The Impact of Self-Esteem and Media Literacy on Personal Branding Strategies on Instagram Among Generation Z

Edelweis Audrew[1],Haris Herdiansyah[2]

[12] Universitas Presiden

[12] Jababeka Education Park, Jl. Ki Hajar Dewantara, RT.2/RW.4, Mekarmukti, Kec. Cikarang Utara, Kabupaten Bekasi, Jawa Barat 17530, Indonesia

[1]edelweis.audrew@student.president.ac.id,[2]haris.herdiansyah@president.ac.id

Abstract

This study examines the effects of self-esteem and media literacy on personal branding strategies on Instagram among Generation Z, with self-perception serving as a mediating variable. Using a quantitative approach, Path Analysis was applied to explore the relationships between these constructs. A total of 206 respondents were selected through simple random sampling, with data collected via an online survey using structured questionnaires. The results indicate significant effects of self-esteem and media literacy on personal branding strategies, mediated by self-perception. Classic assumption tests, including the Normality and Heteroscedasticity Tests, confirmed the validity of the data. Path analysis supports the research hypotheses, underscoring the importance of self-esteem, media literacy, and self-perception in shaping Instagram personal branding strategies among Generation Z. The findings provide valuable insights for educators, marketers, and social media users to better understand and optimize online self-representation.

Dampak Harga Diri dan Literasi Media terhadap Strategi Personal Branding di Instagram di Kalangan Generasi Z

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki pengaruh harga diri, literasi media, dan strategi personal branding di Instagram pada Generasi Z, dengan mempertimbangkan persepsi diri sebagai variabel perantara. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kuantitatif, penelitian ini menerapkan Analisis Jalur untuk menganalisis pengaruh langsung maupun tidak langsung antara harga diri, literasi media, strategi personal branding, dan persepsi diri. Penelitian melibatkan 206 responden yang dipilih menggunakan teknik simple random sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui survei daring menggunakan kuesioner terstruktur. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa harga diri dan literasi media secara signifikan memengaruhi adopsi strategi personal branding di Instagram pada Generasi Z, baik secara langsung maupun melalui persepsi diri. Uji asumsi klasik, termasuk Normality Test dan Heteroscedasticity Test, menunjukkan hasil yang memenuhi syarat. Analisis Jalur mendukung

hipotesis penelitian, menegaskan pentingnya harga diri, literasi media, dan persepsi diri dalam membentuk strategi personal branding di Instagram. Temuan ini memberikan wawasan berharga bagi pendidik, pemasar, dan pengguna media sosial dalam mengoptimalkan representasi diri secara daring.

Kata kunci: *Harga Diri; Literasi Media; Personal Branding; Persepsi Diri; Instagram*

INTRODUCTION

Personal branding is a strategic and purposeful process of shaping and managing an individual's distinct image and reputation. It involves creating a positive and memorable impression by communicating core values and engaging with a target audience. Jeff Bezos encapsulates it as "Your brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room," highlighting the significance of reputation shaped by actions, values, and demeanor (Kaur et al., 2021). Beyond self-promotion, personal branding entails self-discovery, authenticity, and continuous adaptation to differentiate oneself and make a lasting positive impression. It is an ongoing journey of self-reflection, self-presentation, and relationship-building, recognizing its impact on personal and professional success.

The concept of personal branding involves strategically managing one's reputation, image, and identity, drawing parallels from corporate branding to create a distinctive and positive public perception (Hao et al., 2021). The essence lies in showcasing unique qualities and skills that differentiate an individual and resonate with their target audience. This ongoing process demands self-awareness, strategic planning, and commitment to fostering a positive and authentic image, ultimately leading to increased opportunities and professional success (Jacobson, 2020).

Networking is a key facet of personal branding, facilitating meaningful connections and collaborations both online and offline (Viṭelar, 2019). It provides a platform for individuals to express their unique qualities and values, aligning professional endeavors with personal passions for a more fulfilling career and personal life. However, pitfalls exist, such as the risk of presenting an inauthentic version of oneself, prioritizing image over substance, and succumbing to the pressures of maintaining a consistent personal brand in the age of social media (Arruda, 2019).

In the context of today's interconnected world, social media serves as a cornerstone in personal branding by offering a global platform for individuals to showcase their brand to a diverse audience (Arriagada & Ibáñez, 2020). Social media enhances networking, connecting individuals with peers, professionals, and collaborators, opening doors to valuable opportunities. The global reach of personal branding on social media aligns with the psychological need for recognition and validation, positively impacting self-esteem (Abrar-ul-hassan & Safdar, 2022).

Self-esteem, a foundational aspect influencing an individual's confidence and assertiveness, plays a crucial role in shaping various elements of personal branding (Makarova, 2019). Self-esteem, a crucial element in psychological inquiry, shapes individual experiences and mental

well-being through the interplay of self-perception, emotional evaluation, and the pursuit of happiness (Tiwari et al., 2022)and feeling isolated, is one of the critical issues faced by the Hijra's from our society, due to sexual prejudices and stigmas. However, no one bothers how they actually feel, how they see themselves? The idea behind the paper is to identify the impact of looking-glass self (self-concept. Nathaniel Branden defines self- esteem as the disposition to see oneself as competent to face life's challenges and deserving of happiness, emphasizing its dual nature (Branden, 2021). Morris Rosenberg, a sociologist, contributes quantitatively with the Self-Esteem Scale, offering a measurable dimension to the concept. This scale aids empirical research and prompts reflection on societal influences on self-worth perceptions (Kerriche, 2023). The synstudy of Branden's philosophical depth and Rosenberg's empirical rigor provides a comprehensive understanding of self-esteem, unraveling its complexities as a cornerstone of human psychology.

