INSTAGRAM AS REGIONAL LEADER'S PERSONAL BRANDING MEDIUM: A CASE STUDY OF HEAD OF SUMEDANG DISTRICT – INDONESIA'S INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT

SUGIHARTI, EVVI[1] , ARAS, MUHAMMD[2]

[1,2] Communication Department, Binus Graduate Program, Master of Strategic Marketing Communication,

Bina Nusantara University, Indonesia

E-mail: [1]evvi.chandra2@gmail.com, [2]maras@binus.edu

ABSTRACT

Instagram is the most used a social media platform in Indonesia. Therefore, Instagram is a perfect place to form a favorable personal branding for prospective regional head candidates to win the regional head elections (Pilkada). Personal branding was one of the key success to winning the election, strategically performed by the elected heads of Sumedang District to maintain their positive image. Through the regent's personal Instagram account @dony_ahmad_munir and the deputy regent @erwan_setiawan54 they built a charming personal branding. This study aims to explore the process of personal branding formation of both Regent and Deputy Regent of Sumedang Regency through social media Instagram based on three aspects of Peter Montoya and Tim Vandehey theory. Those are the individual/personality aspect, promise and relationship and the eight laws of personal branding. The research used a qualitative approach, descriptive analysis in a single-case study. Descriptive qualitative approach was performed by analyzing, describing, and summarizing various conditions and situations from data collected from interviews or observations acquired through field study, in order to obtain more detailed data that is comprehensive, intense, detailed, and in-depth. The findings show that Instagram succeeded in mediating the couple's personal branding, which led Dony A. Munir and Erwan Setiawan to win the 2018 regional election as regional heads of Sumedang. Moreover, Instagram remained the main platform of personal branding when they served so that the positive image was upheld, fostering sympathy and trust from the public.

Keywords: *Branding, Instagram, Social Media, Personal Branding*

1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, campaign trend is shifting from mass mobilization to creating good impression and minimizing frictions between supporters and the public. This approach is more effective by prioritizing a personal touch through intense and persuasive communication [1]. This strategy is called a personal branding, commonly conveyed to market potential candidates while fighting for the position as regional head or head of state [2].

The role of personal branding is to shape perceptions effectively, hence manage, control and influence how other people perceive and think about a particular person. Having a strong personal branding is a crucial asset both in real life and online as that becomes the key to individual success. Personal branding itself is a process in shaping, attracting, and maintaining public

perception related to aspects that a person has, for example skills, achievements, personality or values. Personal branding can be built intentionally or unintentionally with a goal to display a positive image and gain trust and loyalty, both are golden marketing tools [3]

Personal branding for leader candidates can be formed in three ways, namely integrity, authenticity and consistency. Professionals and leaders must be able to publicize themselves and have good communication skills. With consistency, they will be able to embody an effective and strong image [4]. In elections for heads of state or region, voters look for specific qualities in political leaders when making election decisions, including honesty, intelligence, friendliness, sincerity, and trustworthiness. Image management techniques can help create those impressions. Heads of government who utilize social media to attract attention through

images or videos will get daily response from the public [5].

Communicating personal branding to the public needs a medium that can convey a message and move them to an intended decision. With the development of technology, the most seek-out medium is online digital platform which is social media [6]. Social media has a huge influence on the political process in Indonesia. As a democratic country, Indonesia has developed a quite rapid growth of social media use. Politicians and citizens go to social media to equally participate in the political process [7].

Political marketing is no longer limited to traditional approach but has also marked its presence in digital media. Social media as an example of digital media provides a niche for political marketers to create a political market where candidates, government officials, and political parties can direct public opinion to a desired position. Social Media has now become a very powerful tool for expressing opinions, views, and ideas as well as being an influential tool in the creation of opinions [8].

The media can be a powerful and influential ally in getting the message out and building strong relationships as the spearhead of public imagery. Social media is easily accessible at any time, in a way it can fuel a segmented opinion but also become a productive tool to breathe any personal character into life. Public perception is specially tailored to understand and favor that character [9].

In Indonesia, internet users reached 64.8% of the total population. This fact indicates that the internet has become an important role for the society in various aspects of life. The internet does provide convenience in finding latest information from around the world. Internet accessibility enable almost all levels of society today to be an avid internet user [10]. While online media (Internet, Blog and SNS) turn into one-stop-for-all communication channel for marketers to reach customers with product information and customer service [11].

The winning pairs of Sumedang District chose Instagram as media branding and information dissemination through both of their personal accounts @doni_ahmad_munir and @erwan_setiawan54. Instagram has advantages as visual-based digital media with limited text because it attracts larger audience.

