

Personal Branding Strategies on Social Media Platforms (Case Study of Gaming YouTuber Ari Kulgar and Badminton Influencer @bernika_ave)

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ABSTRACT

Booming profession is intensively utilizing social media on the internet. Choice of job or career as gamer and influencer, is very popular among the young generation of Indonesia. This activity of promoting oneself through social media is called personal branding. This study discusses two subjects who have different careers, but both use social media intensively in their career journeys. The two selected key informants have fulfilled the category of unique and prominent influencers in their industries. The theory used is about impression management by Erving Goffman; then how Montoya's 8 laws of personal branding are applied by both subjects. Study limitations are that the researchers only discuss the "front stage" aspect. While the "backstage" aspect is not discussed, even though this aspect feels the most honest. The method used is a case study, while the main data is obtained through interviews, field observations and of course social media observations. The results of the study show that two different social media have their respective roles and are indeed very distinctive and appropriate to serve these two different types of industries. A gamer prefers YouTube, while an influencer choose TikTok, each to build their personal brands.

KEYWORDS

gamers;
influencers; social
media; personal
brand, TikTok;
YouTube

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of using social media platforms to accelerate careers has become increasingly common today. This article specifically explores why two different digital platforms are chosen for personal branding in distinct fields, focusing on Ari Kriswanto and Bernika Averina. Gamer Ari Kulgar (real name Ari Kriswanto) builds his personal brand through YouTube, while sports influencer Bernika Averina prefers TikTok.

Digital era has changed the way we interact and communicate, allowing users to participate in content creation and now almost impossible to not using social media in career advancement. The influencer phenomenon on social media, especially TikTok, has become very popular. TikTok allows users to create short videos with various creative features. Bernika Averina (@bernika_ave) is a TikTok influencer who focuses on badminton sports content. The popularity of badminton in Indonesia is undeniable. Indonesia has become badminton worlds champions 23 times since the year 1977

(Tempo, 2022). Personal branding is a communication process that makes extensive use of social media features. TikTok provides opportunities to build self-image through creative content. Bernika Averina develops her personal branding within a very specific niche, badminton, while facing challenges such as a limited audience and frequent changes in the TikTok algorithm.

Meanwhile, content creators, especially in the gaming industry, are now the main job for many young generations. The gaming industry in Indonesia is growing rapidly, making it the center of the gaming market in Southeast Asia. Gaming influencers, such as Kairi from the Onic e-sports team, play an important role in promoting games and building communities through platforms such as YouTube. Ari Kulgar, originally an ordinary employee who became a Free Fire gaming YouTuber, managed to improve his economic level quite rapidly through effective personal branding. Maeskina & Hidayat (2022) explain that a content creator is a job to create content in the form of text, images, videos, audio, or a combination of the four elements. These things are created and then shared, especially through digital media such as YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, WordPress, Blogger, and Websites.

Personal branding is the process of creating public perception about various aspects of a person, such as character, skills, or values, and how these things form a positive image in the eyes of the public that can be used as a marketing strategy. (Haroen, 2014). Personal branding covering effective communication strategies uses social media. According to a study by e-marketer, a marketing research firm, around 40% of Gen Z users spend more than three hours per day on the TikTok app (Munoz, 2022). TikTok, as one of the most popular social media platforms, allows individuals to utilize creative features such as background music, filters, and visual effects to build self-image and attract audiences in a short time (Schellewald, 2023). According to Lo & Peng (2022), social media like TikTok should provide equal opportunities for all individuals to build personal branding through consistent and relevant creative content.

Thus, this study asks two key questions: what are the personal branding strategies implemented by Ari Kulgar as a gaming YouTuber and Bernika Averina as a badminton influencer? And why are YouTube and TikTok their main social media choices?

Impression Management Theory, developed by sociologist Erving Goffman in his seminal work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), examines how individuals consciously or unconsciously shape others' perceptions of them. The theory argues that social interactions can be likened to a theatrical performance, where individuals act as actors managing their public image to conform to social expectations (Wijaya, & Kurniadi, 2022). Goffman introduced key concepts such as the "Front Stage" and the "Back Stage," where the Front Stage depicts the self-image presented to the public, while the Back Stage is a place where individuals can relax and be themselves without the pressures of social performance. The essence of impression management lies in its goal-oriented nature; individuals engage in this process to achieve a specific outcome, such as social acceptance, professional success, or personal self-esteem (Hur, & Chun, 2023).