Furthermore, it is closely connected to media literacy, which enhances an individual's ability to critically engage with media content (Robinson et al., 2021). High self-esteem contributes to a more discerning media consumer, as individuals with positive self-perception are less likely to be solely influenced by external standards. This intersection between self-esteem and media literacy underscores the importance of both factors in crafting an authentic and impactful personal brand within the complexities of the digital landscape.

Self-perception refers to the process by which individuals observe their own behavior and use it to form conclusions about their own attitudes and attributes (Mohebi & Bailey, 2020). Carol S. Dweck's perspective delves into the impact of mindset on self- perception, introducing the concepts of "fixed mindset" and "growth mindset." A fixed mindset believes in inherent and unchangeable qualities, fostering a desire to maintain intelligence. Conversely, a growth mindset embraces the potential for development, shaping a more adaptive self-perception (Meylani, 2023).

Self-perception acts as a vital mediator in understanding how self-esteem and media literacy influence personal branding. Positive self-perception, rooted in high self-esteem, contributes to the development of a strong and positive personal brand by aligning with the principles of effective personal branding (Saeed et al., 2023). Similarly, media literacy indirectly impacts personal branding through its influence on self-perception, fostering a nuanced understanding of societal norms and contributing to positive self-perception as individuals navigate diverse media portrayals (Campanella, 2023).

In our media-dominated age, media literacy has become a vital skill for navigating the complexities of information. Scholars Renee Hobbs and Douglas Kellner provide key insights into its definition and significance. Hobbs defines media literacy as a dynamic set of competencies empowering individuals to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages across diverse platforms, emphasizing critical thinking skills (Hobbs, 2021). Kellner, a luminary in media studies, highlights media literacy as the ability to interpret, analyze, and evaluate messages across various media forms, emphasizing its importance in decoding ideologies and understanding

socio-political implications (Kellner & Share, 2019). Their collective insights stress that media literacy goes beyond technical proficiency, serving as essential competencies for comprehending and engaging critically with the multifaceted world of media.

This intricate relationship between self-esteem, media literacy, self-perception, and personal branding underlines the dynamic interplay of psychological factors in the contemporary digital landscape. The researcher hypothesizes that the positive influence of self-esteem and media literacy on personal branding is mediated through self-perception. This hypothesis is rooted in the logical progression of psychological processes, where high self-esteem and enhanced media literacy contribute to a positive self-perception, ultimately shaping a compelling personal brand.

In conclusion, personal branding on Instagram offers numerous opportunities for Generation Z, driven by the influences of self-esteem and media literacy, mediated through self-perception. However, it is crucial to recognize the challenges and complexities Gen Z faces in navigating the delicate balance between self-expression and the potential risks associated with personal branding on social media.

Research Method

This study employs a quantitative research approach to analyze how self-esteem and media literacy influence personal branding strategies on Instagram among Generation Z, with self-perception as an intervening variable. Path Analysis is used to explore the complex relationships between these variables and to identify specific pathways through which self-

esteem and media literacy impact personal branding strategies. The study also examines the mediating role of self-perception in these relationships. Data is collected via surveys, and statistical tools are applied to analyze the numerical data, providing insights into the factors that shape personal branding strategies in the digital age. This method offers a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics influencing Generation Z's online self-representation.

The quantitative nature involves collecting and analyzing numerical data using surveys and statistical tools. This systematic approach provides insights into the factors influencing personal branding strategies on Instagram among Generation Z, contributing to a nuanced understanding of digital-era dynamics.

In order to analyze the variables perfectly, researcher must go through several research process carried out. The process of this research as follows:
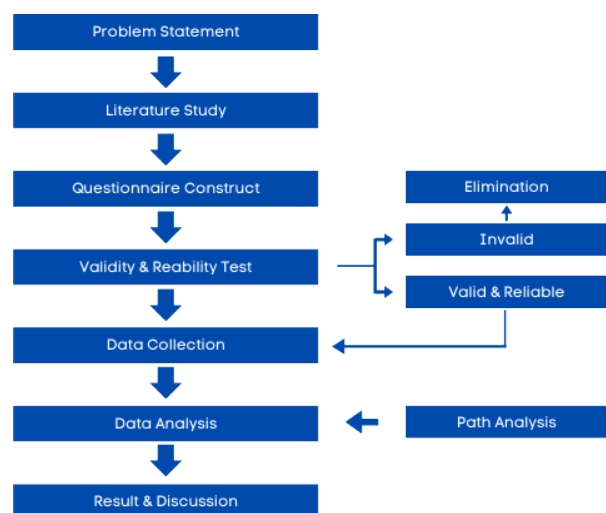
Figure 1. The Structure of Research Process

Source: Developed by The Researcher, based on Sekaran & Bougie (2016)