Recent studies have proven that images play an important role in evaluating politicians. Voters look for specific qualities in leaders when making political decisions, such as honesty, intelligence, friendliness, sincerity, and trustworthiness. Image management techniques can help create the impression that politicians have these qualities. Heads of government who post images and videos in their social media will get daily engagement from the public [5]. Illustration-oriented Instagram enrich people's visual memory, sharpen the thought processes, and facilitate communication with other parties [12]. Therefore, Instagram has more advantage than any other marketing tools to attract certain market [13].

From the studies that have been conducted above, it is stated that the data of the internet users in Indonesia are high enough [10] that the use of Instagram social media has become one of the options to give a significant impact for someone to form personal branding [6]. The development of social media has changed the concept of communication, including political communication. It certainly will change the way a politician communicates to give a positive image to the public by the formation of their personal branding [8].

The power of social media to influence people is based exclusively on its social aspect, making social media as a political strategy for communication, marketing, and the formation of personal branding. Social media exists to make it easier for users to communicate without the boundaries of space and time. As the regional head politician who aims to gain support from the public, one of the efforts to influence political participation is to conduct a campaign by forming personal branding via social media. The formation of good personal branding will result in good opinions, attitudes, and public participation that people are willing to give their support and voice to politicians. The cost is also relatively affordable because there are no costs directly associated with social media. Instagram can also inspire users and increase their creativity due to Instagram's features that can make photos more beautiful, more artistic, and better.

Based on the existing researches, the studies that discuss about the use of Instagram as a medium to form personal branding for politicians are still very few, especially for the regional heads in Indonesia. The majority of research discusses the formation of personal branding on celebrities and influencers. Therefore, in this paper, we will

explain the analysis of the process of personal branding formation on politicians, specifically in the regional heads, with the case study of The Regional Heads of Sumedang, Indonesia, through Instagram social media by using the reference to the Personal Branding theory of Peter Montoya and Tim Vandehey which consists of three aspects: Individual/personality aspects, promises and relationships, and the eight elements in forming personal branding (The eight laws of personal branding).

The use of social media is used by the pair of the Regional Heads of Sumedang to create their personal branding and Instagram becomes their medium to be used as a means of disseminating information through their accounts @doni_ahmad_munir and @erwan_setiawan54. The established of good personal branding is one of their ways to approach the community. It also makes them take the initiative to bring out their best ideas by uploading a photo or video content and have the creativity to promote themselves on social media. They can attract attention and build public trust in regional heads.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Previous Studies

Research on the benefits of Instagram to form a brand for companies or individuals has been conducted quite a lot before, including the research conducted by Green, D. et.al, [14], entitled *"In a World of Social Media: A Case Study Analysis of Instagram"*. This research suggests that social media is a great way to build a personal connection between brands and their followers. With over 400 million users and 80 million posts per day, Instagram has become an essential social media marketing tool for all businesses. However, with the frequent changes in social media usage patterns and preferences, it can be a challenge to assign the right strategy to the right social media platform. The purpose of this case study is to explore how Instagram can evolve as a mobile app for businesses and customers. The study begins by exploring the emergence of multi-platform use. The study will also evaluate and compare major social channels in terms of customers preference and brand. This study will then analyze and provide insight into how Instagram can improve as a marketing platform for businesses. Data collection is gathered through case study analysis as an empirical way to examine social media platforms. This study provides individuals and businesses engaged in social media with a comparison of the

major social media platforms and provides insight into digital marketing strategies for Instagram and businesses. The application of this conclusion can increase the viability of new social media platforms and provide a better understanding of Instagram as a strategic tool for practitioners. This study is substantial because it extends contemporary assumptions about strategic thinking for social media mechanisms.

Lalancette, M., & Raynauld, V [5] conducted another study which analyzed Justin Trudeau's Instagram entitled, "The power of the political image: Justin Trudeau, Instagram, and celebrity politics," and it explores online image management that has an impact on the digital campaign process on politics in Canada. Heads of government use Instagram to attract attention through impactful images or videos almost every day. This study evaluates Instagram as Justine Trudeau's medium in conveying his self-image to increase the number of voters. This study used hybrid quantitative and qualitative methods and analyzed how Trudeau and his party give a certain image to voters as well as how he visualizes his personal life through his personal Instagram in support of the Canadian Liberal Party values and ideas, and how celebrity cultural codes are mobilized to discuss issues policies such as environment, youth, and technology. This analysis highlights the effects and implications of image management in Canada. More generally, it offers a much-needed look at image-based e-politics and contributes to the academic literature on social media, permanent campaigns, and celebrity and politics in Canada.

