Bambang Pacul and the Personal Branding Approach on Instagram to Win the 2024 House of Representatives of Indonesia Republic (DPR RI)

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Abstract

Analyzing the personal branding strategies that politicians utilize on social media, particularly Instagram, is vital in today's political landscape. This study explores the branding techniques of Bambang Wuryanto, widely known as Bambang Pacul, a member of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) who was re-elected to the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI) for the 2024 term from the Central Java IV electoral district, securing 118,394 votes as reported by the General Elections Commission (KPU) on March 12, 2024. In modern political campaigns, social media plays a pivotal role, with Instagram being a key platform. This research adopts a qualitative methodology to analyze Bambang Pacul's Instagram account (@komandanpatjul) through the lens of Peter Montoya's personal branding theory, which comprises eight essential concepts for establishing a positive public image. The study investigates his Instagram posts, captions, interactions, and overall digital presence to evaluate his branding efforts. The analysis reveals how Montoya's principles—such as authenticity, consistency, visibility, and distinctiveness—are manifested in Bambang Pacul's online persona. Findings indicate that his Instagram strategy effectively incorporates these principles, resulting in a cohesive and engaging personal brand. His curated content highlights political accomplishments, personal values, and connections with constituents while fostering audience trust. This research deepens the understanding of political communication in the digital era, illustrating how politicians can leverage social media to enhance their personal branding and achieve electoral success, ultimately offering frameworks for optimizing digital branding efforts.

Keywords: Bambang Pacul; Personal branding; Instagram; PDIP Politician; Political communication strategy

1. Introduction

The rise of social media platforms and online news sources has fundamentally changed the way politicians communicate with the public (Zeitzoff, 2017). In today's digital age, a strong online presence is essential for reaching and engaging with voters. Politicians must carefully craft their personal brand to resonate with their target audience and effectively convey their message. The success of Bambang Pacul in utilizing digital branding strategies highlights the importance of adapting to the changing landscape of political communication. As technology continues to advance, politicians must continually evolve their digital branding efforts to remain relevant and competitive in the public eye.

For example, Bambang Pacul used social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter to connect with younger voters and share his policy initiatives in a visually appealing way. Politicians must be authentic, engaging, and relevant on social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter to connect with Generation Z voters. They should implement a balanced strategy on Twitter that includes both professional and private aspects of their lives to increase interest in their party and intention to vote for them. Quality content and interaction with constituents can lead to free advertising through retweets and favorites, expanding their reach on social media. By using targeted ads and engaging with followers through live Q&A sessions, Pacul was able to build a strong online community that supported his campaign. This personalized approach to digital branding ultimately helped him secure a landslide victory in the election.

Some common tactics include engaging with followers through interactive content, sharing behind-the-scenes glimpses into their daily lives, and leveraging influencers to expand their reach. By strategically utilizing these tactics, politicians can humanize their image, build trust with voters, and ultimately increase their chances of success in elections (Gordillo-Rodriguez & Bellido-Perez, 2021). Additionally, monitoring and analyzing data on social media engagement can provide valuable insights into what resonates with their audience and inform future branding strategies. Overall, the use of social media as a tool for personal branding in politics is essential in today's digital age, and politicians must be willing to adapt and innovate to stay ahead of the curve.

For example, a politician running for office could collaborate with popular social media influencers to create engaging content that showcases their personality and values (Audrezet et al., 2020). By sharing behind-the-scenes glimpses of their campaign trail and interacting with followers in real-time, the politician can establish a genuine connection with voters and differentiate themselves from competitors.

Exploring the role of authenticity and transparency in successful digital branding strategies for politicians. By showcasing their true values and beliefs, politicians can gain trust and loyalty from their audience. In today's digital age, authenticity and transparency are essential components of successful branding strategies for politicians. Voters are increasingly seeking genuine and relatable candidates who are open and honest about their beliefs and actions. By embracing authenticity and transparency, politicians can build trust with their audience and create a strong and loyal following. This approach not only humanizes the candidate but also helps them connect on a deeper level with voters, ultimately increasing their chances of success in the political arena. In addition to authenticity and transparency, politicians should also focus on cultivating a strong online presence through social media platforms (Arshad & Khurram, 2020).