Based on the research problem mentioned previously, the conceptual framework of this research as follows:
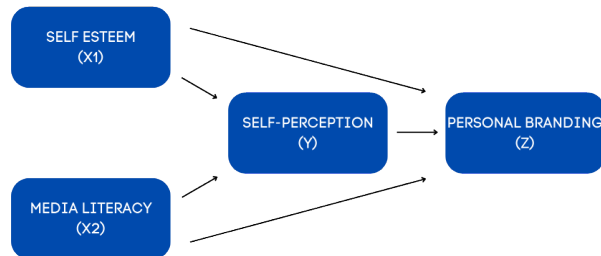
Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

souce; developed by the researcher

Based on the research problem and conceptual framework above the researchers rise following hypothesis;

H1: $\beta_1 \neq 0$: There is a significant influence of self-esteem toward self-perception among Generation Z.

H2: $\beta_2 \neq 0$: There is a significant influence of media literacy towards self-perception among Gen-Z.

H3: $\beta_3 \neq 0$: There is a significant influence of self-esteem toward personal branding strategies on Instagram among Gen-Z.

H4: $\beta_4 \neq 0$: There is a significant influence of media literacy toward personal branding strategies on Instagram among Gen-Z.

H5: $\beta_5 \neq 0$: There is a significant influence of self-perception on personal branding strategies on Instagram among Gen-Z.

H6: $\beta_6 \neq 0$: Self-perception mediates the influence between self-esteem and personal branding strategies on Instagram among Gen-Z.

H7: $\beta_7 \neq 0$: Self-perception mediates the influence between media literacy and personal branding strategies on Instagram among Gen-Z.

Variable Measurement

This research use interval measurement for measure the variables and using the Likert scale as the measurement scale of each variable. In Likert scale there are 5 point of response options (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2021), as follow:

Table 3. The Variable Measurement

Response Category	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Measurement Scale	1	2	3	4	5

Validity and Reliability

This research conducted a validity test by using SPSS. Each instrument item was tested for validity using SPSS by using the significance of the r table with an alpha coefficient of 5% (0.05). The instrument item will be valid, if in this validity test the calculated r value > r table. However, if the value of r count < r table, the instrument item is invalid.

Reliability tests were conducted by using SPSS to show the extent to which the instruments used in this study were reliable for measurement. Things to indicates the acceptance level of reliability can be seen when the range of Cronbach alpha (a) of 0.6-0.7, or we can say the a > 0.6. If the test results meet that condition, it means the data is reliable.

Classical Assumption Test

Normality Test was conducted To find out whether the data is normally

distributed, it can be known If the significant value is greater than 0.05, then the research data can be said to be normally distributed (Sig. > 0.05). Vice versa, if the significant value is less than 0.05, the research data is not normally distributed (Sig. < 0.05).

Heteroscedasticity test also conducted by using testing Scatter Plots images in SPSS, conducted to test whether there is a difference in variance from the residual value in one observation period to another in our research data.

Hypothesis Testing

The requirements that can be used as guidelines in making decisions to reject H0 based on the significance level obtained in statistical results exceeding 0.05 (Sig. > 0.05) and also based on the t count generated in the t-test (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2021). To reject H0 in the t-test hypothesis test, the t count must be greater than the total t table (t-count > t table). Path analysis is a statistical method in structural equation modeling (SEM) that was conducted to analyze direct and indirect relationships among variables in a theoretical model. It involves creating a path diagram, collecting data, and estimating the strength and significance of relationships through statistical analysis (Lleras, 2005). The results help researchers understand the complex interplay of variables in their proposed model.

Result and discussion
Validity and Reliability Test

A pretest was conducted with 40 respondents to assess the validity and reliability of the questionnaire items before distribution to the full sample. The pretest used an r table value of 0.312, calculated at a 5% significance level, as the benchmark for validity. Each questionnaire item demonstrated a Pearson correlation coefficient exceeding the r table value, confirming the validity of all items during the pretest.

Following the successful pretest, the validated questionnaire was distributed to the full sample of 206 respondents for the main study. The reliability test, measured using Cronbach's Alpha, indicated that all constructs met the reliability threshold, ensuring the consistency and accuracy of the instrument. These results confirmed the readiness of the questionnaire for use in analyzing the research hypotheses.

For the reliability test in SPSS, researchers found that on the table reliability statistics below, table 4 shows that all of the instruments have the Cronbach's alpha score more than 0.6 and makes all the questionnaire's scales reliable.

Table 4. Result of Reliability's Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.776	14
0.653	10
0.621	10
0.889	14

Source: Tested by researcher on 2024, January 31th

Classical Assumption
Normality Test

Table 5. Result of Normality's Test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

|		Unstandardized Residual
N		206
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	3.05012424
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.044
	Positive	.030
	Negative	-.044
Test Statistic		.044
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.200[c,d]

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Source: Tested by researcher on 2024, January 31th

The table 5 above shows the significant value of the Kolmogorov- Smirnov test (Asimp. Sig 2 tailed) is 0.200 (> 0.05). It means the research data is normally distributed.