Subsequent research was conducted by Parmelee, J. H., & Roman, N. [15], using quantitative methods. The study expanded the use and gratification research into the area of political Instagram use. A survey shows that followers' motives for following political leaders on social media platforms are associated with their demographics and political attitudes. The findings show that good information and communication motives are important for followers to follow political leaders on Instagram, with social utility being the next highest motive. It also stated that men use Instagram more for social utility purposes than women whose motives related more to entertainment. The results also provide insight into how being politically active can be more influential on Instagram.

However, there is also one study that noted the change of behavior in a person, especially politicians who prefer to avoid direct interaction

with the public. They are more interested in forming their personal branding through social media. It relates to the manipulation of behavior that can be created through social media. According to Ekman, M., & Widholm, A.[16] in their research entitled *"Political communication in an age of visual connectivity: Exploring Instagram practices among Swedish politicians"*. Through quantitative methods, this research explores the particular features of Instagram as a visual political communication platform. By referring to mediation theory and celebrity politics, this paper analyzes how a symbolic form of connectivity is expressed and carried out by sixteen prominent politicians in Sweden through the use of social media related to mass media. The results show that journalism still holds a strong symbolic value. In addition, it reveals how the logic of the Instagram platform contributes to the shaping of digital lifestyle politics, where symbolic connections between politicians and various roles are displayed in social media. Visual political communication does inherit democratic and interactive potential. However, according to the analyzed data, most politicians avoid direct interaction with the public and are more interested in forming their personal branding through social media.

The researches that have been conducted above are more directed at the positive or pro impact on the use of Instagram as a medium to form personal branding. There is little research that contradicts or does not support the role of Instagram in the formation of personal branding. One of the studies is more contra by looking at the point of view of privacy intrusion on Instagram.

Research conducted by Munir, S. M. S.[17] , entitled *"Social Media and its Impact on our Privacy"*. The results of this study indicate that the source content will be open to the whole world through social media. Millions of social media users will share their personal information on the media via the internet. It encourages attackers to attack someone's data using various methods such as Botnets, Phishing scams, Malware attacks, Malicious attacks, etc. Due to this, both administrators and users suffer greatly. It happens because users are not familiar with security and privacy terms and conditions.

Another research that looks at the disadvantages of the use of social media is research conducted by Kumari, S., & Singh [18], which states that users of social networking sites come from all walks of life and all age groups. They are not aware of data theft and they freely share information.

From the several pieces of research that have been conducted before, the difference between journal articles and this research lies in the use of Instagram social media as a form of personal branding for a politician, namely regional heads in Indonesia by applying the personal branding theory of Montoya & Vandehey, as a way of political marketing to create a positive image by using qualitative methods.

2.2 Brand

One of the concepts of marketing strategies is branding. In its development, both practically and theoretically, branding is not only used and discussed in the context of goods/services, but also for individuals. It is proven that branding is not limited to company or its products and services.

Research from Rampersad, H.K., 2008 [19] states that having an authentic and strong Personal Brand is a very important asset in today's online, virtual, and individual era. By controlling your brand and the message it sends, you will influence how others perceive you. It will help you to actively grow and differentiate yourself as an outstanding professional. Meanwhile, according to Elliott, R. H., Rosenbaum-Elliott, R., Percy, L., & Pervan, S. (2015). *Strategic brand management*. Oxford University Press, USA. Brand is an important factor in a marketing activity because, in the process of introducing a product or service activities, it can not be separated from a reliable brand. The brand is also a consideration that will be the main factor in making decisions for customers. The brand is a long-term strategy that has economic value for customers and for the brand owner

Brand itself is currently defined as a self-identity that distinguishes between humans, products, and places. Meanwhile, branding is a communication activity which strengthening and maintaining brand image in order to give certain perspective to the audience [20].

According to Keller, brand can be divided into three terms: brand name (part of a brand that can be pronounced), brand mark (a symbol or design as an identity or distinction) and trade character (brand mark that takes a physical form or human nature [21].

Politicians should make themselves a notable brand, either eccentrically such as in presidential-style campaigns in the United States or France, or as part of a more general approach to their

electorate in democracies such as Australia, New Zealand, much of Europe and Canada [22].

2.3 Political Marketing

One of the concepts of marketing strategies is branding. In its development, both practically and theoretically, branding is not only used and discussed in the context of goods/services, but also for individuals. Political marketing is a permanent concept that candidates must carry out continuously to build long-term trust. Political marketing has emerged as a new approach in political science that is able to answer the need for winning strategies. In a political climate full of open and transparent competition, contestants need an accommodating method to propagate political initiatives, ideas, issues, ideologies, characteristics of candidates, and work programs to the society [23].

Political marketing is basically similar to marketing in general. Political marketing also has four marketing strategies known as the 4Ps: product, promotion, price and place [24].