A brand is an identity consisting of a name, symbol, design, color, and others that create value in the minds of the audience. Branding is the process of communicating the

above to build a complex identity of a company or individual. While personal branding is the process of forming a positive image of a person based on the unique character of that individual. Personal branding includes self-understanding, goal setting, consistency, relationship building, and communication techniques (Oktavianingrum et al., 2023). Thus, personal branding strategy involves careful planning to meet the needs of the target audience. Personal branding strategy is a series of processes for creating, positioning, and maintaining a positive image of a person, based on a unique combination of various individual characters, which provides the target audience with an idea of the character depicted through the different narratives provided (Gorbatov et al., 2018).

Montoya & Vandehey (2002; 2006; 2008) wrote the 8 laws in designing personal branding, namely Specialization, Leadership, Personality, Difference, Appearance, Unity, Determination, and Good Intentions; these are the 8 most important aspects of personal branding. Haroen (2014) said that personal branding is a self-identity that can arouse emotional responses from others regarding the qualities and values possessed by the individual. Personal branding is built on the values of life that are embraced and are closely related to the true essence of the individual. This is a personal representation that reflects a person's identity. (Gorbatov, Khapova, & Lysova, 2018).

On the other hand, inconsistency can damage one's personal image, which can ultimately reduce other people's trust and blur their memory of who the person is (Prasetyo & Febriani, 2020). In conclusion, personal branding is a strategy for building a personal brand that creates a positive perception from the public.

Seen from the origin of the word "influence," it simply means someone who has influence. However, the digital era makes the word's meaning continue, so people who have influence are marked by how many followers they have on social media. For that, a new definition emerged that follows the word "influencer." An influencer is a figure on social media who has a large number of followers, and what he says can influence his followers (Masitoh & Adjid, 2022).

Influencers do not have to be celebrities, so everyone can be called an influencer if they have uniqueness, abilities, or content that can inspire their followers (Ishihara & Oktavianti, 2021). Influencing other people's purchasing decisions due to their authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with their followers is the power that an influencer has (Anjani & Irwansyah, 2020). Influencers are classified according to the number of their followers. In the macro influencer category, the followers that must be obtained to be included in this group are above 100,000 followers (Widhyadhana, 2023). Influencers in the macro group usually produce high-quality content and also have a team to support content creation (Pratama, et. al, 2024). In the micro influencer group, the number of their followers is between 10,000 and 100,000 (Athaya & Irwansyah, 2021). Thus, the word "influencer" now means an individual on social media who has a lot of followers and can influence the decisions of his followers through the content he presents on social media.

New media is a digital media that is used by requiring an internet network and has the function of conveying various information and messages (Prasetya & Marina, 2022). The presence of new media enables humans to have virtual interactivity so that they can

distribute and produce multimedia content in it (Mubarok, 2022). Content in new media is characterized by content that can be created by anyone from the general public and is available to those who are interested and can access the internet (Yanuarita & Desnia, 2023).

New media is identical to the use of computers and the internet. The internet acts as a global network that enables communication between locations in various parts of the world. (McQuail, 2020). Van Dijk (2014) stated that social media is a platform that focuses on the designation of user identity and existence. This makes the assumption that social media serves as a bridge between users and social society (Nasrullah, 2019). In addition, users can also upload their videos to YouTube servers and share them with people around the world (Nasrullah, 2019). The more views and subscribers, the more income a YouTuber will get. Starting from advertisements that can be monetized, or endorsements that collaborate with brands (Abugaza, Social Media Politica, 2014). Live stream is a feature of YouTube that allows players to share their gameplay with their 19 subscribers. YouTube also plays an important role in broadcasting live e-sports game tournaments (Nasrullah, 2019).

