

INFLUENCERS: THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL BRANDING ON INSTAGRAM

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ABSTRACT

In the era of globalization, social media is considered an effective tool of mass communication. In this study, a qualitative approach is employed to analyze the Instagram account of Gantar Surapati using a visual approach methodology. The results show that the visual communication techniques employed in this study are essential for understanding, reading, and interpreting the meaning behind images, photographs, videos, and other forms of visual communication. The research demonstrates how content can shape a positive personal brand and provides practical guidance for influencers on improving their brand presence by resonating with their audience. This line of research could help further refine strategies for creating lasting and credible personal brands in the rapidly evolving digital landscape. This study contributes to the understanding of effective content creation for personal branding on social media, specifically Instagram. This is what attracts the researchers to study it and becomes the focus of problems in research related to the use of Instagram as a medium to build and improve personal branding.

INTRODUCTION

The impact of globalization has caused technology and the internet to develop rapidly. Along with these developments, people at this time no longer send messages through letters written on paper, but people can send online messages through social media. The ease of accessing social media today can be done by anyone, anywhere, without any time limits. With that, the ease of communication using social media is the greatness of existing technology (Lestari et al., 2020). Of the many social media platforms that exist among internet users, one of the social media that is popular with the public at this time is Instagram. This platform is a social media based on photos and videos and has various features to apply filters, direct messages that function to send messages with fellow Instagram users (Imawan, 2019).

Instagram has 2 billion users worldwide and 89.9 million users in Indonesia by 2024. Instagram users in Indonesia spend an average of 15 Hours 24 Minutes in a month and in a day spend an average of 3 hours (Suciati et al., 2024). It can be concluded that the use of social media by the people of Indonesia cannot be separated from daily activities. In the era of globalization, social media is considered an effective tool of mass communication. The use of social media has now become a platform to channel ideas, insights, content, and more (Fajarianto et al., 2021).

People nowadays can channel everything through social media. The number of Instagram users who channel their ideas or content in an interesting way and can influence other users has given rise to a new designation, namely influencer (Zulaikha & Ayu, 2021). An influencer is a social media user and has a good personal branding so that he gets an audience response, and what is conveyed on social media can influence and provide feedback from his followers (Khamis et al., 2017). Basically, an influencer is a person who can influence others about the information they share in real life or social

media, one of which is Instagram, someone who has a large following due to good personal branding (Utami & Christin, 2023). Discussions about personal branding are often seen from many people. Personal which means a person and branding is an image so that personal branding can be interpreted as a person's identity or the image of a person that exists in everyone. The formation of personal branding can affect emotions towards others about the qualities and values that the person has (Ratnasari, 2020).

Personal branding is a product, whether goods or services, so that the brand can be attached to the hearts of the community with all its attributes and differentiation that require effort to build so that it gets a public response is called branding (Soraya & Alifahmi, 2022). Building or forming personal branding starts from knowing about yourself so that you can have the characteristics of a personal brand, have specialization, leadership, personality, differences, visibility, unity, steadfastness and good name that can be attached and have a response to the audience (Montoya & Vandehey, 2002). Personal branding built by influencers in various fields such as for example, Fashion Influencers, lifestyle influencers, Beauty Influencers, Comedy Influencers, Food Influencers, Traveling Influencers and so on.

Referring to the Montoya theory, there are various obstacles that ultimately fail to build personal branding. Usually, this failure occurs because they accidentally do something negative so that they are entangled in a criminal case, or the person does not implement a personal branding strategy properly (Utami & Christin, 2023). Those who succeed in building personal branding because of the personal branding strategy and implementing it according to good visual communication such as done by an influencer named Gantar Surapati who has built personal branding with a visual communication approach on Instagram. @Gantarsurapati who has 19.5K followers and 476 posts on Instagram. The content she creates is about daily lifestyle and is included in the Man Beauty Influencer.

Gantar created a character on Instagram with the name @uncleGantar referred to as Uncle G with a character as a virtual uncle from generation Z aiming to accompany young people who do not have family and lack affection. Gantar uses a visual communication strategy to improve its personal branding as a solution to this problem. Part of the process in conveying information from communicators to communicators through a medium or more can be understood by the sense of sight (Hardiyarso, 2020).