Discussing the challenges and ethical considerations associated with leveraging social media for political gain. One of the main challenges of using social media for political gain is the potential for misinformation and fake news to spread rapidly (Shu et al., 2017). Politicians must be vigilant in fact-checking information before sharing it with their followers to maintain credibility and trust (Ceron et al., 2021). Additionally, there are ethical considerations surrounding the use of targeted advertising and data mining to influence voters. It is important for politicians to be transparent about how they are using social media and to prioritize honesty and integrity in their online interactions. By addressing these challenges and ethical considerations head-on, politicians can effectively leverage social media as a powerful tool for engaging with constituents and driving positive change (Sheikh, 2024).

However, a detailed counterexample to this would be the Cambridge Analytica scandal, where politicians used targeted advertising and data mining to influence voters without being transparent about their methods (Bennett & Lyon, 2019). This breach of trust eroded credibility and integrity in online interactions, highlighting the importance of fact-checking information and being transparent with social media usage.

Social Media

Social media is described as an online media channel that allows people to interact, discuss, and share opinions, experiences, and perceptions with others. (Turban et al cited in Al-Haddad et al., 2023). Social media is the new era for customer interaction and engagement over the Internet. Customers use social media to generate their content, connect with others, and shop online. (Birkbeck cited in Al-Haddad et al., 2023). Barker et al stated that social media is widely used as a tool for marketing and is called social media marketing which positively influences customers towards a brand, company, service/product, or individual (Al-Haddad et al., 2023). According to Heiss et al, Karlsen and Enjolras, Walter and Ophir, social media is an important tool that offers a direct connection between candidates and voters (Boulianne & Larsson, 2023).

Social media platforms have transformed political communication by providing politicians with a direct and interactive channel to engage with voters. Social media is an internet-based platform or service that allows users to interact, share content, and engage in two-way communication with others online. It includes a variety of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc.(Kaplan & Haenlein as cited in Kurniasih & Setianti, 2024).

Social media has become a crucial tool in political communication, enabling politicians to connect with voters directly and effectively. These platforms offer opportunities to enhance transparency, accountability, and participation in the democratic process. Instagram, in particular, stands out as one of the most effective advertising channels, with 90% of users following at least one company on the platform (Levesque & Pons, 2023).
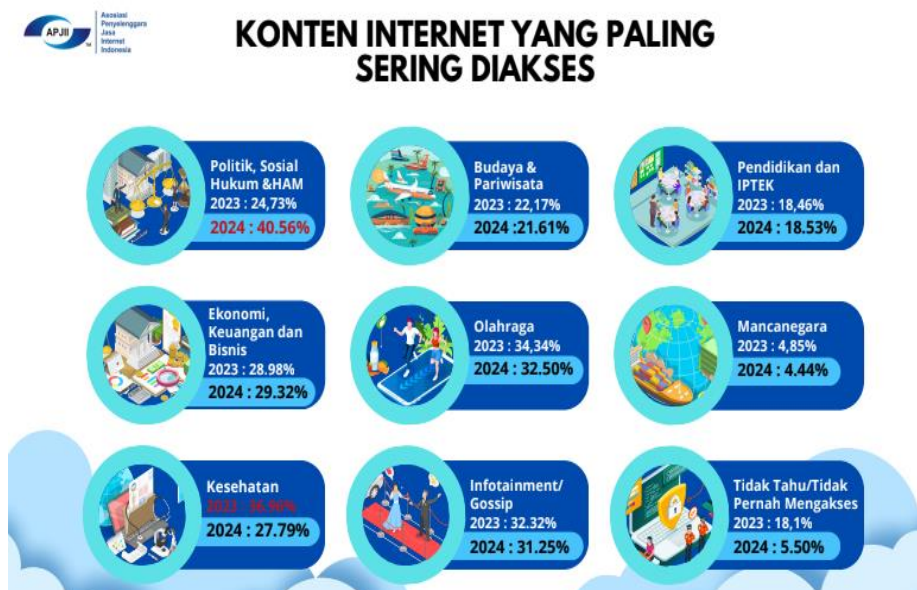
Figure 1. Content with the theme of Politics, Social Issues, Law, and Human Rights ranks first among the most frequently accessed by internet users in Indonesia. (Source: Survei Penetrasi Internet Indonesia APJII 2024

