DRAMATURGY OF CIREBON TEENAGE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN BUILDING SELF-IMAGE ON INSTAGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Instagram is just one of several social media programmes made possible by the latest developments in digital technology. Instagram is more than just a virtual communication tool, but helps teenagers also build their self-image through its many functions. This study aims to uncover how Cirebon teenagers' self-image building works on Instagram, as well as their purchasing habits. The research methodology, particularly the qualitative approach. Results were obtained from an extensive literature review, in-depth interviews, and participant observation. Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective was used to examine the data obtained. Teenagers in Cirebon use Instagram as a dramaturgical tool to shape their self-image, according to the research conclusion. Their front stage consistently displays positive aspects and the best material, helping them cultivate a positive self-image and get positive reactions from fans. In addition, Instagram users' real lives are very different from their Instagram appearances, and often users do not want other users to know the ins and outs of their personal lives, including the steps used to create their Instagram appearances.

INTRODUCTION

No modern human can escape the influence of social media and technological advances, including Instagram. Most Instagram users are in their teens, a time when many people are still individuals. The majority of Instagram users in Indonesia are young people (aged between 18 and 24 years), according to data compiled by NapoleonCat (Nurhayati, 2023). Adolescence is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as starting at the age of 12 years and ending at the age of 24 years. Additionally, there are three different phases of puberty: early, middle, and late. Changes in a person's physical appearance, mental health, social interactions and emotional development occur throughout adolescence. One of the effects that is clearly visible is the emergence of consumer behavior among teenagers in order to create a self-image and existence on social media, namely Instagram. Self-existence is very important for teenagers because when they have achieved this existence, they feel they have been recognized as part of society (Wibisono, 2020). Teens connect with themselves on Instagram, which shapes their self-image. They think about the reactions they could get and how society will judge them (Maureen and Stellarosa 2021). By focusing on physical appearance and way of life, teenagers can change their appearance and stand out from social groups (Fauziah, 2020).
The actions of Instagram users themselves are divided into 2 (two), namely active and passive. Active actions are activities carried out by Instagram users, such as users being able to leave comments or simply clicking on the heart symbol which means they like the upload. On the other hand, passive actions are actions that a person does not take, for example uploading photos or videos (Nurfalah et al., 2021). These two elements influence the formation of teenagers' self-image as Instagram users. This dramaturgical perspective will later discuss the consumer behavior of Cirebon teenagers in building their self-image on Instagram.

In this era of digitalization, social media is a platform that is very popular with teenagers. Social media is a place for someone to express themselves freely and show their existence. Teenagers who are still looking for their identity really need recognition for their existence and in this era of digitalization, they do that through social media so that people know that they exist. In an effort to win this recognition, they will engage in self-promotional competitions on social media. This is what is called building a self-image. This has an impact on the behavior of teenagers themselves. So researchers are interested in examining more deeply the dramaturgical perspective regarding the influence of social media on developing a teenager's self-image, especially in the Cirebon area.

The dramaturgical perspective is an approach that studies human interactions in social life, including virtual interactions. With his 1959 book, The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life, dramaturg Erving Goffman outlined his theory on the subject. According to this hypothesis, many types of interactions include two distinct but interdependent parts. Everyone works to achieve their personal goals. When interacting, people guard their attitudes, actions and words. This is done as a form of self-control when dealing with other people in order to give a good impression as expected.

Teenagers today are heavily influenced by the pressure to live up to an ideal version of themselves. Consumptive behavior is one of them, and is a major contributor to unhealthy behavior because it encourages people to do this, especially teenagers who find it difficult to control themselves in buying something without considering it carefully. The changing trends mean that teenage Instagram users don't want to be left behind in enlivening it so as not to be labeled as a coup or lacking updates.

The researchers used the explanation above as a stepping stone to develop many problem formulations that centered on the dramaturgical view of Instagram as a tool for Cirebon teenagers to construct their self-image. Using Instagram as a starting point, researchers asked questions about how Cirebon teenagers build their self-image. The problem that the two researchers want to investigate is the way Instagram interactions reveal the purchasing habits of Cirebon teenagers which illustrates individual consumptive behavior in creating Instagram content that these teenagers want to support the formation of their self-image on Instagram.

The researcher aims to study the dramaturgy of consumer behavior among Cirebon teenagers in creating a self-image through interactions on Instagram, based on the problem formulation above.

