

INSTAGRAM STORIES AND PERSONAL BRANDING AMONG COMMUNICATION STUDENTS AT MERCU BUANA UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

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This research aims to examine the influence of utilizing Instagram Stories on personal branding among students of the Faculty of Communication Sciences at Mercu Buana University in Jakarta. A quantitative approach with an explanatory survey method was employed in this study. The population consisted of active undergraduate students of the 2016 cohort in the Communication Studies program, with a sample of 171 respondents obtained through proportional stratified random sampling. Data were collected through a questionnaire using a Likert scale. Data analysis included descriptive statistics and simple linear regression analysis. The results indicate a positive and significant influence of Instagram Stories utilization on students' personal branding, with a regression coefficient of 0.900, a determination coefficient of 66.9%, and a t-value greater than the t-table value ($18.334 > 1.65392$). These findings confirm that Instagram Stories can potentially be utilized as a means to build effective personal branding for students through the posting of engaging content that reflects their personality and embraced values. However, it is important to note that personal branding is not solely influenced by the use of Instagram Stories but also by other factors such as consistency, audience interaction, and a profound understanding of personal branding strategies.

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1. Introduction

In today's digital era, social media has become an integral part of people's lives, providing a platform for self-expression, communication, and sharing experiences. One of the most popular social media platforms is Instagram, which has gained immense popularity, particularly among young adults and millennials. With its visual-centric approach and unique features like Instagram Stories, the platform has revolutionized the way individuals present themselves and curate their online personas. This phenomenon has given rise to the concept of personal branding, where individuals consciously shape and promote their unique identities, values, and skills to stand out in a crowded digital landscape.

The notion of personal branding finds its roots in the realm of marketing and branding strategies traditionally employed by businesses to differentiate their products and services. However, in the context of social media, personal branding has taken on a new dimension, allowing individuals to leverage these platforms as powerful tools to showcase their authentic selves and build a distinctive brand identity. By carefully curating their online presence, individuals can establish themselves as influential figures, thought leaders, or experts in their respective fields, ultimately enhancing their professional and personal growth opportunities.

This phenomenon is particularly relevant for university students, who are at a crucial stage of self-discovery and career exploration. As digital natives, they are well-versed in the use of social media platforms like Instagram and are often early adopters of new features and trends. The utilization of Instagram Stories, a feature that allows users to share ephemeral content in the form of photos and videos, has become a popular means for students to express their daily lives, interests, and personal brand narratives.

Drawing from the theoretical framework of the uses and gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 2007), which posits that individuals actively seek out and utilize media to fulfill specific needs and gratifications, this study aims to explore the influence of utilizing Instagram Stories on personal branding among communication students at Mercu Buana University in Jakarta. The research seeks to understand the motivations, strategies, and perceived benefits of leveraging Instagram Stories as a tool for personal branding, as well as the potential challenges and considerations involved in this process.

By investigating the interplay between Instagram Stories and personal branding, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how modern communication technologies shape self-representation and identity construction in the digital realm. Additionally, it provides valuable insights for communication students and professionals alike, as they navigate the ever-evolving landscape of social media and personal branding strategies.

Therefore, the research question guiding this study is: To what extent does the utilization of Instagram Stories influence personal branding among communication students at Mercu Buana University in Jakarta? The objective of this research is to examine the impact of utilizing Instagram Stories on personal branding among communication students at Mercu Buana University in Jakarta.

2. Method

This research employed a quantitative approach using a survey method. The survey method is suitable for collecting data from a sample representing a larger population to investigate the relationship between variables (Creswell, 2014). Specifically, this study utilized an explanatory survey design, which aims to explain the cause-and-effect relationships between variables (Neuman, 2014).

The population for this study consisted of active undergraduate students from the Communication Studies program at Mercu Buana University in Jakarta, Indonesia, who were enrolled in the regular class of the 2016 cohort. The total population size was 299 students, comprising four majors: Public Relations, Broadcasting, Digital Communication, and Marketing Communication.