Social media, much like a double-edged sword, offers benefits such as connection and political participation but also carries risks like the spread of misinformation and the potential for addiction. Users need to be prudent and critical in their use of social media, being mindful of its risks while responsibly maximizing its benefits. It is essential to be selective about the information one consumes and shares in order to prevent misuse and protect mental health.
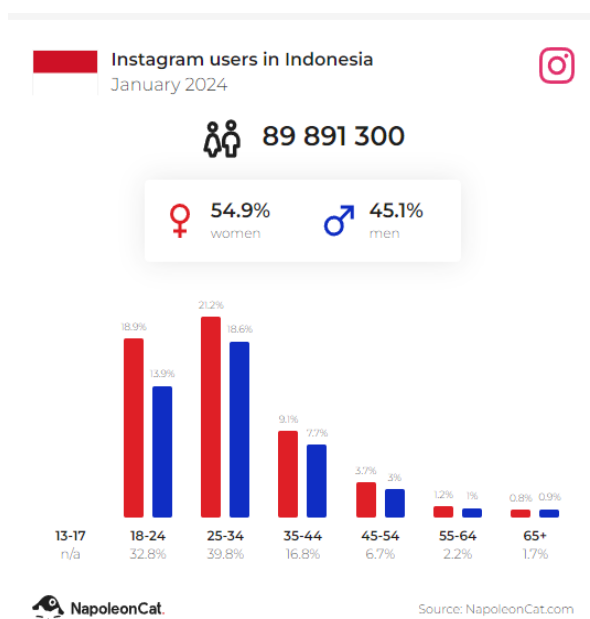

Figure 2. Table of Instagram users in Indonesia January 2024

The Instagram social media platform has experienced rapid growth in Indonesia. As of January 2024, there were 89,891,300 Instagram users in the country, representing 31.9% of the total population. Notably, the majority of users are female, accounting for 54.9% compared to 45.1% male users.

The platform is predominantly used by younger generations, particularly those aged 25 to 34, with 35.8 million users in this age group. The female dominance on Instagram is even more pronounced among users aged 18 to 24, where there are 12.5 million more female users than male.

This data illustrates that Instagram has become a popular and relevant platform for Indonesian society, especially among women and young adults. This presents significant opportunities for marketers and businesses to effectively reach their target audience through this platform.

Instagram influences student political participation at Jakarta State University (Aisya et al as cited in Al-Haddad et al., 2023). Hendrawan et al as cited in (Al-Haddad et al., 2023) mentioned that Instagram is used as a tool for social transformation, conducting political campaigns, political news, and propaganda. Participation and socialization through Instagram affect eWOM and engagement.

Instagram can be used as a medium by politicians to convey political information. Instagram's effectiveness in conveying information has been tested through research (Arini & Sudradjat as cited in Kurniasih & Setianti, 2024), in the use of social media by the Instagram account @hanan_attaki on preaching content that conveys information about Islamic teachings. However, according to Zempi et al, research is needed that can describe the ability of the public to choose the information on social media correctly (Kurniasih & Setianti, 2024)

Ma'aruf & Putra in their research discussed the personal branding strategy used by President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) on social media Instagram. They conducted the research with the aim of finding out whether Joko Widodo's use of Instagram contributed to the development of his personal branding among first-time voters in the 2019 general election in Indonesia. This research shows that Joko Widodo's Instagram account successfully communicated with first-time voters in the 2019 General Election and contributed to the development of his personal branding (Kurniasih & Setianti, 2024).

