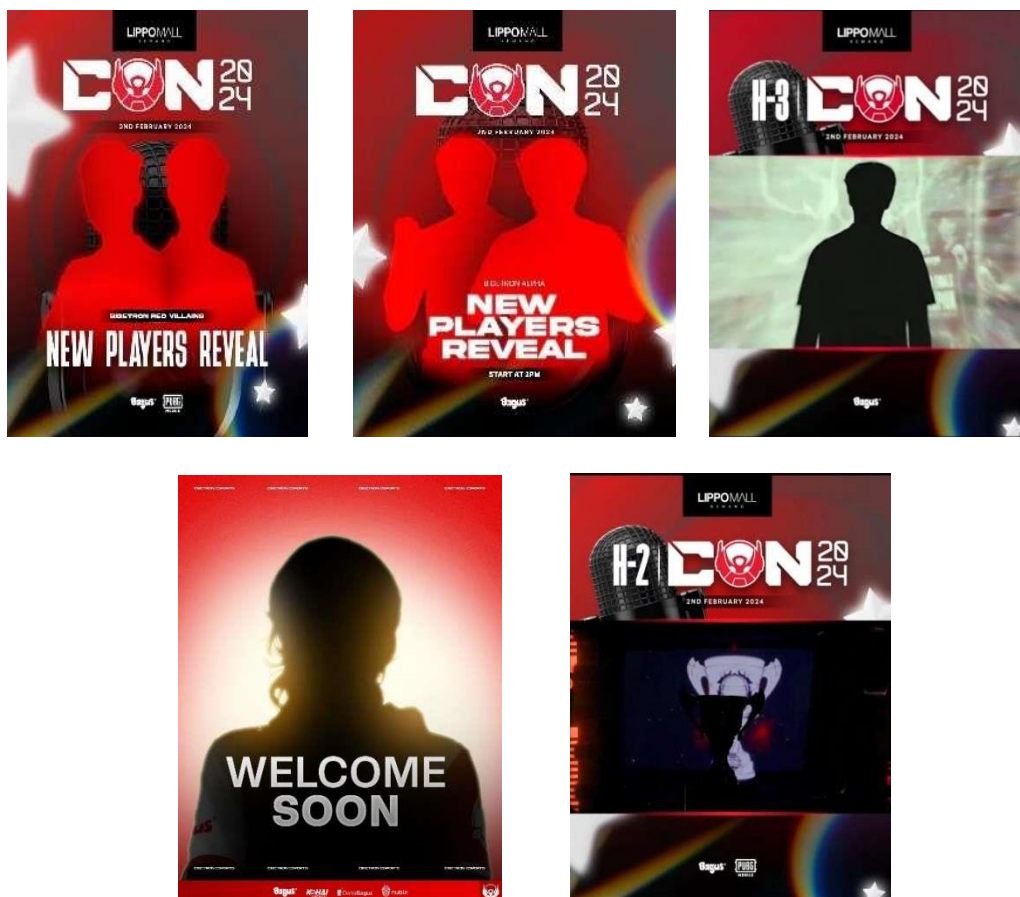


Figure 4 : @bigetronesports Instagram feed and reels posts

The bigetron esports team always surprises their loyal fans by providing content that keeps bigetron team fans guessing by providing silhouette content which is a characteristic of the bigetron esports team. Even though it is not stated explicitly, the use of silhouette images or content in @bigetronesports Instagram feed posts and reels can reflect the use of symbolic strategies in strengthening brand identity and building emotional connections with fans. Analysis can be carried out by evaluating the effectiveness of using these symbols in building relationships with the audience. Not only with silhouette images, but the Bigetron Esports team always uses red in every content presented. This is also a symbol for the Bigetron esports team which has the nickname "The Red Robot".

Symbolic brand strategies theory focuses on how brands can become a symbolic source for construction and communication in maintaining brand identity. In the context of the Bigetron esports team, the use of silhouette images or content in feed posts and reels can be interpreted as a strategy to create symbols that build a strong brand identity and attract fans' attention. Brands in this postmodern era have become a symbolic source for communication construction. Brands acquire symbolic meaning in several ways and one of the strongest is through advertising which is conveyed through narratives and construction of meaning that is mutually understood by society (Simon Pervan & Richard Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2018).

Based on the discussions above, the research found branding strategies that are related to the *branding strategy theory* put forward by Elliott, Percy, and Pervan in their book entitled (*strategic brand management*, 2018). Which used by the Bigetron Esports Team via

social media Instagram in the period from December 2023 to February 2024. The branding strategy used by the Bigetron Esports Team is *Event Branding*.