To determine the sample size, the Yamane formula (Yamane, 1967) was employed with a 5% precision level. The calculated sample size was 171 students. The sampling technique used was proportionate stratified random sampling, which ensured proportional representation from each major within the population. The data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire developed based on the research objectives and theoretical framework. The questionnaire items were designed to measure the independent variable (utilization of Instagram Stories) and the dependent variable (personal branding).

The items for the independent variable were adapted from the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 2007), capturing dimensions such as content, attention, comprehension, duration, and frequency of Instagram Stories usage. The dependent variable items were based on the concept of personal branding, encompassing dimensions like authenticity, promise, and relationship-building.

The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" to capture the respondents' responses. The instrument underwent validity and reliability testing to ensure its accuracy and consistency. The collected data were analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the demographic information and provide an overview of the data.

To investigate the influence of Instagram Stories utilization on personal branding, linear regression analysis was conducted. Linear regression analysis is a statistical technique used to model the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In this case, personal branding was the dependent variable, and the utilization of Instagram Stories was the independent variable.

The statistical significance of the regression model was assessed using hypothesis testing. The null hypothesis (H_0) stated that there was no significant influence of Instagram Stories utilization on personal branding, while the alternative hypothesis (H_a) posited a significant influence. The t-test statistic was calculated, and the significance level (α) was set at 0.05.

If the calculated t-value exceeded the critical t-value from the t-distribution table, the null hypothesis would be rejected, indicating a significant influence of Instagram Stories utilization on personal branding. Conversely, if the calculated t-value was less than the critical t-value, the null hypothesis would be accepted, suggesting no significant influence.

3. Results and Discussion

a. Respondent Data

Based on the results obtained from the questionnaires filled out by 171 students from the Faculty of Communication Sciences, batch 2016. According to the data on the characteristics of the respondents, there are several criteria for the respondents, namely Study Program, Gender, Age, Instagram User, Frequency of Using Instagram Stories, Duration of Using Instagram Stories, and Number of Uploads.

b. Analysis of Research Results

Based on the research results obtained from the responses of the respondents with a sample of 171 people who also represent the population in this study, the respondents' answers will be processed and grouped according to the instruments in the frequency table. The sampling technique used was Proportional Stratified Random Sampling, and the data collection technique was carried out online using a Google form.

c. Results Regression Analysis

		Coefficients ^a			
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t
1	(Constant)	14,165	3,546		3,995
	Pemanfaatan Instagram Stories	,900	,049	,818	18,489

a. Dependent Variable: Personal Branding

Figure 1. Hasil olah data SPSS 24 Coefficients

Based on Figure 1 Coefficients, it can be seen in the B Constant column (a) is 14.165, while the value of the Influence of Instagram Stories Utilization (b) is 0.900. Thus, the regression equation can be stated with a simple linear regression model:

$$Y = \alpha + b X$$

$$Y = 14.165 + 0.900 X$$

Y is Personal Branding, and X is the Utilization of Instagram Stories.

a = 14.165 means that if there is no change in the Utilization of Instagram Stories, which is included in the independent variable, the value of Personal Branding is 0.900 as a constant value for the dependent variable.

b = 0.900 means that every addition of Instagram Stories Utilization will affect an increase in Personal Branding by 0.900.

Coefficient of Determination Test

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,818 ^a	,669	,667	7,25268

a. Predictors: (Constant), Pemanfaatan Instagram Stories

Figure 2. Hasil olah data SPSS 24 Model Summary

Figure 2 explains that the correlation or relationship (R) is 0.818. Then, the contribution of variable X (Utilization of Instagram Stories) to Y (Personal Branding) is 66.9%, so the remaining 33.1% is influenced by other factors outside this study.

d. Hypothesis Testing

Based on the calculations performed, it is known that the t-count value > t-table (18.334 > 1.65392), which can be concluded that Ha is accepted, and Ho is rejected. This means that there is a positive and significant relationship between the Influence of Instagram Stories Utilization on Personal Branding of Students of the Faculty of Communication Sciences at Mercu Buana University, Jakarta.

e. Discussion

The researcher used the theory from Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, which explains the basic assumptions of the Uses and Gratification theory, where the media audience is active,

and media use is based on certain motives to be fulfilled, where communication in the media leads to what individuals do to the media. Based on the background of the problem, the researcher wanted to examine the extent of the utilization of Instagram Stories on the Personal Branding of Students of the Faculty of Communication Sciences at Mercu Buana University, Jakarta.