According to Dewi Haroen, personal branding is the process of forming public perception of aspects that a person has, including personality, abilities or values, and how all of this creates a positive perception from the public which can ultimately be used as a marketing tool (Jamil et al., 2023). Meanwhile, Personal Branding according to Hubert K. Rampersad is a fun and systematic way to become clearer and more certain as a person, not only in the eyes of others, but also in your own thoughts. An example of giving a name to someone is the smallest part of Personal Branding, but more than that, someone is required to be a professional person in their field, so that to get to what is desired is very easy if the brand has been built in public perception (cited in Jamil et al., 2023).

Thomas Tokan Pureklolon wrote that political communication is an object of political science study because the messages expressed in the communication process are characterized by politics, namely related to the political power of the state, government, and also the activities of communicators in their positions as actors in political activities. These messages are usually written through captions or information that explains everything related to various political activities through the photos posted on Instagram accounts, of course the captions on the photos have certain political messages (cited in Jamil et al., 2023)

The development of digital technology through the use of the internet has now been packaged in political products. Where the role of political parties has begun to use the internet as a political marketing activity. One of them is the use of Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and video streaming accounts (Hayat et al; Rahmah; Yu & Liu cited in Boestam et al., 2023).

In addition, political communication can provide an understanding of the importance of the relationship between communication functions, political science, culture and social psychology. Likewise, political actors in the current era will find it very easy to carry out virtual political communication activities to remote villages. The existence of this multimedia facility must be integrated through new media, so that in the end it can be in line with the implementation of democracy as a political principle that is generally used in various countries (Aryesta & Selmi; Hayat et al.; Safitri cited in Boestam et al., 2023).

Aaker; Keller & Swaminathan stated that personal branding and political communication are becoming increasingly important in the digital era, especially on social media platforms such as Instagram. Branding communication encompasses a variety of strategies and tactics used by individuals or organizations to build and manage their brands. It involves the creation and dissemination of messages, visual elements, and experiences that shape brand perceptions and associations (cited in Kurniasih & Setianti, 2024). Personal branding refers to the process of building and promoting an individual's brand identity. It involves managing one's reputation, values, skills, and unique characteristics to differentiate oneself from others (Kapferer cited in Kurniasih & Setianti, 2024). According to Duffy & Pooley, personal branding has become an important strategy for individuals in dealing with precarity in today's work and social environments. In the midst of increasingly fierce competition and rapid economic change, individuals must build a strong personal brand to differentiate themselves and gain opportunities and benefits. Speed et al, wrote that through strong personal branding, politicians can build trust, familiarity and emotional ties with voters. (cited in Kurniasih & Setianti, 2024). Designing a strong personal brand according to McNally & Speak involves considering several key characteristics, namely; distinctive, relevant, and consistent.

Showing interactions in posts is beneficial for post engagement. By interacting with others online, politicians can show examples of themselves expressing "authenticity" and "digital intimacy" (Kreiss et al. cited in Boulianne & Larsson, 2023), which should reduce the "psychological distance" (Vergeer dan Hermans cited in Boulianne & Larsson, 2023) between them and the voters.

Tosepu stated that the analysis of political communication on social media networks (especially Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) is facilitated by the interconnectedness of visual, textual and verbal images (cited in Dhanny Susetyawidianta and Galang Geraldy, 2024). Political communication is a way of conveying political messages that aim to influence the public. The presence of social media is certainly used as a communication medium by the government, political parties, activists and professionals. Social media is an important part for political parties to provide information to the public about their political activities. Social media is used by political parties for political interests, because this media has the power to influence various audiences. (Alam cited in Dhanny Susetyawidianta Dan Galang Geraldy, 2024). The identity of a celebrity politician is an attempt by politicians to gain sympathy and support from the people who have the right to vote for them or their constituents by adopting celebrity culture in a performative manner (Ekman & Widholm cited in Purwaramdhona et al., 2024).