**Literature Review**

The interactions between people in real life and online are the focus of the dramaturgical point of view. With his 1959 book, The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life, dramaturg Erving Goffman outlined his theory on the subject. According to this hypothesis, many types of interactions include two distinct but interdependent parts. Everyone works to achieve their personal goals. Everyone pays attention to their attitude, behavior and words when dealing with other people.

Dramaturgy, according to Erving Goffman's dramaturgical view, can happen anywhere and to anyone, because people's goals in presenting themselves in the public sphere and the media vary. Everyone has the freedom to express their individuality in the way that is most meaningful to them. On the one hand, people may act in a way that is far from ideal, but on the other hand, there are times when they want to appear perfect. With careful planning, similar to a performance, these opposing points of
view are revealed. The teenage informant’s Instagram social media network displays the artist’s stage performance.

The portion of the performance that deals with style and presentation is the front stage, according to Erving Goffman. According to Erving Goffman, a person’s life is like a play with a front and back stage. Before uploading a photo to an Instagram feed or story, users make sure the photo is in the best lighting. To get good reactions and admiration from other Instagram users, the content shared by users consistently showcases the best outfits or trends. Today, Instagram is used for more than just communicating; it is also used for dramaturgy, helping young people create virtual versions of themselves.

Since a person’s self-image is based on their perception of themselves as a physical entity, it makes sense that physical attributes, such as appearance, would also be included. If we take (Hadiwibowo, 2003) definition of self-image at face value, we can see that it is related to an individual’s perception of himself and his opinion of how others see him. As (Prakoso, 2003) argues that a person’s external appearance, actions, thought patterns, emotions and character shape a person’s self-image, so too do these factors contribute to a person’s overall personality. Based on this definition, it can be said that a person’s self-image is a mental representation of himself that he builds from his evaluation of his physical appearance and the opinions of other people around him.

The way Instagram users see themselves online is a topic that everyone is sure to pay attention to. Creating an Instagram persona requires certain resources, be it time, money, or ideas. Teenage Instagram users show consumptive behavior due to constant shopping. Communication media, including print and digital mass media such as Instagram, can shape public opinion. Instagram is a type of online media that facilitates user participation, sharing and generating ideas that have the potential to be disseminated widely.

Currently, consumer behavior affects people of all ages, including teenagers. As part efforts to achieve autonomy and self-discovery, teenagers seek new experiences that push their comfort zone, said (Santrock, 2012). However, there are many changes that occur during adolescence, including changes in attitudes, behavior, emotions, and even the body. One of them is a shift in attitude which often leads to purchasing actions (Sukari et al., 2013).

According to Bush (Lins et al., 2013) Marketers view teenagers as a demographic group with a lot of untapped purchasing power, therefore it is not surprising that this group of teenagers is increasingly growing in consumer culture. In addition, as stated by (Mangkunegara, 2013) the characteristics of teenagers include being unstable but easily tempted, buying impulsively, not having realistic expectations, and engaging in wasteful activities, all of which contribute to an increased urge to buy. The large number of shopping centers, restaurants and cafes is a supporting factor for teenagers to live a consumerist life. Teenagers who live consumer lives prioritize wants rather than needs, such as changing cellphones every time a new type of cellphone is released, always buying clothes that follow trends, and visiting new restaurants or cafes. (Solomon, 2019) echoes similar sentiments, writing that the majority of youth spending goes to purchasing satisfying consumer goods.

There is some discussion of dramaturgy in previous works. However, previous research has shown that variations exist. In research by (Andini et al., 2018) it was concluded that the components of the front stage were setting, gimmick, insight, vocal skills and teamwork. At the same time, background elements include context, emotions, individual strengths and weaknesses, hidden struggles, and revelations about oneself. In contrast to previous research where the research subjects were radio broadcasters, this research’s subjects were teenagers.

Meanwhile, (Khuzaimah & Harianto, 2023) research found that Instagram is now used for more than just communicating; it also plays a role in shaping young people’s virtual self-image. This can be seen when they select and edit photos in a way that displays clothing (appearance) and style (manner) that they believe will appeal to other Instagram users. In contrast to previous research which focused on forming self-image on Instagram only, this research also focuses on consumer behavior that arises
from forming self-image on Instagram. Apart from that, the setting of the research location is different, if the previous research was in Sedan District, this research is in Cirebon City.

Research by (Tanika & Muhibbin, 2023) concluded that using the Instagram Story feature is not only a means of sharing entertainment content, but also creates a self-image of Instagram users who have a spirit of nationalism and a broad outlook. Apart from that, the focus of the research is only on the use of all features on Instagram as a form of self-image, whereas this research focuses on the use of all features on Instagram as a form of self-image which leads to consumer behavior.

