Why Does Generation Z Love Using Apple Products as Personal Branding on Their Social Media?

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Abstract
Young people, particularly members of Generation Z, are the technological generations. They are always on the cutting edge of technology. Apple is one of the technology brands with generationally positive sentiment. This generation uses Apple products not only for technical reasons but also as a form of personal branding. They frequently upload photos taken with an Apple device to their social media accounts. Consequently, this paper describes how and why they brand themselves by using Apple products in their Instagram account. Personal branding theory related to impression management theory by Littlejohn and Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) by Tomic describe these phenomena. The study employed qualitative descriptive methods by interviewing a young apple addict. The outcome of their use of apple products as personal branding is netizens' favorable perception of social media. They believe that using Apple products will enhance their personal brand. Their personal branding will improve their relationships, friendships, existence, education, and careers, as well as their amusement and usefulness. In order to develop their personal brand, they utilized impression management by displaying an Apple product in a photo or video mirror selfie directly within their Instagram content.
Keywords: Apple Product, Instagram, Personal Branding, Social Media, Generation Z

Introduction
This paper examines the phenomenon of adolescents who use Apple products to establish their personal brands via social media. Apple Inc.'s annual company growth figures are constantly on the rise. The most recent record that Apple broke was in 2020, which was written based on Neil Cybart's analysis that there are currently 1 billion iPhone owners. According to his estimates, Apple exceeded 1,8 billion active apple devices (Caminade et al., 2022). The widespread use of Apple products has spawned a new phenomenon for its users, including the use of Apple products for personal branding. Not just Apple products, the use of all technological applications and devices has risen sharply, in another perspectives, the rising number of people using Apple products can make consumerization (Albertus, 2020).

iOS surpasses Android in terms of user loyalty, despite the existence of other brands. The analysis conducted by CIRP in March 2020 generates data that shows the year 2020 where Apple users have a higher level of brand loyalty than Android users, namely 93% versus 88%. This explains why Apple users will continue to purchase Apple products when purchasing a new device, indicating that iOS users are loyal and rarely switch to other operating systems.

This study examines and reveals the Instagram profiles of adolescent Apple users. This study focuses on the Instagram platform because it is common knowledge that Apple products produce the highest quality content for uploading to Instagram, the world's fourth most popular social media platform. According to an analysis of the GadgetIn YouTube channel published in September 2018, Instagram developers have difficulty adapting because there are too many Android-powered smartphone brands and models. Personal branding among adolescents is being studied because, in general, adolescence is a time when individuals want to express themselves in public and receive recognition from their peers. Late adolescence is a period leading up to adulthood characterized by a sustained interest in a field (Sarwono SW, 2012) The use of social media, which is exploding in the current digital era, is one way adolescents present themselves through their appearance (Mutia, 2017) . In light of this, this article attempts to explain why teenagers or Generation Z use Apple products in their social media posts.

Social media itself create positive and negative impacts on adolescents. Adolescents can turn negative impact like materialism into positive impact on themselves(Tarigan, 2017). Even though, adolescents have a relatively low awareness of privacy in social media. Their openness to strangers in social media is one of the causes(Maryani et al., 2020).

Among the numerous studies on this topic, Indah Sari and Gautama's "Ownership of a Used iPhone as Personal Branding among Class of 2017 Students, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, UNP" reveals that students have Personal Branding from iPhone ownership to appear cool and not be left behind from friends who have previously used the iPhone. This student teenager uses an iPhone to gain prestige, wealth, and to display himself through mirror selfies, TikTok content, and Instagram uploads, which is an effort to demonstrate that he owns an iPhone, which is a luxury, expensive, and prestigious item in the world. Students believe that using an iPhone can improve their social standing, influencing their personal brand. Next is title The Influence of Apple's Brand Personality on Consumer Buying Interest in the City of Bandung, which explains that Apple as a brand of technology products is regarded as possessing exclusive characteristics formed by the advantages of prestige and attractiveness, which ultimately succeeded in attracting consumer purchasing interest in this Apple product, where respondents' awareness of the Apple brand was extremely high. According to his research conducted in Bandung, consumers view Apple products as trustworthy, intelligent, and technologically superior (Priyandra & Lubis, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

According to the Personal Branding Theory, personal branding is based on the values of a person's life and has a high degree of relevance to who that person truly is. Personal branding refers to a person's personal brand that will be remembered by everyone he/she knows. Personal branding is an effort to shape people's perceptions of a person's characteristics, such as personality, abilities, or values, and how these create positive perceptions that can be used as a marketing tool. A personal brand is comprised of elements that are integrated with one another and developed concurrently. The personal brand consists of three primary components: the personal brand is you, the personal brand is the promise, and the personal brand is the relationship (Montoya & Vandehey, 2008). Impression Management Theory is the next concept. Impression management is a concept that signifies the presentation and maintenance of social identity while interacting with others (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Social identity is the identity that an individual projects in public. To display a positive image of the communicator in order to attract or persuade the communicant, masks are frequently utilized in human communication as part of impression management. There is a process in which he/she selects and controls his/her behavior based on the situation that arises and forms the desired impression on others. There are five distinct types of attribution, each with its own specific strategies for acquiring attribution and implementation techniques (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

According to DeVito (DeVito, 2013) there are five objectives and strategies of impression management. They are (1) affinity-seeking and politeness strategies, (2) credibility strategies, (3) influencing strategies, (4) self-deprecating strategies, (5) image-conforming strategies. These strategies can be used in social media. A person or teenager can utilize all the

strategies in his/her social media, depending on the objective of the user(Murwani, 2018).