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2. Method

In this study, the focus is on the analysis of Bambang Pacul's Instagram account (@komandanpatjul). The approach that will be used is a qualitative approach, which will allow for an in-depth study of the content and messages conveyed by the account. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to better understand the characteristics and objectives of the account, as well as its impact on its audience.

This study will also adopt Peter Montoya's personal branding theory as an analytical framework. This theory consists of eight main concepts that cover various strategies for building and managing a positive personal image. These concepts will be used as a tool to evaluate how Bambang Pacul uses the Instagram platform to build and strengthen his identity and image in the eyes of the public.

Thus, this study aims to investigate the extent to which Bambang Pacul's Instagram account applies personal branding concepts in the content shared and interactions with his followers. This analysis is expected to provide deeper insight into how personal branding strategies can be applied in the context of social media, as well as their impact on the perceptions and responses of his audience.

3. Result and Discussions

Social media, especially Instagram, has become an important tool for politicians and businesses to communicate with their audiences and achieve their goals. Strong scientific support suggests that social media offers significant opportunities to increase political participation, raise brand awareness, and drive sales.

Figure 3. View of Bambang Pacul's Instagram account (@komandanpatjul)

Bambang Pacul's Instagram account (@komandanpatjul) has been on the platform since May 2023. The identity of the account owner, Bambang Wuryanto, is reflected in the bio which is presented with the Javanese phrase "Ngelmu iku, kelakone kanti laku. Lekase kalawan kas, tegese kas nyantosani - sedya budya pangekes ing dur angkara." The message emphasizes the importance of knowledge and effective action in living life. Through this bio, Bambang Pacul implicitly communicates to his followers that knowledge without real action has no deep meaning.

In this account, although the following activity is limited to two accounts, namely @puanmaharani and @pdipjateng, the account (@komandanpatjul was able to attract the attention of 66,787 followers. This shows that the messages and content conveyed by Bambang Pacul have significant appeal to most Instagram users. From here, it can be concluded that this account may have a significant impact in the context of the social platform, both as a source of inspiration, information, and discussion. In an era where social media has become an important means of communicating and interacting, accounts such as (@komandanpatjul show that messages conveyed through this platform can reach a wide audience. By conveying deep and compelling values through the bio and content shared, the account proves that effective communication does not only rely on the number of followers, but also the quality of the message conveyed.

Instagram is not only used for entertainment and business, but also used for political campaigns (Aisya et al cited in Al-Haddad et al., 2023). Instagram is used for political participation during elections to share news, information, and candidate profiles on the platform (Hendrawan et al cited in Al-Haddad et al., 2023). Currently, out of one billion internet users, 24% utilize Instagram. More than 40% of these users are young people under the age of 24 (Waas et al cited in Al-Haddad et al., 2023). More than 90% of Instagram users are under the age of 35, using the platform primarily for entertainment. Approximately 49% use it daily, 32% several times a day, 24% on a weekly basis, and only 26% use it less than once a week (Smith; Duggan et al cited in Al-Haddad et al., 2023). The majority of Instagram users fall within the 18 to 24 age range, accounting for approximately 36.4%, which presents a significant opportunity to reach this demographic. Additionally, around 40% of top brands have integrated Instagram into their marketing strategies (Riel et al; Triputranti et al; Hutahaean & Julitawaty cited in Al-Haddad et al., 2023)

Based on observations, Bambang Pacul's Instagram account (@komandanpatjul) is active in sharing various content, especially in the form of short videos. The post on December 28, 2023 with the title "Becoming a Javanese leader" received a positive response with 39,745 likes and 1,162 comments. In the content, Bambang Pacul seems to implement several personal branding concepts according to Peter Montoya's theory. For example, the message addressed to his audience about the traits needed to be a leader (Ngayomi, Ngayemi, and Ngayani), as well as attitudes to avoid (Adigang, Adigung, Adiguna), reflects an effort to build a strong and consistent leadership image.