Social media refers to a variety of platforms that utilize the internet to facilitate users in creating, collaborating, and engaging actively (Nabila, 2022). YouTube is clearly different from TikTok. TikTok is a platform for creating short videos, generally designed to entertain with various audio and visual effects (Kulaga, 2024). According to the *We Are Social* survey report in 2023, Indonesia ranks as the country with the second largest number of TikTok users in the world, reaching a total of 106.5 million (Padilah et al., 2022). One reason TikTok has become such a popular trend is that it allows users to freely express themselves without the need to maintain profile aesthetics as on Instagram (Ruth & Cahyaningrum, 2020).

METHOD

This research uses a constructivist paradigm, which allows researchers to observe subjects in depth to produce clear interpretations, and uses a flexible qualitative-holistic approach that allows researchers to explore deeper meanings about how influencers build their personal branding on two different social media. The holistic approach focuses on collecting and analyzing data comprehensively and contextually, allowing researchers to understand the phenomenon in depth without dividing it into separate parts. The method used is a case study of two personal brands in two very different industries. This study uses two types of data, namely primary data, obtained directly through observation and interviews. Secondary data, obtained indirectly from second or third sources as supporting data such as literatures and articles.

One of the subjects, Bernika Averina, was formerly a badminton athlete but shifted her career path to become an influencer after sustaining an injury. She is considered one of the first women in Indonesia to use TikTok to build her image and popularize badminton. Beginning her content creation in 2021, Bernika has since gained over

120,000 TikTok followers. Her background as a badminton player became the primary inspiration for developing her personal branding. She chose to focus on educational content while sustaining her passion for sports through digital creation. Notably, she also secured sponsorship from the sports brand Felet. On TikTok, she is known by the username “CiBer.”

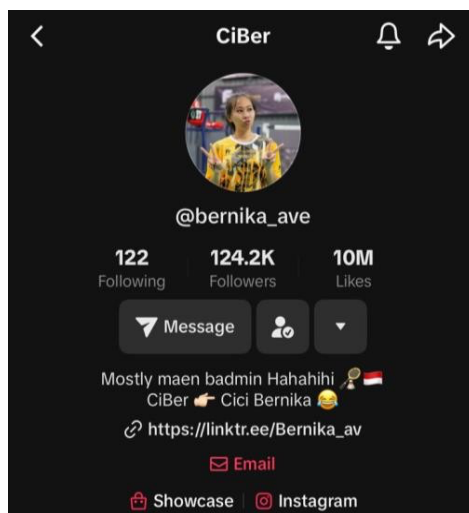


Figure 1. Tiktok profile @bernika_ave

Source: Bernika Averina's TikTok Social Media

The next personal brand examined is gaming YouTuber Ari Kulgar (real name Ari Kriswanto). He began his career as an employee at Garena and later became a Free Fire influencer. The name “Kulgar” is a creative abbreviation of *Kuli Garena* (*Garena worker*). Free Fire, developed by PT. Garena Indonesia, is a battle royale game that brings together up to 50 players on a map to compete until only one winner remains. Ari Kulgar currently has 6.45 million subscribers on YouTube. His main content focuses on Free Fire, including information leaks, reviews, stories about game masters, surprise diamond giveaways, and vlogs. Some of his viral videos, such as distributing diamonds to street children, have reached more than 12 million views.



Figure 2. Ari Kulgar's Instagram Profile

Source: Instagram @kriswantoari

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The concept of Goffman's dramaturgy is clearly displayed by both subjects of this study. Although they occur in two different industries, both content creators, the gamer and the badminton influencer, design their social media content carefully. The goal is also clear: they want their respective social media content to influence the perception and even actions of their audience. The front stage for Ari Kulgar is the YouTube page, while for Bernika Ave it is the TikTok account. Both Bernika and Ari have even created their own stage names CiBer and Ari Kulgar.

YouTuber Gamer

From Montoya's 8 concepts of forming personal branding, Ari Kulgar has practiced all of these concepts, including specialization, leadership, personality, differences, visibility, unity, determination, and good name. Although overall it is said to be good, inconsistency in creating content will be immediately noticed by followers and even result in losing followers. This happened when Ari gave the wrong game information and ended up losing around 300 thousand of his followers. Interesting and good-quality content is not enough to be an indicator of success. A content creator must also have strong and authentic personal branding in front of his viewers.