Heteroscedasticity Test

Table 6. Result of Heteroscedasticity's Test
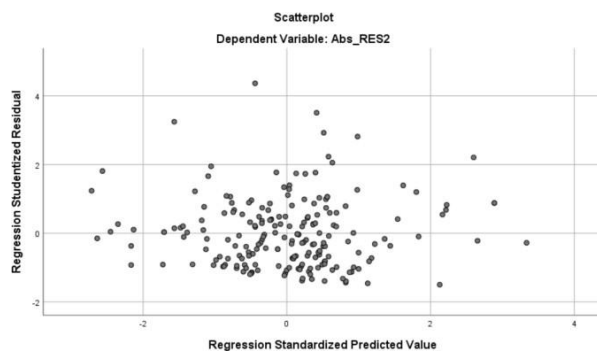
Source: Tested by researcher on 2024, January 31th

The table 6 above shows that the scattering data points are above, below, and around 0. The points also do not collect just above or below. The spread of the data points also does not form a wavy pattern that widens then narrows and widens again so that the spread of data points is not patterned. From the following test results, it can be concluded that there are no symptoms of heteroscedasticity problems.

Hypothesis testing (Path Analysis)

Table 7. Result of Coefficients 1

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	11.491	3.013		3.813	.000
	Self Esteem	.315	.060	.377	5.285	.000
	Media Literacy	.288	.075	.274	3.839	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Self Perception

Source: Tested by researcher on 2024, January 31th

1. The significance value of the self-esteem variable is 0.000 (<0.05), indicating that the self- esteem variable significantly influences the self-perception variable. **(H1 Accepted)**
2. The significance value of the media literacy variable is 0.000 (<0.05), suggesting that the media literacy variable significantly influences the self-perception variable. **(H2 Accepted)**

Table 8. Result of Model Summary 1

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.584[a]	.341	.335	2.99441

a. Predictors: (Constant), Media Literacy, Self Esteem

Source: Tested by researcher on 2024, January 31th

1. The R Square value is known to be 0.341, indicating that the combined influence of the self-esteem and media literacy variables on the self-perception variable is 34.1%.
2. Meanwhile, the value of e1 can be calculated using the formula, as follow;
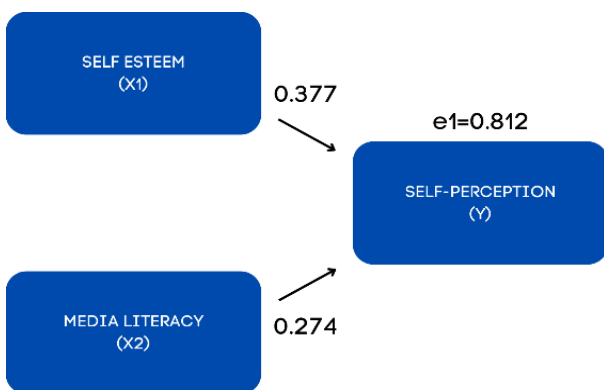
$$\sqrt{1 - 0.341} = 0.812$$

Figure 1. Path Diagram Model 1

Figure 1 displays the score of standardized coefficient beta of self-esteem to self perception (0.377) and media literacy to self perception (0.274) and the value of e1 (0.812)

Table 9. Result of Coefficients 2

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.169	4.088		1.509	.133
	Self Esteem	.171	.083	.141	2.056	.041
	Media Literacy	.398	.102	.260	3.907	.000
	Self Perception	.594	.092	.409	6.463	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Personal Branding

Source: Tested by researcher on 2024, January 31th

1. The significance value of the self-esteem variable is known to be 0.041 (<0.05), concluding that the self-esteem variable significantly influences the personal branding variable. **(H3 Accepted)**
2. The significance value of the media literacy variable is known to be 0.000 (<0.05), leading to the conclusion that the media literacy variable significantly influences the personal branding variable. **(H4 Accepted)**
3. The significance value of the self-perception variable is known to be 0.000 (<0.05), leading to the conclusion that the self-perception variable significantly influences the personal branding variable. **(H5 Accepted)**

Table 10. Result of Model Summary 2

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.684^a	.467	.459	3.92390

a. Predictors: (Constant), Self Perception, Media Literacy, Self Esteem

Source: Tested by researcher on 2024, January 31th

1. The R Square value is known to be 0.467, indicating that the combined influence of the self-esteem, media literacy, and self-perception variables on the personal branding variable is 46.7%.
2. Meanwhile, the value of e1 can be calculated using the formula as follow;
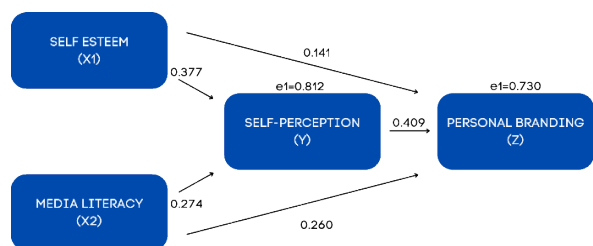
$$\sqrt{1 - 0.467} = 0.730$$

Figure 2. Path Diagram Model 2

Result Interpretation (Path Analysis)

Influence of self-esteem through self-perception toward Personal Branding:

It is known that the **direct influence** of self-esteem on personal branding is **0.141**. Meanwhile, the **indirect influence** of self-esteem through self-perception on personal branding is the product of the *beta* value (self-esteem to self-perception) and the *beta* value (self-perception to personal branding), namely: **0.377 x 0.409 = 0.154.**

Based on the above calculation, it is found that the **direct influence is 0.141,** and **the indirect influence is 0.154.** This means that the indirect influence is **greater** than the direct influence. Therefore, it can be concluded that indirectly, self-esteem through self-perception significantly influences personal branding. **(H6 Accepted)**

Influence of media literacy through self-perception toward Personal Branding:

It is known that the **direct influence** of media literacy on personal branding is **0.260.** Meanwhile, the **indirect influence** of media literacy through self-perception on personal branding is the product of the *beta* value (media literacy to self-perception) and the *beta* value (self-perception to personal branding), namely: **0.274 x 0.409 = 0.112.**

Based on the above calculation, it is found that the **direct influence is 0.260,** and **the indirect influence is 0.112.** This means that the indirect influence is **smaller** than the direct influence. Therefore, it can be concluded that indirectly, media literacy through self-perception does not significantly influence personal branding. **(H7 Rejected)**

Discussions

The sample size for this research consists of 206 individuals, all of whom belong to the Gen-Z demographic and actively use Instagram. The majority of respondents are 24 years old, comprising 34 individuals (16.3%). During the pre-test using SPSS, the validity test indicates that each item in the questionnaires is valid, as the r-value surpasses the critical r-table value (0.312). The reliability test reveals Cronbach Alpha values of 0.776, 0.653, 0.621, and 0.889, all exceeding 0.6, indicating that the data is reliable.

H1 : There is a significant influence of self-esteem toward self-perception among Generation Z.

The study conducted rigorous validity and reliability tests for the self-esteem and self- perception variables, ensuring the accuracy of measurement instruments and stability over time, as assessed by Cronbach's alpha. Classical assumption tests, including normality and Heteroscedasticity tests, were employed to fortify statistical analyses, confirming a normal distribution and homogeneity of variances for robust path analysis results.

The path analysis, a potent statistical technique, explored the direct and indirect influence between self-esteem and self-perception among Generation Z on Instagram. The obtained significance value of 0.000 for the self-esteem variable validated a substantial and statistically significant influence on self-perception, enhancing result credibility.

The profound impact of self-esteem on the self-perception of Generation Z stems from a complex interplay of various factors intricately linked to their digital

upbringing. Born roughly between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, Generation Z has been immersed in an era dominated by digital technology, particularly the widespread use of social media and constant connectivity. This unique environment has significantly molded their self- perception, with a close relationship to their levels of self-esteem (Mărgăriţoiu & Eftimie, 2022).

One key aspect of this influence is the pervasive role of social media. As the first generation to grow up with easy access to various platforms, Generation Z utilizes these platforms as a stage for self-presentation. Individuals share not only their accomplishments but also their vulnerabilities. The constant comparison to carefully curated online personas of peers can exert a considerable impact on self-esteem. Positive online feedback, manifested through likes, comments, and shares, has the potential to elevate self-esteem, while a lack of such validation may induce feelings of inadequacy (Jaciow & Wolny, 2021).

Moreover, the digital landscape has introduced a culture where one's value is sometimes measured by online validation metrics such as the number of followers, likes, or shares. For Generation Z, these metrics can influence their self-perception, as high levels of online validation contribute to heightened self-esteem, while a dearth of it may lead to lower self- esteem (Zilka, 2023).

On the flip side, the prevalence of cyberbullying and online criticism poses a significant challenge to Generation Z's self-esteem. Navigating a virtual world where negative comments and judgments abound, they are exposed to experiences that can profoundly impact their self-perception and overall confidence (Fadilah et al., 2023).

Additionally, as Generation Z undergoes a crucial period of identity formation, the constant exposure to diverse opinions and lifestyles on social media acts as a critical factor. While this exposure can facilitate the process by providing inspiration and diverse perspectives, it can also create confusion and a sense of inadequacy if individuals feel they don't measure up to societal expectations.

In summary, H1 acceptance underscores the nexus between self-esteem and self- perception among Generation Z is intricately woven into the fabric of the digital landscape they inhabit. Social media, online validation, exposure to both positive and negative aspects of virtual interactions, and the ongoing process of identity formation collectively shape how they view themselves and their overall sense of self-worth. Recognizing these dynamics is crucial in fostering healthy online behaviors and facilitating the development of robust self- esteem within this generation.

H2 : There is a significant influence of media literacy toward self-perception among Generation Z.

The acceptance of H2 is supported by the obtained significance value of 0.000 (<0.05) in the path analysis, indicating a substantial and statistically significant influence of media literacy on self-perception. The substantial impact of media literacy on the self-perception of Generation Z is rooted in their capacity to critically analyze and interpret media messages. Media literacy equips individuals with

the skills necessary to deconstruct images, narratives, and information presented across various media platforms, including social media, television, and online content (Arafah et al., 2023).

Media literacy facilitates critical evaluation, enabling Generation Z to scrutinize the content they consume. This heightened critical thinking aids in distinguishing between realistic portrayals and idealized representations in media, thereby reducing the likelihood of internalizing unrealistic beauty standards or social norms.