In the results of the research obtained from the answers given by the respondents to the statements given to the students at the Faculty of Communication Sciences, totaling 171 people, namely Public Relations with 72 people (42.1%), Broadcasting with 62 people (36.3%), Digital Communication with 30 people (17.5%), and Marketing Communication with 7 people (4.1%) in the 2016 batch in the form of an online questionnaire using a Google form.

The majority of respondents were dominated by women with a percentage of 72.5%, while men accounted for 27.5%. Based on the respondent data by age, the average respondent was between 21 and 24 years old, with the majority being 23 years old with 68 people (39.8%), followed by 22 years old with 56 people (32.7%), then 24 years old with 25 people (14.6%), and finally, 21 years old with 22 people (12.9%). Of the 171 respondents, all were Instagram Stories users.

Most of the respondents used Instagram Stories for less than 1 hour with 32.7%, and the number of uploads per day was 1 post with 46.2%. Here it can be seen that the majority of respondents used Instagram Stories for 1 hour with 1 post per day.

Instagram Stories is a new feature provided by the Instagram application. This feature provides an opportunity for users to directly share their daily activities or information in the form of photos or short videos that can be seen by their followers on that account. However, uploads on Instagram Stories will be automatically deleted after 24 hours, unlike the Instagram upload feature, which will remain on the user's profile. To determine the utilization of Instagram Stories, it can be measured through five dimensions: content, attention, comprehension, duration, and frequency, which are stated into 18 statements.

For the concept theory of Instagram Stories utilization, the theory according to Del Barrio is used, which states that intensity consists of four aspects: attention, comprehension, duration, and frequency. In this variable, the majority of 171 respondents chose to agree on each dimension. In the Content dimension, 45.2% of respondents chose to agree with the statement submitted, then in the Attention dimension, 42.6% of respondents chose to agree, then for the Comprehension dimension, 42.5% of respondents chose to agree, then in the Duration dimension, 42.8% of respondents chose to agree, and finally, in the Frequency dimension, 45.0% of respondents chose to agree.

Based on the results of the calculation on the accumulation of the Instagram Stories Utilization variable, with details, namely, the majority of respondents chose to agree, which was 43.3% (1334 answers), followed by strongly agree 34.4% (1060 answers), then undecided 12.6% (389 answers), then disagree 6.6% (202 answers), and finally, strongly disagree 3.0% (93 answers).

Based on the uses and gratification theory, it can be concluded that the audience of Instagram Stories is using Instagram Stories to do many things. In addition to uploading photos/videos about daily activities, these users can also provide information to their followers. Apart from sharing photos and videos, Instagram Stories can be used as a medium for Public Relations activities, one of which is personal branding.

Personal Branding is a way for someone to do branding by showing how they look different or unique, which gives an impression to others about themselves. To determine the effect on Personal Branding, it can be measured through three dimensions: personal brand is you, personal brand is promise, and personal brand is relationship, which are stated into 20 statements.

The concept theory of personal branding uses the theory according to Montoya & Vandehey, which states that personal branding is divided into three elements: personal brand is you, personal brand is promise, and personal brand is relationship. In this variable, the majority of 171 respondents chose to agree on each dimension. In the personal brand is you dimension, 48.7% of respondents chose to agree with the statements submitted, then in the personal brand is promise dimension, 46.5%, and finally, in the personal brand is relationship dimension, 46.5% of respondents chose to agree.

In the accumulation of the Personal Branding variable with the following details: the majority of respondents chose to agree, which was 47.3% (1617 answers), followed by strongly agree 29.3% (1001 answers), then undecided 15.1% (515 answers), then disagree 5.5% (189 answers), and finally, strongly disagree 2.9% (98 answers). These results can be seen from the research results which explain that students understand that the posts posted by students show their unique characteristics, so the personal branding carried out by students is based on their own characteristics.