The law of leadership, Ari Kulgar shows an interesting and inspiring character, able to lead online discussions and motivate his followers to be more actively involved in the content created. The law of specialization, Ari Kulgar focuses on free fire gaming content, building a reputation as a trusted source of information among game enthusiasts. This specialization strengthens his position in the gamer community. The law of distinctiveness, Ari Kulgar's uniqueness lies in his collaboration with Ridho and the ability to provide relevant leaks and hacks. His cheerful and outspoken character is also part of his appeal. The law of unity, Ari Kulgar creates harmony between his public image and personal behavior, maintains consistency in the messages conveyed, interacts positively with the audience, and portrays himself authentically. The law of persistence, Ari Kulgar shows steadfastness in his career journey as a gaming YouTuber, maintains enthusiasm and joy in content, and consistency in maintaining a personal branding strategy. The law of personality, Ari Kulgar has succeeded in building a strong personal branding by displaying an authentic and relatable personality. His speaking style and energy make him easily accepted by the audience. The law of visibility, Ari Kulgar increases the visibility of his content among gamers through consistency in posting content and continuous activity on social media. The law of goodwill, Ari Kulgar emphasizes the importance of listening to criticism and suggestions from the audience to improve the quality of content, creating loyalty among the audience.

Ari Kulgar has successfully built a strong personal brand as a Free Fire game master through effective impression management. He recognizes the importance of self-image in increasing visibility and number of followers. His personal branding strategy includes avoiding affiliations with Garena competitors, listening to criticism, and leveraging negative issues for virality. The mistake of leaking the update date once

threatened his credibility, but he managed to restore his image with reflexivity and a promise not to repeat the mistake. The principle of specialization in the Free Fire game strengthens his personal brand, despite the economic disadvantages of affiliate restrictions - meaning that he does not endorse other game brands.

YouTube was chosen as the main platform because of its suitable target market and complete multimedia features. The “live streaming” feature with horizontal or landscape format is considered more capable of sharing gaming content. YouTube also has a reminder feature, where followers who activate this button will automatically receive a notification when there is new content from their chosen channel. He still has other social media channels, but the function of other social media is only to promote the main channel: YouTube. Ari Kulgar managed to reach 1 million subscribers in three months, showing the effectiveness of this platform in developing personal branding. And this achievement contributes to economic boost from just an ordinary employee of PT.Garena company to an influencer or YouTuber.



Figure 3. Ari Kulgar's Live Streaming
Source: Instagram @kriswantoari

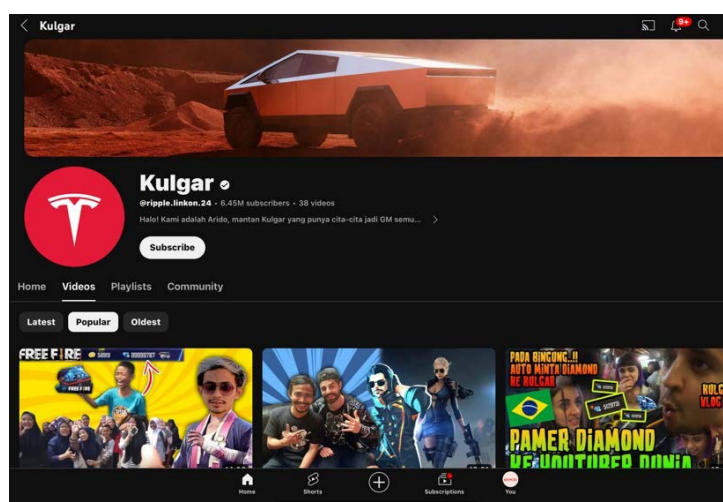


Figure 4. Ari Kulgar YouTube Channel

Source: https://www.YouTube.com/channel/UCBcREx7wgTLTij_VKfgOEDQ

TikTok Influencer

The second analysis is the personal branding strategy used by Bernika Averina, a badminton sports influencer on TikTok. Back to the theory of The Eight Laws of Personal Branding from Peter Montoya and Tim Vandehey (2002) and the concept of The 3Cs of Personal Branding (credibility, consistency, and clarity are three important elements in building personal branding on social media) from the journal "The Building of Online Personal Branding" (Avinash, et. al, 2022).