Methodology

According to (Sugiyono, 2013) to explain, verify, create and reveal information, hypotheses, and to understand, solve and predict problems in human existence, research techniques are a scientific approach to collecting data. This research uses qualitative methods, which means trying to solve problems through direct investigation, which is then refined into data. With this method, in-depth insight into the experiences and perceptions of the research subjects will be obtained. Qualitative tends to relate to letters or text, in contrast to quantitative which always relates to numbers and data calculations.

To support their findings, the researchers turned to Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach. According to dramaturgy, there are two main parts in every social interaction, namely the front stage and back stage. Behind the scenes, these individuals are authentic, while on stage, they show the world who they are.

The data collection techniques used are subject observation, literature review, and interviews. In-depth interviews with individuals so that the resource person can answer in detail what they think about the research topic being studied. According to Esterberg in (Sugiyono, 2013) states that an interview is a meeting of two individuals to share information and opinions regarding a particular problem through a question and answer session. The researcher will take 3 (three) data samples which will then be managed to obtain more varied and complex data, so that the researcher has several data to compare which will then be processed into a conclusion.

Results and Discussion

Use of Instagram for Cirebon Teenagers

Teenagers who are the millennial generation are often the subject of public discussion. For teenagers, Instagram is something that is no longer foreign. Like the three sources who have also used Instagram since Instagram was first released. Some of them said that Instagram is a place to create a positive, social, and existing self-image on social media. They also use Instagram as an entertainment medium, such as watching reels, using filters on Instagram stories, and looking for inspiration from other Instagram users. Plus, the features on Instagram are:

a. Stories feature
   This is a feature for sharing content (photos or videos) temporarily, so it's only for 24 hours. The use of Insta stories seems more interactive in sharing content because people are really annoyed.

b. Post feature
   One of the important features in building an image on Instagram. This feature is more long-term so it allows other users to continue to see it. Moreover, in this feature, users can also add relevant and interesting captions.

c. Feeds
   Permanent gallery showing user uploads. By planning and selecting relevant content, users can also show positive aspects of their own personalities.

d. Reels
   Short video feature that makes users more creative in editing videos with music, effects and transitions. Users can express themselves through these short videos.
e. Hashtags
Users can use hashtags to mark their uploads. The hashtags used are relevant to personal characteristics so they reach a wider audience.

f. Interaction with followers
The comments and direct message features allow users to interact with their followers. Responding to comments and chatting with followers can strengthen relationships and show a positive personality.

g. Live videos
This live video feature allows users to talk directly to their followers. This can be used to share experiences, thoughts, or ask questions.

These features certainly support the process of forming the user’s self-image. One of the features that interviewees use is Instagram stories, where they can easily upload activities they want to show to the public. Promotional features are also an option because they can make their profile better known to the public, especially for business needs. The resource persons are often inspired by the content of other users who have more followers than them when creating content.

Self Image on Instagram and Front Stage Life

Life in cyberspace is something that is also of concern to social media users. The perspectives of many people they meet through social media make Instagram users in particular more careful when using this application. Therefore, many people who use Instagram build a virtual self-image that is not necessarily the same as their personality in the real world. The importance of forming a self-image on Instagram was explained by interviewee 3;

“I think self-image is important because it is a person's assessment of the posts I upload to determine my best side to inspire other people. I also believe that my self-image on Instagram has the potential to impact my career or job opportunities. I strive to build a professional and positive image on Instagram by showcasing accomplishments, skills and interests relevant to my career field.”

Dramaturgy, according to Erving Goffman's dramaturgical view, can happen to anyone, at any time. Every human being has the right to choose what he wants to display in public. Individuals have two different sides, they will make thorough preparations before presenting themselves. In front of the public, they will show their positive and ideal side so that the public's response is in accordance with what they want. This performance on the front stage can take place on social media, such as Instagram, which is also done by Cirebon teenagers. Style and outward appearance are the center of attention in Erving Goffman's perspective.

After conducting in-depth interviews with 3 (three) sources who are Cirebon teenagers regarding their front stage performances on Instagram, they tend to show the good side of themselves. The front stage displayed by Cirebon teenagers on Instagram is at the appearance stage, namely each of them prepares content (photos and videos) that have aesthetics, chooses the right shooting angle, content with HD photo or video quality, behaves positively, visits places which is trending. They also make captions that are interesting and do not contain SARA.

As is known, to make someone's Instagram feed look attractive like an Instagram celebrity or influencer, one way is to ensure the quality of the photos or videos is in HD (High Definition), which will also be assisted by themes, grid layouts, color schemes and photo layouts for adds a neat and aesthetic impression to an account.