Next, on March 16, 2024, there was a video comparing Jokowi and Bambang Pacul. Although it received a lower number of likes, namely 23,283, and 474 comments, the content reflects a personal branding strategy that emphasizes comparing oneself with famous figures as a way to strengthen one's own image in the eyes of the public.

Similar things can be seen in the post dated February 14, 2024, which commented on the figure of Setya Novanto, as well as the post dated January 14, 2024, which reviewed the differences between the two groups in the context of local politics. In both of these posts, Bambang Pacul uses the

Instagram platform to convey his views on political figures and related issues, which is one of the personal branding strategies to strengthen his image as someone who has strong and consistent views in politics.

Finally, on December 3, 2023 and November 27, 2023, there were posts that emphasized moral or philosophical messages. Although these contents are not directly related to politics, they still reflect aspects of personality and values that Bambang Pacul wants to convey to his followers, which is also part of a personal branding strategy to build a consistent and trusted self-image in the eyes of the public. Thus, it can be concluded that Bambang Pacul's Instagram account is active in presenting diverse content, while integrating personal branding concepts from Peter Montoya's theory to strengthen his self-image on the platform.
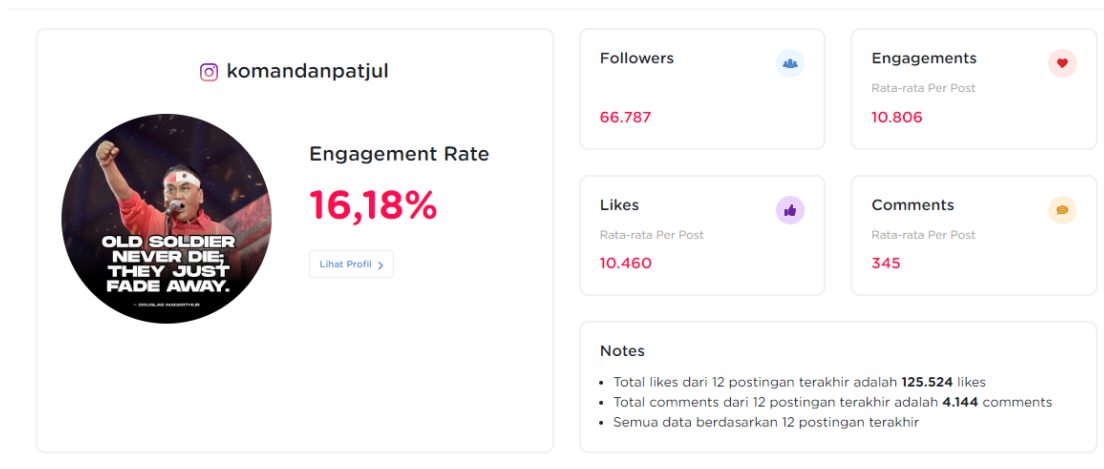

Figure 4. Analysis of Instagram engagement @komandanpatjul from
https://www.allstars.id/

From the data displayed in Figure 4, it shows that Bambang Pacul's Instagram account (@komandanpatjul) has built a strong presence with a total of 150 posts, consisting of short videos and photos. With 66,787 followers, this account shows an impressive engagement rate of 16.18%, indicating that the content shared has succeeded in attracting attention and interaction from its audience.

In his last 12 posts, Bambang Pacul received an average of 10,460 likes and 345 comments per post, and an average engagement of 10,806 per post. This confirms that the content shared is not only liked by his followers, but also triggers active discussion and interaction. The total number of likes from the last 12 posts reached 125,524 likes, while the total comments reached 4,144, indicating that this account has followers who are engaged and responsive to the content shared.