Material and Methodology

This research uses a qualitative-descriptive approach to explore the z generations or adolescents using apple's product as a tool and a brand to brand themselves in social media especially in their Instagram account. The informants are adolescents who used apple's product more than three products, have an Instagram account, and actively post pictures by using apple's product. This research focuses on their post in Instagram by applying content analysis in their post.

Result and Discussion

These adolescent apple users utilize several forms of personal branding. These include (1) uploading photos to the story and posting them with good quality and editing capabilities, which can be accomplished by utilizing their Apple products. (2) performing a mirror selfie or pose in which he displays his Apple products as a form of personal branding. (3) OOTD (Outfit of the Day) photos, (4) MacBook photos that he uses to watch or work, and (5) a picture of his dog. Finally, post-edited videos and photographs with aesthetic tones in their feeds.

> "Once, in my story and profile photo. Never in posts because I'm afraid to be called a narcissist. The story is pretty good, at least 3-4 times a month. Usually, I post for OOTD, watching football, and showing off hahaha. (Interview with Faixco, April 20, 2022).

> "Sometimes, usually mirror selfies in stories and posts for OOTD purposes because I like OOTD. Then, sometimes when I'm watching something on my MacBook, I take a picture with a picture of the MacBook too. Usually 1-2 times a week, there must be a mirror selfie. if the posts at least once a week or two weeks. Either to show OOTD, or indeed to endorse a cellphone case" (Interview with Evelina, April 22, 2022)

> "Once I uploaded a story with a post with the Apple logo visible. But most often in stories. It can be 3-4 times a week if you upload it in stories. Usually because I'm in the gym, I'm a mirror selfie. I usually put it in the highlight "me" after that. In the posts so far, there are only two photos. So, I rarely post in posts." (Interview with Dimas, April 20, 2022)

Evelina acknowledged that she typically uploads photos or videos containing Apple products once or twice per week for the story feature and once every week to two weeks for posts. The average is displayed as a mirror selfie to promote OOTD or a cellphone case. Andina explained that she could upload photos of Apple products approximately three to four times per week, most frequently when taking classes at the gym and taking mirror selfies with her friends.

Personal Branding Motives on Instagram

According to the interviews, each of the four informants has their own reasons for using Apple products. However, it can be seen that the four respondents cited the device's quality and Apple's features as the primary reason. Additionally, the use of Apple affects personal branding, particularly on Instagram. Social media is one medium for delivering personal branding (Afrilia, 2018). Therefore, Instagram as a social media platform is a way for a person to demonstrate his/her personal branding, which is well-known as crucial in life. Obviously, whatever is written on someone's Instagram comes from technology. Since Instagram is a mobile application that requires internet access, it cannot be separated from the use of mobile devices. Therefore, through Instagram accounts, it is evident who uses Apple products, and the distinction can be felt. Therefore, the informants selected Apple to promote their brand on Instagram.

It is believed that using Apple improves the appearance of one's Instagram account, and when the public, particularly Instagram followers, discover that someone is using Apple, it is believed that their social value will also increase. Three out of four respondents admitted that they initially used Apple because they believed their lives would improve if they did so. But one of them disagrees; he uses Apple not because of other people or his existence, but because he has fallen in love with the quality of Apple's products. In the end, however, all informants believe that using Apple makes personal branding on Instagram better and more appealing, which benefits social life and careers.

The phenomenon of using Apple products as a personal branding effort through Instagram is related to the Personal Branding Theory, which defines personal branding as an effort to attract and build trust from others towards the individual (Septriadi, 2012). Therefore, the use of Apple products was cited as a component of the informants' personal branding initiatives. By doing mirror selfies or taking photos of their Apple products, they indicate to other Instagram users that they are Apple users and create high-quality photos and videos with these Apple devices. In addition, the results obtained from interviews with the four informants were summarized into the following factors: relationship, friendship, existence, study & career, entertainment, and utility.

Relationship. The relationship factor is the utilization of Apple products that can facilitate romantic relationships. As Dimas stated, he explained that the camera results from Apple products made a person appear more handsome/beautiful, making it easier to find a partner, which he did in reality. And Faixco added that using Apple products can connect and strengthen a relationship between two Apple users. According to Montoya and Vandehey (2008), who define personal brand as a relationship, this relates to the theory of personal brand. Yang explains that a positive personal brand will foster positive relationships with others.