At the manner stage, teenage Instagram users show good behavior if they want to upload things on Instagram. For example, a style when eating that looks polite and neat, supported by clothing that supports a good self-image. Create captions to build interaction between Instagram users and each other. They also use features on Instagram to support quality content that attracts attention.

Based on the researcher’s observations of the Instagram accounts of the three sources who were interviewed, the researcher found that they collected a lot of photos or videos that contain aesthetics and self-existence which are also supported by HD quality content, interesting captions, and songs that
give an impression of the content they uploaded. The following is a view of one of the sources' Instagram profile.

Self Image on Instagram and Back Stage

Goffman argued that the backstage area was a place for actors to relax, get ready, and rehearse for their roles on stage. The individual’s true character and appearance is also visible on the back stage. Life on the back stage shows the true life of each individual, including this Cirebon teenager. On the back stage they were more themselves, without thinking about a particular concept for ‘input’ on their Instagram. Like statements from sources regarding the differences in self-image on Instagram and the real world.

“The self-image I build on Instagram is different from real life. In real life I will be myself without thinking about feedback from other people, unlike on Instagram where I think first about uploading something. Although I strive to share moments that are authentic and true to my life, I am also aware that sometimes I tend to select and edit content to show the best side of myself.”

Other research sources also stated that they only show their best side on Instagram and are always in the perfect position if there is a camera showing their activities. Also, one of the interviewees is someone who is picky about consuming food or drinks, but on Instagram he builds a self-image as a culinary lover.

Based on observations made by researchers, it turns out that the sources’ backstage lives have quite significant differences in building their self-image on Instagram. On his Instagram account, the source shows a life that likes hanging out in cafes, but behind that he has pay later bills in order to create a self-image that is up to date, social, and also a culinary lover. Some of them also live much more simply in the real world than they show on their Instagram. Their behavior in real life is free in acting and
speaking, if on Instagram they always prioritize politeness, but on the back stage they act and say without considering this.

**Self Image on Instagram and Consumptive Behavior**

This is in line with Chaney’s argument regarding self-image in (Ulfah et al., 2017). It can be seen how arguments about lifestyle and self-image can be applied in the context of Goffman’s dramaturgy. Goffman describes individuals as actors playing roles on the stage of everyday life, and how they attempt to manipulate their self-image to create a desired impression. In the context of social media such as Instagram, this is relevant because many teenagers try to project the image expected by others, sometimes at the expense of their real needs.

To support success in creating a self-image on Instagram, it is often necessary to spend money on producing aesthetic photos such as hanging out in cafes or visiting nice places. This shows that the consumer behavior of teenagers who are trying to build their image on Instagram tends to carry out consumptive actions based on wanting, not needing.

Based on the explanation above, in forming a self-image, a person will take consumptive actions so that their self-image can be realized. Teenagers today are competing to upload aesthetic and interesting content on Instagram. They do this so that they can be recognized as positive people by the public. As indicated by all three sources, they often engage in activities that meet the demands of their content, such as visiting cafes two to four times a week or visiting locations with beautiful views. To meet their content needs, they are also willing to pay between IDR 500,000 to IDR 1,000,000 every month.

**Conclusions**

Advances in digital technology allow individuals to interact indirectly or virtually. Instagram social media is a choice because of the many features on Instagram that they can use, for example Instagram stories, uploading photos or videos, reels and other features. Over time, Instagram has become a place for teenagers to display their self-image in front of other people virtually. The majority of them always display a positive, ideal and even perfect self-image in their posts on feeds or Instagram stories. This is inversely proportional to their real lives which are different from what is shown.

In Erving Goffman’s view, this phenomenon is called dramaturgy, with a front stage and a back stage. Grebon children only show their best side through carefully created material that they share on social media. Material with excellent design, cinematography and high definition (HD) visual quality will attract their attention. People do this when they select and edit photos in a way that displays the clothing (look) and style (way) they believe will look best when seen by other Instagram users. To make this happen, they are directed towards consumer behavior that is based on desires, not needs. Behind the elegance and beauty of their account posts, some of them also feel pressure in creating their own self-image because they feel the importance of self-image on Instagram.

The findings of this research show that cafes are a popular gathering place for young people in Cirebon, where they develop their sense of identity. Most of them want to be seen ‘existing’ in public, especially on their Instagram social media. There are many ways they do to achieve a self-image that ‘exists’ on Instagram and subconsciously forms consumer behavior.

**References**


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