Data analysis shows that Bambang Pacul's Instagram account has managed to maintain consistency in his followers' engagement from post to post. With a stable level of engagement, this account reflects success in building a close relationship with his audience. The high average number of likes and comments per post shows that the content shared by Bambang Pacul has consistently managed to maintain the interest and interaction of his followers.

Thus, it can be concluded that Bambang Pacul's Instagram account (@komandanpatjul) not only has a large number of followers, but also has high quality engagement. Through varied and interesting content, this account is able to build an active and engaged community on the Instagram platform, creating space for meaningful discussion and interaction between Bambang Pacul and his followers.

The following are some posts from the Instagram account @komandanpatjul with more than 35,000 likes.

Figure 5. Analysis of Instagram video reels Desember 2023

On December 28, 2023, Bambang Pacul's Instagram account (@komandanpatjul) shared a short video titled "Becoming a Javanese leader." The post received a positive response with 39,745 likes and 1,162 comments. In his caption, Bambang Pacul asked his audience a rhetorical question about the criteria for becoming a leader, emphasizing the importance of attitudes such as Ngayomi, Ngayemi, and Ngayani, and avoiding attitudes such as Adigang, Adigung, and Adiguna.

Ngayomi, Ngayemi, and Ngayani are Javanese words that have meanings related to the attitudes and behaviors expected of a leader. In general, they describe good leadership traits, such as being wise, empathetic, and caring for others. "Ngayomi" refers to the ability to understand and appreciate the views and feelings of others. "Ngayemi" indicates an attitude of mutual respect and empathy for others. While "Ngayani" describes the ability to provide attention and support to those being led.

On the other hand, Adigang, Adigung, and Adiguna refer to attitudes that should be avoided by a leader. These words also come from Javanese and reflect behavior that is not in accordance with effective leadership. "Adigang" describes arrogance and haughtiness, which can harm the relationship between a leader and his subordinates. "Adigung" shows an attitude that is unfair or unwise in making decisions or handling conflicts. While "Adiguna" reflects an attitude that is irresponsible or

inconsistent in acting and speaking. By linking these words in the caption of his post, Bambang Pacul may want to convey a message about the importance of positive traits that a leader must have, while reminding that negative attitudes must be avoided so that leadership can be effective and have a positive impact on the community he leads.

Figure 5. Video post 14 January 2024

On January 14, 2024, Bambang Pacul's Instagram account (@komandanpatjul) shared a video reviewing Ganjar Pranowo with the title "The 'culvert' troops and the 'owl' troops." The post managed to get 89,328 likes and 3,801 comments, indicating great interest from his followers in the content.

Figure 6. Video post 27 November 2024

On November 27, 2023, Bambang Pacul's Instagram account (@komandanpatjul) shared a short video with the caption "A lesson for all Korea, that being a man doesn't have to be handsome. Clear huh?" The post managed to get 49,992 likes and 1,254 comments, showing significant interest from his followers in the message conveyed.

4. Conclusion

From the description above, several important things can be concluded. First, the phenomenon of rapid growth of Instagram users in Indonesia in January 2024, with a total of 89,891,300 users or around 31.9% of the total population, indicates the significance of this platform in the social and communication context in the country. In addition, the majority of users are women, and the younger generation, especially those aged 25 to 34, dominates this platform. Second, research on Bambang Pacul's Instagram account (@komandanpatjul) shows an effort to understand personal branding practices on social media, especially in the context of using the Instagram platform. By adopting Peter Montoya's personal branding theory, this study aims to explore how the account builds and strengthens its image through published content and interactions with its followers. Third, from the results of the analysis, it can be seen that Bambang Pacul is active in presenting various types of content, especially short videos, which often review political and moral issues. Through this content, he tries to communicate and strengthen his image as a figure who has strong and consistent views. Finally, it can be seen that Bambang Pacul's Instagram account has managed to achieve a high level of engagement from his followers, as indicated by the significant number of likes and comments on each post. This shows that the personal branding strategy implemented by Bambang Pacul has been able to attract attention and generate active interaction from his followers on the Instagram platform.

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