Branding events

Event branding or event marketing is a promotional method where a brand is associated with an event or event that has a theme to create experience goals for consumers and promote products and services by a brand. Marketing products and services through events can be an opportunity for a brand or company to expand *market reach* that has not previously been reached when *marketing on line*. Branding events can also help create and introduce directly and interact directly between consumers and the brand (Belch & Belch, 2012).

In promoting a player or product from the Bigetron Esports Team, they use offline events to show or introduce their products and services to consumers or fans of the Bigetron Esports Team. By organizing offline events as part of their branding strategy, the Bigetron Esports Team is taking advantage of the opportunity to increase the brand visibility of the Bigetron Esports Team, attract media attention, and demonstrate their presence in the Esports industry. Based on the explanation from *the Symbolic brand strategies*, the Bigetron Esports Team would like to introduce several players and introduce the sponsors obtained by the Bigetron esports team in an offline event entitled "Bigetron CON 2024" which will be held on February 2 2024 at Lippo Mall Kemang.



Figure 5 : @bigetronesports Instagram feed and reels posts

In the previous post, what was discussed and explained in *Symbolic brand strategies* can produce branding strategies in offline events or what can be called event branding. In the "CON 2024" event which means *Conference* or conference of the Bigetron Esports Team

introducing *partners reveal* or what could be called new sponsors joining the Bigetron esports team, *official 2024 jersey reveal*, *New players reveal* the Bigetron team introduced several players who had previously been posted using silhouette content with the aim of increasing interaction with fans in this offline event to attract attention and increase fans' curiosity, because what fans are waiting for is the announcement of players from the ML (Mobile Legends) division and from the PUBG (Player Unknowns Battleground Mobile) division, and there are also *Special Music Performances*, *Fan Signing Sessions*. In organizing or packaging the branding of this event, Bigetron received support from several media partners who participated in enlivening the event. And from the results of this offline event, the Bigetron Team received sponsors who joined the Bigetron Esports Team. *Sponsorship* in a brand has a very important influence on increasing *brand awareness*, the relationship between the two is very profitable and the relationship between the two variables is between *sponsorship and the brand*. Activities in promotions at times and places that are appropriate to the field being promoted and looking at the market the promotion wants to convey. (Hatta & Muhammad, 2018).

The selection of aspects of *Personal Meaning Strategies (Brand As A Friend, Nostalgia)*, *Symbolic Brand Strategies* in this research is based on the need to focus on the key elements that are most relevant and significant in the context of analyzing the branding strategy of the Bigetron Esports Team via the Instagram platform. These aspects are focused and in-depth in analyzing the branding strategy used by the Bigetron Esports Team via the Instagram platform, as well as understanding its impact on relationships with fans and the brand's position in the esports industry.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of research on the branding strategy of the Bigetron E-Sport Team via the Instagram platform, it can be concluded that the Bigetron E-Sport Team has succeeded in implementing an adaptive, idealistic and differentiated branding strategy. They utilize symbols such as the color red and silhouette images to build a strong brand identity and attract fans' attention. Apart from that, the results obtained from this research are Event Branding or Event marketing used by the Bigetron Esports Team for their branding strategy, offline events held by the Bigetron Esports Team aim to increase brand visibility and attract the attention of fans, media and sponsors. Analysis can be carried out by examining the impact of the event on the brand image and the extent to which it strengthens the position in the Esports industry.

In the context of the rapidly developing E-Sport industry in Indonesia, the branding strategy used by the Bigetron E-Sport Team via Instagram makes a positive contribution to the team's image and success in national and international competitions. By utilizing social media as a branding platform, the Bigetron E-Sport Team is able to strengthen relationships with their audience, increase brand awareness and expand their market share. Overall, the branding strategy implemented by the Bigetron E-Sport Team via Instagram utilizes social media to strengthen brand identity, increase fan engagement, and achieve success in a competitive industry such as E-Sport. Through content that focuses on player and talent announcements as well as through offline events, the Bigetron Esports Team integrates fans, sponsors and media partners into their strategy by evaluating the extent to which the Bigetron Esports Team has succeeded in building strong relationships with stakeholders.

Research on the branding strategy of the Bigetron E-Sport Team via the Instagram platform has significant benefits in understanding branding strategies in the Esports industry, but it also has several negative things that need to be considered. Even though it makes positive contributions in the academic and practical fields, this research has limitations in the generalization of findings, reliance on secondary data which can limit accuracy, limitations of research methods in providing in-depth analysis, limitations in conclusions that may not cover all aspects of branding strategy, and limitations in relevance in facing rapid changes in the Esports and social media industry. Therefore, this research needs to be seen as a first step in understanding Esports branding strategies through social media, while further research is needed to gain a more holistic and relevant understanding in the long term.

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