Visual communication combines art, symbols, typography, images, graphic design, illustrations, and color for content creation for an influencer (Sunarya et al., 2015). A good visual content can channel a message in visual form correctly and attractively to the audience, therefore in the creation of Instagram content it is necessary to have a creative, informative and communicative strategy that is implemented into verbal and visual language that refers to the principles of visual communication. The use of these elements in Instagram content can build a good image for the audience. The visual message on Instagram content must be clear, understandable, and attention-grabbing to be remembered so that it will have an impact on the personal branding built (Arifah & Anggapuspa, 2023).

With many people building and improving personal branding on social media by creating content. In previous research, there was a lot of content that was not explained how to make it correctly. In this study, the importance of content creation so that it can have a positive impact on the audience, and can form a good character in influencers to improve personal branding. Therefore, this research was carried out with the aim of being able to build and improve personal branding through Instagram social media. This is what attracts the researchers to study it and becomes the focus of problems in research related to the use of Instagram as a medium to build and improve personal branding with an analytical approach from a Gantar Surapati on the Instagram social media account as the object of this research.

This research contributes to the understanding of effective content creation for personal branding on social media, specifically Instagram. While previous studies have noted the importance of content, they often lacked clear guidance on how to create it effectively. By analyzing the Instagram account of Gantar Surapati, this study demonstrates how influencers can strategically build and enhance their personal branding through well-crafted visual content. The research offers insights into how content can shape a positive personal brand and provides practical guidance for influencers on improving their brand presence by resonating with their audience.

METHODS

In this study, the qualitative method was chosen. The qualitative approach provides detailed explanations and emphasizes the quality of the data over quantity, focusing on the depth of understanding rather than numerical analysis. This approach is particularly suitable for exploring the researcher's object through observations and descriptive data collected from interviews with relevant

sources. In this study, the qualitative method is employed to analyze the Instagram account @Gantarsurapatii using a visual approach methodology.

The visual methods used in this research are essential for understanding, reading, and interpreting the meaning behind images, photographs, videos, and other forms of visual communication. This method is appropriate for examining how Gantar Surapati constructs his personal branding on Instagram by interpreting the visual content he shares. To gather in-depth insights, interviews with the influencer were conducted via Google Meet, focusing on how visual communication strategies enhance personal branding.

To frame the analysis, the research applies Montoya's theory of The Eight Laws of Personal Branding. These laws guide the exploration of how Gantar Surapati uses specialization, leadership, personality, differentiation, distinctiveness, unity, persistence, and goodwill to shape his personal brand. This theoretical framework supports the analysis of how visual communication techniques are employed to create a strong and distinct personal brand on Instagram.

RESULTS

Visual communication is a series of processes of conveying information or messages to other parties using media that can only be understood by the sense of sight. Visual communication combines art, symbols, typography, images, graphic design, illustrations, and colors for content creation for an influencer (Aesthetika & Febriana, 2022). The visual communication approach can be seen from Gantar Surapati, an influencer who runs in the field of influencers, has 19.5 thousand followers with 494 posts on Instagram with @Gantarsurapatii username.



Figure 1. Gantar Surapati's Instagram Profile

Gantar's Instagram bio itself is written Extended Virtual Family, which refers to another character created by Gantar himself named Uncle Gantar (Uncle G). Uncle G with the character of a virtual uncle from generation z aims to accompany young people who do not have family and lack affection. He uses visual communication strategies to improve his personal branding as a solution to this problem.

According to Gantar himself, the purpose of creating Uncle G is because currently many young people, especially in the Jakarta area, are experiencing family issues and lack of affection from their families. With Indonesia ranked number three in the world as Fatherless Country, it is the reason why Gantar created the character Uncle G, which Gantar conveyed in the first content created on @unclegantar account of @Gantarsurapatii collaborators. In addition, Gantar also joined the @originalitasrasa team which contains culinary content as a voice over to the team. while Gantar itself focuses its content on the field of lifestyle and travelling.

Lifestyle influencers are people who actively share their daily activities on social media, in this case Instagram. They can influence the audience with their posts, including traveling content. Gantar creates content by visiting/traveling to cultural heritage sites to explore and be able to explain to his audience about the culture of the local community visited.



Figure 2. Feeds of @Gantarsurapatii

The content created by @Gantarsurapatii can be enjoyed by the audience from the delivery of visual communication that he made as above which can be seen from the clothes worn during cultural events using visual communication techniques such as images, art and symbols worn by Gantar and his friends.