From the analysis results described above, the effect of the utilization of Instagram Stories on the Personal Branding of students is 0.000, which indicates that there is an influence between the utilization of Instagram Stories on Personal Branding of students because the significance value is < 0.05 . On the correlation coefficient results, it is found that the relationship between the Instagram Stories Utilization variable and personal branding is 0.818, which is concluded that the relationship between the two is strong because it is in the correlation interval of 0.70-0.899. Thus, the correlation coefficient of this study is strong or in the same direction.

Then, the results for the determination test are known to contribute between variable X (Utilization of Instagram Stories) to Y (Personal Branding) of 0.669 or 66.9%, which indicates that the Utilization of Instagram Stories is proven to affect the Personal Branding of students. As for the remaining 33.1%, it is influenced by other variables, for example, the personal branding of students is not only influenced by the Utilization of Instagram Stories but also by using other social media.

Result Table

Table 1. Highest Score of Public Relations Study Program

VARIABLE	STATEMENT	SCORE
Instagram Stories Utilization	I can use the photo/video editing feature to create interesting posts	312

Personal Branding	My posts show my personal characteristics	297
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Source: Processed Data (2023)

From the table above, it can be concluded that Public Relations students in the 2016 batch at Mercu Buana University have understood how to edit interesting photos/videos to create posts that show their personal characteristics.

Table 2. Highest Score of Broadcasting Study Program

VARIABLE	STATEMENT	SCORE
Instagram Stories Utilization	I prefer Insta-gram over other social media for posting interesting posts	259
Personal Branding	My posts repre-sent who I am	256

Source: Processed Data (2023)

From the table above, it can be concluded that Broadcasting students in the 2016 batch at Mercu Buana University prefer Instagram over other social media for posting photos/videos to create posts and also understand that their posts have shown their personal characteristics.

Table 3. Highest Score of Digital Communication Study Program

VARIABLE	STATEMENT	SCORE
Instagram Stories Utilization	I prefer Insta-gram over other social media for posting	138
Personal Branding	My posts represent my personal taste which is up-to-date	134

From the table above, it can be concluded that Digital Communication students in the 2016 batch at Mercu Buana University prefer Instagram over other social media for posting photos/videos to create posts that match their up-to-date personal tastes.

Table 4. Highest Score of Marketing Communication Study Program

VARIABLE	STATEMENT	SCORE
Instagram Stories Utilization	I prefer Insta-gram over other social media for posting	34
Personal Branding	My posts represent my personal taste which is up-to	34

From the table above, it can be concluded that Marketing Communication students in the 2016 batch at Mercu Buana University prefer Instagram over other social media for posting photos/videos to create posts that match their up-to-date personal tastes.

From the statements above regarding the highest scores of the statements submitted, for the two variables of Instagram Stories Utilization and Personal Branding, Public Relations students who were respondents in this study scored 10,579, then for Broadcasting students who were respondents in this study scored 9,144, then Digital Communication students who were respondents in this study scored 4,814, and finally Marketing Communication students who were respondents in this study scored 1,077.

The research conducted by Yuliarti (2020), which discusses personal branding that has three fundamental things, namely uniqueness, relevance, and consistency. Uniqueness, where the personal brand displayed strongly explains something in a unique or specific way so that it can differentiate itself from others. Then relevance, the personal brand displayed strongly explains something that has been considered to have a value by society and has relevance to its character. Finally, consistency, where the personal brand displayed strongly results from consistently formed branding efforts so that it forms brand equity (brand superiority). This research explains that personal branding needs to be done in a unique or different way from others by displaying things that have relevance or relationship with oneself so that one can display one's unique characteristics that are formed consistently or repeatedly.

The research conducted by Amanah (2019) explains that by utilizing the Instagram Stories feature to build relationships with the public. In addition to producing graphic content, Instagram Stories is also sufficient to describe various support from the public who use it. It also interacts with the public, such as reposting on Instagram Stories. This is done to restore public trust and to bring communication closer. Based on this research, the relationship with the research conducted is that personal branding is carried out to the public who become the audience using the Instagram Stories feature and interacting with the audience to get closer to the public.