Media literacy fosters awareness of potential manipulation within media content. This newfound awareness empowers Generation Z to question and resist messages that could contribute to negative self-perception, such as unrealistic body image ideals or unattainable lifestyles.

Moreover, media literacy empowers Generation Z to actively engage in media creation and sharing. By participating in content creation, they can shape their online presence, challenging stereotypical representations and promoting authenticity and self-expression. This active engagement positively influences their self-perception (Esposito & Raymond, 2023).

Additionally, media literacy aids in understanding how social constructs, including gender roles and cultural expectations, are perpetuated through media. This awareness enables Generation Z to navigate media messages more consciously, mitigating the potential impact on their self-perception based on societal norms (Fathurohman et al., 2023).

The acceptance of H2 contributes to the broader understanding of media literacy encompasses an understanding of the potential impact of excessive media consumption on mental health. Equipped with media literacy skills, Generation Z may be more inclined to strike a balance in their media use, leading to healthier self-perception and overall well-being (Stahl & Literat, 2023). In conclusion, the accepted H2 sheds light on the media literacy provides Generation Z with the tools to navigate the media-saturated environment, fostering a more critical and informed approach to the messages they encounter. This, in turn, contributes to a more positive and resilient self-perception.

H3 : There is a significant influence of self-esteem toward personal branding strategies on Instagram among Generation Z.

In addressing H3, which asserts a significant influence of self-esteem on personal branding strategies on Instagram among Generation Z, the study found a significance value of 0.041 (<0.05) in the path analysis, indicating the acceptance of the hypothesis. This discovery adds depth to our understanding of how self-esteem shapes the personal branding choices of Generation Z on Instagram.

The substantial influence of self-esteem on personal branding strategies on Instagram within Generation Z can be traced to the platform's emphasis on visual representation, social validation, and personal expression. Instagram's visually-oriented nature encourages users to meticulously curate and present a visually appealing version of themselves, making it a space where self-esteem holds significant importance in shaping personal branding (Davies, 2020). Instagram's emphasis on a

visual identity aligns with the correlation between higher self- esteem and a more positive and confident portrayal through carefully crafted images. Individuals with elevated self-esteem are often adept at leveraging the visual aspect of the platform to create a compelling and authentic personal brand (Yoanita et al., 2022).

Instagram's metrics, such as likes, comments, and followers, serve as a form of social validation. Higher self-esteem equips individuals to create content that resonates with their audience, garnering positive feedback and reinforcing their positive self-perception through online affirmation (Hidayat et al., 2022).

Moreover, individuals with higher self-esteem are more likely to confidently share their achievements, interests, and experiences on Instagram. This confidence in self-presentation translates into more effective personal branding, as they showcase a strong and authentic personal identity. Additionally, higher self-esteem contributes to more active engagement with followers and a willingness to share personal insights. This interaction not only builds a stronger connection with the audience but also fosters a positive brand image, enhancing the effectiveness of personal branding strategies (Neufeld-Wall, 2023). Furthermore, individuals with higher self-esteem are empowered to take creative risks and innovate in their personal branding efforts. This willingness to stand out and experiment with new strategies contributes to a distinctive and memorable online presence, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of their personal branding.

In summary, the acceptance of H3 signifies the intrinsic connection between self-esteem and personal branding on Instagram among Generation Z is deeply rooted in the platform's visual nature, its emphasis on social validation, and the confidence required to actively shape and present a compelling personal brand. Those with higher self-esteem often navigate these elements more effectively, resulting in stronger and more impactful personal branding strategies.

H4 : There is a significant influence of media literacy toward personal branding strategies on Instagram among Gen-Z.

Addressing H4, which posits a significant impact of media literacy on personal branding strategies on Instagram among Generation Z, the study discovered a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05) in the path analysis, resulting in the affirmation of the hypothesis. The profound impact of media literacy on personal branding strategies on Instagram among Generation Z is rooted in their capacity to critically engage with and navigate the platform's content. Media literacy equips Generation Z with the skills to critically evaluate the authenticity and credibility of content on Instagram. This critical approach directly influences their personal branding strategies, ensuring that the content they create and share aligns with their genuine values and identity. As a result, media-literate individuals can foster a more authentic and trustworthy brand (Harahap et al., 2023).

Media literacy plays a crucial role in helping individuals understand and navigate the prevalent influencer culture on Instagram. Generation Z, armed with media literacy skills, can distinguish between genuine personal expression and promotional content. This ability

allows for more strategic and transparent personal branding efforts, enhancing their effectiveness (Davies, 2020).

Moreover, media literacy includes an understanding of visual communication. Given Instagram's visually-oriented nature, Generation Z can leverage this knowledge to craft visually compelling content that aligns with their personal brand. By strategically using images, filters, and aesthetics, they can convey a consistent and appealing brand image (Szabó & Dani, 2022). Additionally, media literacy empowers individuals to resist and challenge unrealistic beauty standards and lifestyle portrayals often perpetuated on Instagram. This resistance to societal norms influences personal branding strategies, prompting the promotion of more diverse and realistic representations. Such authenticity resonates better with audiences, contributing to a positive brand image. Furthermore, media literacy emphasizes ethical considerations in online communication. Equipped with media literacy, Generation Z is more likely to engage in ethical personal branding practices. This includes ensuring transparency, honesty, and responsible content creation, enhancing trust and credibility in their personal brand (Hidayat et al., 2022). In summary, the acceptance of H4 signifies the influence of media literacy on personal branding strategies on Instagram among Generation Z is intricately tied to their ability to critically assess content, navigate influencer dynamics, leverage visual communication effectively, resist unrealistic standards, and engage ethically. Media literacy empowers individuals to strategically shape their personal brand,

aligning it with authenticity, transparency, and a more nuanced understanding of the visual and social landscape on Instagram.