Bernika uses her identity as a Chinese woman who is able to play badminton with a unique and attractive style. Her stage name, "Ciber," reflects her cultural roots and the cheerful character she displays, making her more memorable to the audience. Her "front stage" focuses on badminton education while also promotes a commercial brand that endorses her. She chose TikTok as her main platform because it has a large audience and long-term potential for content creators.

Uniqueness and Specialization, Bernika has expertise in badminton that gives her an edge over her peers who also create sports content. She has knowledge of the correct techniques and ways to play, which makes her content more informative and useful for her followers. Bernika has managed to create interesting and relevant content, making her a well-known influencer in the badminton niche. Audience Interaction, Bernika maintains active engagement with her followers by replying to comments on their posts and doing live streaming also on TikTok. Her followers feel connected to the content Bernika creates, especially because of the relevance and uniqueness she displays. Collaboration with brands, Bernika started working with Felet in 2022, who saw great potential in her as a brand ambassador. Her product review videos, especially about the TJ Power Control racket, gained a lot of attention and showed that Bernika is an active and diligent content creator.

As for the Montoya & Vandehey theory, the law of specialization, Bernika leverages her expertise as a former badminton athlete to create informative yet entertaining content. Her specialization in the badminton niche gives her a competitive advantage, as she is able to provide added value to her audience by sharing her technical skills, experiences, and inspiring stories. The law of leadership, Bernika positions herself as a leader in the badminton niche, especially on the TikTok platform. She has succeeded in building strong likability and has a big influence on her followers, especially in terms of their decision to choose badminton as a hobby or physical activity. The law of personality, Bernika shows her cheerful personality and friendly attitude which is seen in every content she creates.

Authenticity is a key element in Bernika's personal branding, creating trust from the audience because they feel connected to an authentic and unpretentious figure. The law of distinctiveness, Bernika's uniqueness lies in the combination of educational content about badminton techniques, her cheerful personality, and her light and inclusive communication approach. Her distinctive communication style, such as the greeting "*warga ciber yang budiman*" and the jargon "*uhuy*," create an identity that is easy to remember and close to her audience. The law of visibility, Bernika maintains a consistent and active presence on TikTok, which helps increase her visibility. The law of unity,

Bernika maintains consistency in the message, style, and values carried across all platforms and contexts. This unity makes Bernika's personal brand easily recognizable and provides a consistent experience to her audience. The law of persistence, Bernika shows persistence in building her image as an influencer in the world of badminton by regularly producing relevant and quality content. This persistence is very important in the competitive world of social media, where algorithms often prioritize creators with consistent activity. The law of goodwill, Bernika successfully implements this principle by sharing content that is not only entertaining, but also provides useful added value. Honesty in every collaboration and product review helps build her credibility in the eyes of followers, who feel that they can trust what Bernika says.

The nature of branding is consistency. Bernika shows consistency in her content creation and routine posts on TikTok. This consistency not only affects TikTok's algorithm but also strengthens audience engagement. TikTok offers a huge opportunity because its engaged audience, especially Gen Z, is very responsive to fresh and unique content. Gen Z is indeed Bernika's target audience.