Friendship. The friendship factor is also related to the personal brand in relationship theory. Evelina explained that a friend who does not have an Apple device would be shunned because it is difficult to send data or photos without one.

Existence. Moreover, Faixco Evelina and Dimas mentioned the "presence" they gained by using Apple products, particularly when their Instagram followers were aware of it. Based on the results of interviews with Evelina and Dimas, who explained that when a person uses Apple products, he/she will receive a certain level of recognition for his/her personal branding, which increases his/her value in society and allows him/her to be accepted by the upper-middle class, which ultimately causes him/her to have a large number of friends and appear slang, the conclusion is that using Apple products will increase a person's social status. Because Apple products are expensive, a new perception has emerged that Apple products are exclusive, luxurious, and prestigious goods, allowing users to be perceived as competent and wealthy.

This relates to Personal Branding Theory by Rita Srihasnita R.C. and Dharmasetiawan in their article, Strategy to Build Personal Branding in Improving Self Performance, which states that one of the primary goals of personal branding is to influence others' perceptions of one's self-perception, as well as to position oneself above the competition because it appears distinctive and superior to competitors (Setiawan, 2018). As the informant in this study relies on Apple products for his existence, he receives them from others, making him feel special, unique, and superior. According to Andina, Apple products are superior, particularly for Instagram. An example of video results in Android's story feature will appear broken and blurry. This is in stark contrast to Apple, which can offer Instagram users the highest quality.

Study and Career. Faixco also noted that using Apple can facilitate a broader range of connections, which can ultimately impact academics and careers. Whereas with Apple's own products, which already have a sophisticated and trustworthy product image, users can be judged to be trustworthy and credible in the workplace. This situation relates to the theory that explains how the benefits and advantages of one's personal branding can increase one's credibility and others' trust. Although Andina stated that no existential factor in social interaction motivates her use of Apple products, she uses Apple to have an attractive personal brand and appear credible in her studies and career, and so do the other three informants. Apple's high quality enables it to support the photos or videos that Andina uploads to demonstrate her personal branding interest and credibility in her work as a fitness instructor. Similarly, Evelina, a model and celebgram, receives income from her Instagram account, including endorsements and calls to work as a model after her account is viewed.

Entertainment. The male informants in this study, Faixco and Dimas, added support for the entertainment industry as another reason for Apple's popularity. Apple's ability to support e-sports competitions and tournaments is an additional feature besides its camera. This is because Apple products have internal specifications, such as RAM, that enable them

to support the running of games without lagging or crashing.

Utility. The last factor is utility. The four informants agree that Apple products have a use-value for their users to carry out all activities and to create good personal branding for their users, such as making Apple consumers appear capable and high economic and social value. This is evidenced by the high level of satisfaction among respondents who use Apple products on more than three devices. In the initial interview, the informants describe the distinctiveness of Apple products compared to other brands. Not a little bit unique that Apple owns and is useful for its use. Apple is a

Conclusions

Based on the described findings and discussion of the results of the research data analysis, the conclusions are as follows:

Teenagers use Apple products on Instagram to appear more modern, capable (capable) at work, increase self-value (value) and social value, and be perceived as wealthy or affluent because they have purchased expensive and prestigious goods. In addition, the Apple brand is renowned for its superior technology and cutting-edge innovations, distinguishing it as a technology trendsetter. Like Apple's camera, which is clearer than Android's, Instagram videos and photos taken with an Apple device will appear smooth and natural. In contrast to the Android video results, which will be broken and blurry when uploaded to Instagram. In terms of software and speed, Apple products are also more advanced than Android devices.

Informants' personal branding efforts on Instagram consist of showing their Apple products to Instagram followers or viewers via photos or boomerangs that are then uploaded to the story or post feature of their Instagram accounts. Typically, by taking selfies alone or with friends, photographing their Apple products in use. For instance, the informant takes a photo of a MacBook and uploads it to the story while he is working on an assignment or watching a video on his MacBook, indicating to his followers that he is working on an assignment or watching a video on an Apple brand laptop.

The use of Apple products on Instagram is based on the theory of personal branding, which states that a person's attire can influence

well-known innovation that dared to be different when it was developed. Apple has the audacity to innovate by utilizing a different operating system, iOS, when every other brand in the gadget industry uses Android. This successful innovation gave birth to the exclusivity that ultimately belongs to Apple. This phenomenon can affect Apple consumers' personal branding objectives. They want others to know who they are, what they have, and what distinguishes them from others. These differences and distinctions may cause them to feel valued and have certain expectations of those with whom they interact.

others' perceptions of them and attract and build others' trust.

Impression Management Theory is also crucial in this situation, as using Apple products as a form of personal branding on Instagram is a consumer strategy to be deemed competent and acceptable by society.

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