H5 : There is a significant influence of self-perception on personal branding strategies on Instagram among Generation Z.

In investigating H5, which proposes a significant impact of self-perception on personal branding strategies on Instagram among Generation Z, the study discloses a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05) in the path analysis, resulting in the affirmation of the hypothesis. Instagram serves as a dynamic platform for individuals to construct and showcase their identities. The self-perception of Generation Z act as an essential element in shaping how they want to be perceived by others. Informed by their self-perception, individuals strategically curate content that aligns with their desired personal brand, showcasing aspects of themselves that resonate with their self-image (Trang et al., 2023). Moreover, a positive self-perception often leads to a more confident and authentic expression on Instagram. Generation Z individuals with a positive self-perception are inclined to present a consistent and genuine personal brand, feeling comfortable showcasing their true selves and exhibiting authenticity in their content creation. This authenticity is crucial in navigating the platform's visual landscape (Andhini & Andanawarih, 2023).

Active engagement with followers is another dimension influenced by self-perception. The validated H5 underscores Individuals with a positive self-perception are more likely to engage meaningfully with their audience, building a stronger connection. This interaction, which

can include responding to comments, sharing personal experiences, and creating relatability, contributes significantly to fostering a positive brand image (My et al., 2023).

Furthermore, a positive self-perception contributes to increased confidence in content creation. Generation Z individuals who perceive themselves positively are more likely to experiment with creative and innovative content. This confidence allows them to stand out within the highly visual and competitive landscape of Instagram, leaving a lasting impression on their audience. Additionally, Instagram often involves personal storytelling through images and captions. This aligns with Hypothesis H5, a positive self-perception influences the narrative individuals choose to share, emphasizing achievements, passions, and unique aspects of their lives. This intentional storytelling shapes the personal brand, creating a compelling and relatable online persona that resonates with their self-perception (Davies, 2020).

In summary, the influence of self-perception on personal branding strategies on Instagram among Generation Z is significant because it guides identity construction, promotes authenticity and consistency, drives engagement with followers, boosts confidence in content creation, and shapes the narrative in personal storytelling. Recognizing and leveraging one's self-perception becomes crucial for Generation Z individuals in effectively crafting and communicating their personal brand on this visual- centric social media platform.

H6 : Self-perception mediates the relationship between self-esteem and personal branding strategies on Instagram among Generation Z.

The direct impact of self-esteem on personal branding was determined to be 0.141, indicating a positive relationship. Concurrently, the indirect impact of self-esteem through self-perception on personal branding was calculated by multiplying the beta values (from self-esteem to self-perception) and (from self-perception to personal branding), resulting in 0.154.

The notion that self-perception functions as a mediator in the relationship between self- esteem and personal branding strategies on Instagram among Generation Z underscores the pivotal role of individuals' self-view in translating self-esteem into strategic actions on the platform.

Self-esteem shapes how individuals perceive their own worth and capabilities. This interpretation of self-worth is then filtered and translated by their self-perception within the context of personal branding on Instagram. Positive self-perception may manifest as a more confident and assertive personal brand, while negative self-perception might lead to a more cautious or restrained approach (Trang et al., 2023).

Self-esteem contributes to individuals' confidence in their abilities and values vThis confidence, in turn, influences their self-perception and shapes the alignment of personal values with the content and messages they share on Instagram. A positive self- perception often results in more authentic personal branding that resonates with individual values, while a negative self-perception may lead to incongruent or inconsistent branding efforts. Moreover, self-esteem

influences one's willingness to take risks, impacting creative choices in personal branding strategies. Positive self-perception empowers individuals to take creative risks, experimenting with unique content and approaches on Instagram. Conversely, a negative self-perception might lead to more conservative choices in personal branding to avoid potential scrutiny or judgment (Andhini & Andanawarih, 2023).

Furthermore, self-esteem contributes to the overall confidence individuals have in presenting themselves online. This confidence shapes how they strategically construct their personal brand on Instagram (Mărgăriţoiu & Eftimie, 2022). Positive self-perception fosters a more assertive and proactive approach to personal branding, while negative self-perception may result in a more reserved or guarded online presence.

Additionally, individuals with positive self-perception may feel more comfortable engaging with their audience on Instagram, fostering a sense of connection and community, which is a key component of effective personal branding. In contrast, negative self-perception may hinder engagement, limiting the impact of personal branding efforts. In summary, self-perception acts as a mediator in the relationship between self-esteem and personal branding strategies on Instagram among Generation Z by influencing how individuals interpret their self-worth, align their actions with personal values, impact their risk-taking behavior, shape their confidence in online presence, and affect their engagement and interaction with the audience. Understanding this mediation provides insights into the nuanced ways in which self-esteem translates into intentional personal branding efforts on the platform.