Basically, visual communication can be proven by the audience with good or inappropriate delivery, here we researchers interviewed a follower from @Gantarsurapatii on behalf of @irnanofiani and @helmisandy accounts. Gantar has its own purpose and purpose in conveying its message to the audience through the content created, the researcher participates in inviting Gantar followers to find out whether the message that Gantar intended is conveyed in accordance with the expectations that Gantar intended.

The first follower interviewed by the researcher was a content creator named Irna nofiani who had followed the Gantar account in November 2023. Irna's daily activities create a lot of content on social media, which of course her view of Gantar is different from the perspective of the second resource person, who is a student. The second follower interviewed by the researcher is named Helmi Sandy, who has followed the Gantar account in December 2023. With the two followers who have been interviewed by researchers, there is a difference in perspective on how they see the figure of Gantar. The difference in viewpoints is influenced by several factors, including the environment, lifestyle, gender, age and work.

Discussion

Gantar Surapati Content Specialization

The characteristic of a personal brand is precision in a field, focusing only on certain strengths, skills or achievements or specialists who strengthen the personal brand that is inherent in an influencer with the right visual communication so that it can be conveyed. Gantar's own response about specialists is the main thing that an influencer undergoes (Fernando, 2022).

Gantar's content specialization is in Travelling, culinary, man beauty and family. Gantar said that the theme of traveling, culinary and man beauty content is being talked about and Gantar sees a great opportunity if he makes the content. Gantar also has its own mentor and said that at first Gantar did not have content theme specifications, so at first Gantar made all types of content themes. In the end, Gantar found his own formula that made his content attract many viewers and followers.

The visual communication approach is used by Gantar by writing the type of Gantar content on his Instagram page, namely culinary, man beauty and family. Writing is a way of communication that is only received by the human sense of sight by reading. This process can influence people related to Gantar's Instagram account information which has culinary content specialists, man beauty and also family.

Culinary content is very relate to everyone's life because culinary is part of everyone's basic needs so that it can be easier to explore and make the audience curious so that it is fast in the algorithm. As for family content, the emphasis is on the character Uncle G. The culinary, man beauty and family content created by Gantar has yielded good results. It can be proven by Helmi and Irma who followed the Gantar account some time ago. Helmi is interested in the man beauty content created by Gantar because he can imitate the attractive way of looking at Gantar. while Irma is interested in the culinary content created by Gantar to add references to culinary places and education related to unique culinary in Indonesia.

Uncle G's Character Leadership

In Montoya's view, in general, people want to be influenced. People want a leader, someone who can remove a sense of uncertainty and can provide clarity. In forming a leadership, one does not have to be the best in everything. Leadership can be achieved through excellence (expert in a certain field), position (having an important position) or recognition (through certain awards or achievements) (Imawati et al., 2016).

The concept of Leadership in Gantar itself can be seen from the character of Uncle G. Gantar positions Uncle G as the leader of young people, especially generation Z. As the leader of generation Z, Uncle G can be an uncle for followers among young people of generation Z such as listening, inviting traveling, and educating and can influence his followers to be able to experience the content presented by @Gantarsurapatii and @uncleGantar content. Gantar explained that the purpose of forming Uncle G is to be a virtual uncle for generation Z, which aims to accompany young people who do not have family and lack affection.

The visual communication approach to the Gantar leadership concept refers to how Uncle G has the charisma of an ideal uncle who can be trusted to lead young people, especially generation Z. How Uncle G behaves, looks on his face, how he dresses and how he speaks is a form of visual communication that Gantar uses to express an uncle or leader of generation Z.

Followers who follow @Gantarsurapatii, including Helmi and Irma, because the leadership style in the content created can be a reference for her, one of which is interactive in creating content such as the hook that is brought, namely "hi it's me your Uncle G", in which case Helmi can feel the atmosphere of the content created by Gantar and knowledge education so that Helmi is interested in following it.

Gantar Surapati's Personality

Good personal branding can describe an individual's personality from all aspects, including the aspects of perfection and imperfection of a person on social media, because sometimes there are a lot of people who like influencers as they are (Avicenna & Budisuwita, 2022). To display a personal branding, an influencer must be displayed by appearing professional. However, to appear professional does not mean that an influencer must get rid of his or her human side, because basically, humans want to be accepted and considered equally by others. Gantar said that he was just an ordinary human being and did not call himself an influencer, but only as a person who created content on social media.