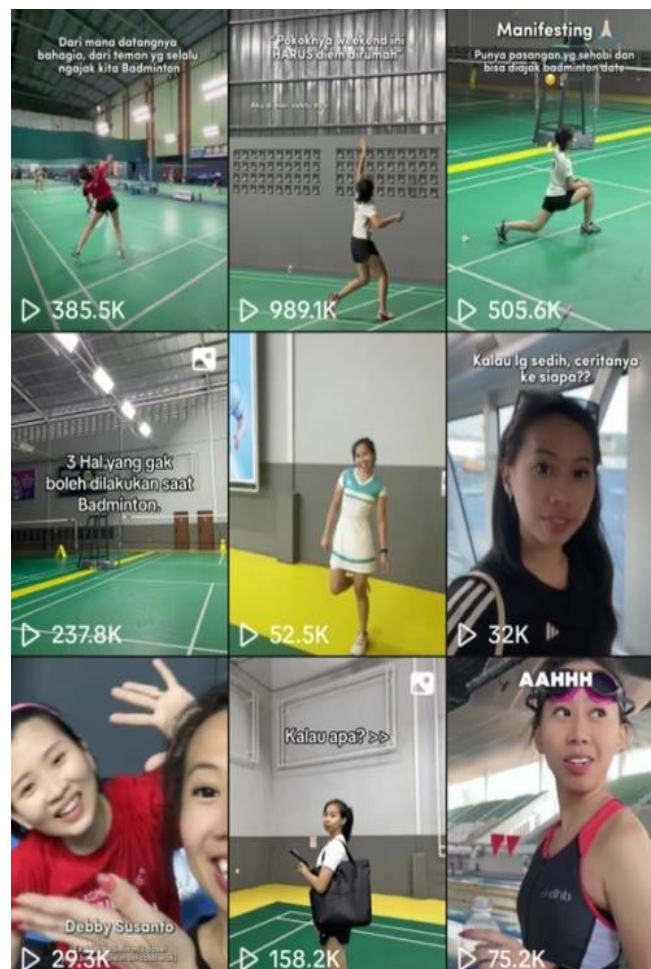


Figure 4. Bernika Averina's TikTok content

Source: Author's Personal Document

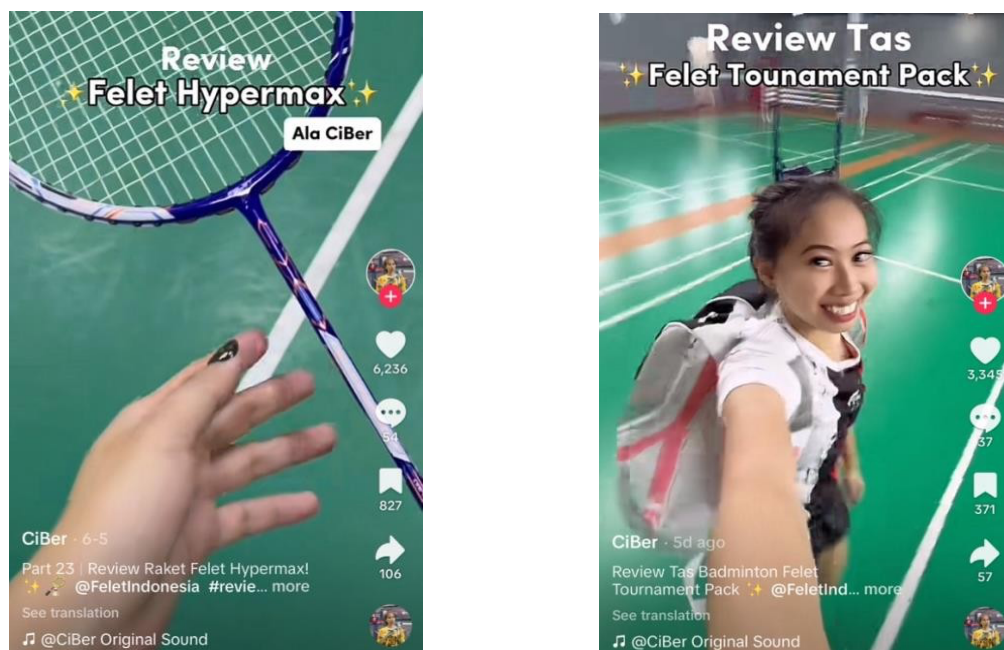


Figure 5. Bernika Averina's TikTok content
Source: Tiktok Social Media @bernika_ave

Meanwhile, from the perspective of the “3Cs of Personal Branding”, Credibility; Bernika builds credibility through integrity and honesty in conveying information to the audience. She does not only focus on product promotion, but also shares useful knowledge related to badminton. Consistency, Bernika shows consistency in the routine of creating and posting content on TikTok. This consistency not only affects the TikTok algorithm but also strengthens audience engagement. Meanwhile, TikTok also has a special feature - a yellow basket that allows for buying and selling after watching content. Clarity, Bernika has succeeded in applying this principle in her content in a simple and easy-to-understand way. Clarity in Bernika's personal branding is also reflected in her consistency in using distinctive elements in each video, such as the taglines "uhuy" and "good Cyber citizens".