H07 : Self-perception does not mediate the relationship between media literacy and personal branding strategies on Instagram among Generation Z

If the statistical analysis upholds the null hypothesis ($\beta_7 = 0$), indicating that self- perception does not act as a mediating variable, it implies that the influence of media literacy on personal branding strategies is not channeled through changes in self- perception among Generation Z individuals on Instagram. The absence of self- perception as a mediator in the relationship between media literacy and personal branding strategies on Instagram suggests a more direct and independent connection between media literacy and personal branding.

Media literacy entails the ability to critically analyze and comprehend media messages, including those on Instagram (Arafah et al., 2023). Individuals with high media literacy may develop an objective understanding of media representations and branding strategies, irrespective of their personal self-perception. Moreover, media literacy skills may prioritize strategic communication, visual storytelling, and content creation techniques rather than being closely tied to how individuals perceive themselves (Hidayat et al., 2022). Those with advanced media literacy might focus on learning effective communication strategies and branding techniques, emphasizing skill acquisition over shaping online presence based on personal self-perception.

Additionally, media literacy often underscores critical evaluation of content and awareness of media manipulation.

Individuals with high media literacy may adeptly discern strategic branding efforts without necessarily relying on self-perception as a mediator. Personal branding, in this context, may be approached more as a strategic communication task than a self-reflection process (Neufeld-Wall, 2023).

Furthermore, media literacy can make individuals more aware of external influences, societal expectations, and cultural contexts in media (Stahl & Literat, 2023). Personal branding strategies on Instagram may be more influenced by these external factors than by internal self-perception, leading to a diminished mediating role of self-perception in the relationship.

Finally, media literacy encourages a diverse range of personal branding approaches, allowing individuals to adopt various strategies aligned with their goals and target audience. This diversity may be less dependent on individual self-perception and more on the skills and knowledge acquired through media literacy (Fathurohman et al., 2023).

In summary, the lack of mediation by self-perception in the relationship between media literacy and personal branding strategies on Instagram may be attributed to media literacy's emphasis on objective understanding, strategic communication skills, critical evaluation, external influences, and the diverse approaches individuals can adopt in their personal branding efforts. These factors suggest that media literacy can independently shape personal branding strategies without necessarily relying on an individual's self-perception as a mediating factor in this context.

Conclusion and Recomendation

Conclusion

The digital upbringing of Generation Z, immersed in social media and constant connectivity, shapes their self-perception, with social media metrics serving as a significant influencer. Positive online feedback boosts self-esteem, while cyberbullying poses a challenge, impacting self-perception and confidence.

Media literacy significantly influences Generation Z's self-perception by enabling critical evaluation, fostering awareness of manipulation in media content, and empowering active engagement in media creation. Media literacy also aids in understanding societal constructs, contributing to a more informed and balanced approach to media consumption.

Higher self-esteem is intricately linked to personal branding strategies on Instagram, driven by the platform's visual nature and emphasis on social validation. Individuals with elevated self-esteem navigate these elements effectively, resulting in stronger and more impactful personal branding efforts.

Media literacy Holds significant importance plays a pivotal role in personal branding on Instagram among Generation Z by facilitating critical engagement with content, understanding influencer culture, and promoting ethical considerations. Media-literate individuals can create authentic, transparent, and diverse personal brands.

Self-perception significantly influences personal branding strategies on Instagram, guiding identity construction, promoting authenticity, boosting confidence in content creation, and shaping personal storytelling. Recognizing and leveraging

one's self- perception is crucial for effective personal branding.

Self-perception acts as a mediator in the relationship between self-esteem and personal branding on Instagram among Generation Z. Positive self-perception results in a confident and authentic personal brand, while negative self-perception may lead to more cautious or restrained branding efforts.

The absence of self-perception as a mediator in the relationship between media literacy and personal branding on Instagram suggests a more direct and independent connection. Media literacy's emphasis on critical evaluation, strategic communication, and awareness of external influences shapes personal branding efforts without relying on self-perception as a mediating factor.

Recommendation

For Generation Z Individuals:

As members of Generation Z, it is imperative to recognize that your online presence plays a significant role in personal and professional development. Invest time in media literacy programs that provide insights into the impact of social media on self- perception and personal branding. Additionally, consider engaging in self-esteem workshops to build a resilient foundation for your online identity. Authenticity is key on platforms like Instagram, so strive to align your personal brand with your true self.

For Educational Institutions

Educational institutions should not only include media literacy and self-esteem modules but also integrate practical exercises that simulate real-world scenarios on social media platforms. Creating a holistic approach to digital literacy can empower students to critically evaluate content, understand the implications of their online presence, and develop a positive self-image. Furthermore, incorporating guest lectures from industry professionals can provide valuable insights into the expectations of the digital landscape.

For Future Researchers

Future researchers can build on the current study by delving into the nuances of cultural influences on personal branding. Investigate how societal expectations, cultural backgrounds, and regional variations impact the personal branding strategies of Generation Z on Instagram. Additionally, exploring the role of emerging technologies, such as augmented reality or virtual reality, in shaping personal branding could provide valuable insights into the future dynamics of online identity.

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