Like influencers in general, Gantar always needs input to develop his content. Gantar said that he often consulted friends, relatives, mentors and his followers. This can be seen in all Gantar content that always activates the comment column. His followers can give input or criticism to Gantar in the comment column and it is not uncommon for Gantar to reply to comments from his followers. In addition, Gantar often interacts with his followers through Instagram Stories.

Visual communication is established at this stage, where his followers can feel Gantar's personality through comments and Instagram stories that use writing and pictures as a form of visual communication. According to Helmi in an interview that has been conducted with researchers, Helmi feels that Gantar is a humble influencer, as evidenced by Gantar who always answers comments from Helmi on Gantar's Instagram posts and stories, it can be concluded that Gantar is interactive with his followers.

A Difference

Personal branding will be more effective if it has a strong impression by being different from others in the same field. In personal branding, there must be a distinction between one personal brand and another so that it is easy to remember (Imawati et al., 2016). The difference that can distinguish Gantar from other influencers is the existence of two characters on his social media accounts, namely Gantar surapati and also Uncle G. In the process of creating the character, Gantar was inspired by an actor or acting artist in film or theater who played a character for the stage. Gantar sees advantages in creating these characters, including that he can express freely according to the character created and can increase Gantar's confidence when creating content.

The two characters are made different from each other. Such as the first character, the character "Gantar surapati" which Gantar places as a character behind the scenes. Has a character like Gen Z, ambivert and has an Aquarius zodiac. While the other character is named Uncle G who Gantar places as a character who is in front of the screen. The background of the creation of Uncle G with the character as a virtual uncle from generation Z aims to accompany young people who do not have family and lack

affection. Uncle G himself has a personality like the millennial generation, has a Leo zodiac sign and is very extroverted.

These two characters can be distinguished, such as the character Uncle G can be seen or felt from a Gantar when he wears lighter and lighter colored clothes, while the Gantar surapati character tends to use dark colors. In this case, the visual communication framework is used, people and his followers will think that when Gantar wears light-colored clothes, Gantar will transform into the character he created, namely Uncle G. but people's perception will change if Gantar himself wears dark-colored clothes, because people will think that Uncle G is not in Gantar. Apart from the clothes used, the accent and way of speaking of these two characters are different. Gantar Surapati used to use Indonesian in general and Gantar always thought first before speaking. while Uncle G uses a Betawi accent and speaks like a millennial generation who is "to the point".

Instagram users, of course, they filter the people they follow based on the characters they follow. From interviews with two Gantar followers, Helmi and Irna, Helmi said that Gantar has a firm and tough character, Gantar inspires his followers, even without the role of a father, he must still have a high spirit of life. Meanwhile, according to Irna, the character of Gantar is considered a friendly, caring and loving person. With the creation of the character Uncle G for Irna Gantar, she understands the main problems experienced by Gen Z.

Gantar Content Visibility

To achieve success, it must be visible consistently continuously, until someone's personal branding can be recognized. In content creation, there is a series of processes in conveying information or messages to other parties using media that can only be understood by the sense of sight (Amalia & Satvikadewi, 2020).

In the journey of Gantar to create content, Gantar initially created content with various segments, until Gantar found a segment that made the audience follow his Instagram account. Currently, Gantar is focusing its content on the traveling, culinary and family segments. With the reason that the content is relevant to the current conditions where many audiences are interested in the content segment with many people who are tired so they need a vacation, so Gantar creates content to be a solution for families who want to go on vacation and as a result, the Gantar Instagram account can be seen by the audience. Gantar said that currently Gantar is focusing its content on traveling, culinary, and family. This is in line with the current situation where many people are tired of work and need a vacation; The content can recommend vacation and culinary places for them.

For Irna and Helmi, Instagram @Gantarsurapatii very educational because the content created contains information about cultural tourism, culinary tourism and family with a communicative nature.

The Influence of Uncle G's Character on Gantar's Life

A person's life behind the personal branding that is built must be in line with ethics, morals and attitudes based on character made on social media. The life of an influencer can be a mirror of an image that wants to be instilled in the personal branding that is built (Octavianus & Oktavianti, 2022). From the creation of these two characters, it turns out that it can affect real life when not seen in front of the camera. Gantar said that sometimes he accidentally spoke with a Betawi accent or an unfiltered speaking style, as if he were Uncle G.