Sociologist Erving Goffman came up with the Impression Management Theory, his seminal work “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life” (1959), discussing how individuals consciously or unconsciously shape others' perceptions of them. This theory argues that social interactions can be likened to a theatrical performance, where individuals act as actors who manage their public image to conform to social expectations (Wijaya, & Kurniadi, 2022). Key concepts such as "Front Stage" and "Back Stage" were coined by Goffman stating that the Front Stage describes the self-image presented to the public, while the Back Stage is a place where individuals can relax and be themselves without the pressure of social performance (Hur, & Chun, 2023). The fact that two influencers are using social media to boost their careers and increase economic standard of living, are the manifestation of their “front stage”. This study was only able to discuss the front stage aspect of the above two influencers. This study limitation is in the back stage which has not been discussed. Researchers only can observe the lives of content creators when using social media. By nature, social media platforms only serve the front

stage aspects. This includes the results of social media observations, the results of interviews with key informants and other informants, and field observations when the two influencers created content.

CONCLUSION

The essence of impression management lies in its goal-oriented nature; individuals engage in this process to achieve certain outcomes, such as social acceptance, professional success, or personal self-esteem (Hur, & Chun, 2023). Influencing other people's purchasing decisions due to their authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with their followers is the power that an influencer has (Anjani & Irwansyah, 2020). The goal of these two influencers is of course for the audience to take the expected action, for Ari Kulgar it is to keep gamers loyal to Free Fire game. YouTube has a large user base and fits Ari Kulgar's target demographic, namely teenagers aged 13-17 years who are the majority of Free Fire gamers. This platform allows gaming content to reach the right audience effectively.

YouTube supports various content formats such as long videos, live streaming, and shorts, which are perfect for gaming content. The live streaming feature allows direct interaction with viewers, strengthening the relationship between creators and audiences. YouTube provides a transparent monetization system through advertising, sponsorships, and features like Super Chat during live streaming. Revenue can also be earned from endorsements and brand partnerships, which increase with the number of views and subscribers. YouTube's algorithm helps viral content be more easily discovered by new users, increasing channel exposure and growth. Ari Kulgar managed to reach 1 million subscribers in just three months, demonstrating the effectiveness of this platform in building personal branding. YouTube is considered more professional than other platforms like TikTok or Instagram, especially for educational or informative content such as game leaks and playing tips. This strengthens Ari Kulgar's image as an informative and trustworthy "Game Master". Ari Kulgar builds an image as a "Kuli Garena" who works hard for maintaining the Free Fire community. YouTube supports this narrative with a video format that allows for deeper and more authentic storytelling.

Meanwhile, Bernika Ave's content is not only inspiring and informative, but also it aims to get the audience to purchase the products she reviews. The strategies used online often reflect those identified by Goffman, but are reinforced by the visual and interactive nature of digital communication (Hur, & Chun, 2023). The choice of different social media for these two influencers is a strategic decision where for gamers involving more than 1 person gaming, YouTube is the right platform for implementing personal branding. However, badminton influencer Bernika Ave prefers TikTok because it is able to convey the message she gives with various types of content: text, photos and videos and even encourages the audience to make purchases. TikTok has a very large number of users, especially from Gen Z. Indonesia is even the country with the second largest number of

TikTok users in the world (106.5 million users). Gen Z is known to be very responsive to fresh, unique, and fast content, making TikTok an ideal platform to reach them.

TikTok allows users to express themselves freely without the aesthetic pressures of Instagram. Bernika uses this feature to showcase her cheerful personality and distinctive style, such as the greeting “good CiBer citizens” and the jargon “uhuy”. TikTok provides various features such as background music, visual effects, and filters that strengthen the storytelling and visual appeal of the content. These features help Bernika build a strong and memorable image. The TikTok algorithm strongly supports creative content to go viral, even from accounts that do not yet have many followers. This provides a great opportunity for new creators to grow quickly. TikTok allows active interaction through comments and live streaming, which Bernika uses to build closeness with her followers. This interaction strengthens audience loyalty and increases engagement. TikTok allows Bernika to specifically target the badminton sports niche, which may be less optimal on other platforms. Educational and entertaining content about badminton is more easily accepted and disseminated on TikTok. TikTok has become Bernika's main platform for working with brands like Felet, who see great potential in her creative content. Product review videos on TikTok have proven effective in reaching audiences and building trust.

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