One example of personal branding here is where students do personal branding to become public speaking experts by utilizing the Instagram Stories feature by doing public speaking regularly to practice themselves. With Instagram Stories, students can freely share their videos, from the personal branding formed, public speaking skills can also be obtained. For example, at this time, there is a lack of public attention on the importance of using masks and washing hands properly, so students can make public speaking videos by speaking clearly with appropriate vocabulary and information regarding these arguments and then upload the video to Instagram Stories, then see how the audience responds.

Nowadays, it is very easy for students to get information, but getting information from the right source is actually quite difficult. Many accounts on social media provide information taken from unclear sources whether it is true or not, so it can make people who see it feel anxious or cause conflicts. As a student, one must be smart in sorting out information, especially now that there are many lies that are deliberately spread to provoke conflicts, which are certainly undesirable. In providing information on Instagram Stories, for example, students must be able to consider what they should upload or not, whether what they want to upload will not cause negative opinions about themselves, and then also to provide information whether they have ensured that the information is indeed true and based on credible sources.

Personal Branding for students is done by knowing what skills and expertise one has, by evaluating one's passion, achievements, and vision, such as mastering foreign languages, mastering good public speaking, enjoying organizations, and other Public Relations skills.

Then create a presence; it is very important for us to create our presence because people will recognize us based on the presence we show. To form a unique impression, show what specialization you want, such as uploading interesting and useful information about things that can attract others on social media, so that a view of the individual can be formed.

It is important for a Public Relations professional to form a personal brand from an early age because this way, when starting to enter the world of work, companies will be attracted to the personal brand that has been built.

Many people see that personal branding is something difficult to do, but by utilizing the digital era today, we can do it easily. Moreover, with the spread of the Covid-19 virus that is currently spreading in Indonesia, it will be difficult for us to do personal branding directly or face-to-face, let alone using conventional media. As a Public Relations professional, creative thinking is needed, for example, using social media to improve personal branding.

Now, with Instagram Stories, students can carry out Public Relations activities, namely personal branding. For example, showing a personal life that is in line with moral ethics and good attitudes, as well as self-credibility. Someone does need to have a good personality, but that doesn't mean they have to be perfect. Therefore, in doing personal branding, it must be done based on a down-to-earth personality because every individual must have one thing that distinguishes them from other individuals. So we must understand ourselves about what makes us different and develop it.

In forming personal branding, it cannot be formed quickly because it requires a long process, so it requires repetition of the formation process. It is very important to pay attention to every stage and trend, but you must remain consistent with the personal brand that was initially formed and never intend to change it. Personal branding is important because that is how someone remembers another individual. If something unique and distinctive is not built consistently, how will someone remember it?

We as Public Relations professionals must pay attention to how people see us because PR is the face of the company. Being a creative, credible, potential, and trustworthy individual are some ways to become a quality PR professional. But that doesn't mean we don't become ourselves.

If we truly have that potential and skills, a good reputation will come by itself to build the desired personal branding.

4. Conclusion

This research addresses the proposed hypothesis regarding the influence of Instagram Stories utilization on personal branding among students of the Faculty of Communication Sciences at Mercu Buana University, Jakarta. The findings indicate a positive and significant influence between these two variables. The facts discovered include the results of the regression analysis, which show that every increase in Instagram Stories utilization will lead to an improvement in personal branding by 0.900. A determination coefficient of 66.9% confirms that the utilization of Instagram Stories has been proven to influence students' personal branding, while the remaining 33.1% is influenced by other factors outside this study. The hypothesis test, with a t-value greater than the t-table value ($18.334 > 1.65392$), further reinforces the finding of a positive and significant relationship between the two variables.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Instagram Stories has the potential to be utilized as a means to build effective personal branding for students. However, it should be noted that personal branding is not solely influenced by the utilization of Instagram Stories but also by other factors such as consistency in maintaining self-image, interaction with the audience, and a profound understanding of effective personal branding strategies. The implications of these findings clarify the benefits of Instagram Stories in assisting students in building a strong self-identity and increasing opportunities for professional and personal growth.

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