This is proven by Irma as a follower of Gantar who has met Gantar directly. Irma said, when Gantar speaks, there are several moments when Gantar unconsciously changes into an Uncle G. such as from the way he suddenly speaks using a Betawi accent. In addition, Gantar's body gestures and facial expressions can change like Uncle G. this happens due to the visual communication approach. visual communication style in the form of facial expressions and body gestures of Gantar and Uncle G characters have a difference. Therefore, Irna can feel whether Gantar is being herself or being Uncle G just from Gantar's gestures, speaking style and facial expression.

Strong Ideology

Behind the success of a personal branding, of course, there are individuals who are very firm in their ideological stance. It can be seen from the way Gantar creates content on his social media. Gantar has ambitions to create content that has a value. Gantar said that creating content that has a value is more difficult and takes more time, such as having to create a script for content with a research and analysis approach. Creating content whose main purpose is only viral without value, is easy to create.

However, if Gantar creates content that has value and the content goes viral, it will have an impact on followers who will increase, and he will get better personal branding.

Pre-production of content created by Gantar can be concluded that the occurrence of visual communication is the existence of a creative strategy in the form of a script to be implemented in a content that will be created by Gantar. Helmi as a follower of Gantar sees him as a person who has a strong ideology because the content that Gantar makes still has value and is interesting to see so that it is memorable for Helmi. The value of Gantar content can be felt by Helmi from the use of words, diction or knowledge when Gantar explains the content of a video on Instagram. In addition, brands provide trust, and trust is not easy to get in a short time. A person's consistency over time in the process of improving personal branding will foster trust in the form of a brand (Feblyania et al., 2022).

Gantar's consistency in content creation began since junior high school with the first time in the Vine application to create content as much as possible, not yet to the professional realm or the intention to become a content creator. Gantar itself focuses on the world of content by entering an agency that handles Specialist KOLs, during the process until now Gantar finally thinks about being able to become a content creator and become a KOL. A consistency from Gantar can be a reference for a person's determination to be able to process and get a result of trust from the company for him. Gantar said that he had been actively creating content since junior high school, at that time on the Vine application. In the past, he made content as much as he could, until finally he has entered the professional realm and joined an agency that handles Specialist KOLs.

Until now, Gantar still continues to implement his creative ideas through the visual content he creates. Gantar's consistency in creating content shows that he has a consistent schedule. It can be seen from his Instagram page which always uploads every two to three days. However, for Instagram Story, Gantar is always updated every day. Because it is to share his daily activities with followers. In this case, Helmi and Irna as followers of Gantar on Instagram who have been interviewed, they explained the reason for following the Gantar Instagram account because Gantar remains consistent in creating content on Instagram. Irna said that she needs entertainment after doing activities all day. The content uploaded by Gantar can accompany Irna's daily activities.

Maintaining a Good Name

In building personal branding on the internet, one example is on social media Instagram. Influencers strive to create and build a good name on social media so that influencers can get a positive stigma from followers. Gantar stated that he did not close himself to the criticism and advice given by his followers. In addition, Gantar has its own way of maintaining or building a good name on the internet. Gantar said that if there is a misunderstanding in the content he created, Gantar will clarify by explaining the meaning of the content created and apologizing to followers for the misunderstanding.

In maintaining a good name, Gantar carries out stages in creating content that refers to visual communication. Some examples of Gantar's stages in creating content are creating scripts and consulting with his personal mentor. This is done so that the message you want to convey can be understood by the audience.

CONCLUSION

Gantar Surapati, an influencer, has effectively used personal branding to build strong relationships with his followers. He uses eight montoya approaches, including specialization, leadership, personality, difference, unity, visibility, constancy, and good name, to showcase his unique and creative side. The characters' unified narratives emphasize the importance of constancy and consistency in maintaining personal branding. The study aims to help Generation Z avoid identity crises by implementing their own personal branding. Future research should explore multi-generational personal branding strategies across different influencer profiles, examine the long-term effects of dual-persona branding on an influencer's reputation, and investigate the impact of consistent personal branding across different social media platforms. This research could help refine strategies for creating lasting and credible personal brands in the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

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