The main product of a political institution is the political party which house concept, ideological identity, and work program of an institution. Three important dimension which must be understood from a political product are person (political candidates), party, and ideology (identity). These three dimensions are what being sold to voters in determining which one represents their vote. Other aspect to understand is voter loyalty, the main goal for political institutions. Candidates need to win voter confidence so that they keep being on their sides. Mutability or changeability aspect is related to voters' perception of the candidate [25]. Promotion is advertising, public relations, and promotional initiatives in accordance with the needs of the community [26]. Price includes many things, ranging from economic, psychological, to the national image [27]. Place affects how presentable a party is and its ability to communicate with voters. This means that a party must be able to map the structure and characteristics of society, both geographically and demographically [28].

2.4 The concept of Personal Branding Montoya & Vandehey

Personal branding is a process to shape, attract and maintain public perceptions that an individual has particular skills, achievements, personality or values that are built intentionally or unintentionally with the aim of displaying a positive image. The strategy is done to gain trust and loyalty, both are powerful marketing tools. Personal branding is the art of attracting and retaining more clients by actively shaping public perception [19]

In other words, personal branding start when people perceive themselves or their careers as a brand. Everyone has a brand. Personal branding is not something only political candidates can do. It is the way people market themselves systematically. As a brand, there needs to be a strategy to paint the image in certain angle as expected.

Researcher explained that there are elements of branding that must be interconnected so that they can develop together [29]:

a. Individual aspect/Personality. Individuals need methods and good communication concept to relay message until it reaches the target market.

b. Promise. Personal brand is a promise that the person will meet public's expectation. It is correlated to the person's trustworthiness.

c. Relationships. A good personal branding guarantees links of clientele. The more attributes a person has, the higher is his power in public's eyes.

In addition to the elements above, researcher mentioned that there are eight concepts personal branding formation known as the eight laws of personal branding [29]:

a. The Law of Specialization: the hallmark of a great personal brand is specialization or expertise in a particular strength, skill, or achievement.

b. The Law of Leadership: branding bears power and credibility that reflect leadership ability.

c. The Law of Personality: a great personal brand is based on real personality and not without flaws.

d. The Law of Distinctiveness: an effective personal brand must be presented in a way that is different from others.

e. The Law of Visibility: personal brand is meant to be seen consistently and continuously until it is known to the public.

f. The Law of Unity: real characters behind the personal brand must reflect moral ethics and attitudes represented by the brand itself.

g. The Law of Persistence: personal brand takes time to grow.

h. The Law of Goodwill: personal brand will last longer and be effective if the person is always perceived with a positive image.

2.5 Instagram

The existence of social media has changed modern social life. It alters relationships, social institutions and its systems, including values, attitudes and behavior patterns among groups [30]. Online media and social media are here to enable communication without the boundaries of space and time [31].

One of the widely used social media is Instagram. Instagram is a visual-sharing application that allows users to take photos or videos, apply digital filters, and share them on various social networking services [32]. The rise of Instagram is more fueled by the increasing demand to appear a certain way to the public than to network with friends, hence bestowing Instagram a robust personal branding power [33].

Right now, most of politicians and leaders are in social media to reach the public [34]. For example, Justine Trudeau's Instagram account becomes an important channel to attain constituents. This shows that Instagram plays significant role during campaign seasons in seizing supporters and securing their sympathy ahead of the election. In his account, Trudeau becomes relatable to the public by providing latest update about his personal and political activities and the policies he will take [5].

Indonesians are familiar to Instagram, even those in remote areas. Therefore, regional heads now use Instagram as their political marketing [35]. In the term of political participation, social media now serves as a stage to voice public's thoughts and opinions in democratic process. Now social media is no longer a personal space but also a public forum for online aspirations [36].

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed case study method with a qualitative approach. Researcher stated that case study research is a research conducted on an 'object', carried out thoroughly and in-depth using various data sources [37]. This type of approach is usually adapted to investigate and understand an event or problem that occurred by collecting various kinds of information and then processed to obtain a solution. This study used a qualitative paradigm because the problem is related to humans which is fundamentally dependent on observation [38]. A qualitative approach investigates research subject and researcher becomes the key instrument in the study. The result is described in written words from the empirical data. This approach emphasizes meaning rather than generalizations [39].

A qualitative research pays more attention to humanism and human behavior. It comes from an awareness that all consequences of human actions are affected by internal aspects of the individual such as beliefs, political views, and social background, including personal branding [40]. The authors expected that qualitative approach can explain and interpret regency heads' personal branding as brand ambassadors in promoting Sumedang Regency tourism through Instagram based on the results of interviews, observations and literature studies.

The authors adapted exploratory research which aims at the design of extensive, deliberate, and systematic data collection. The intention is to maximize findings from generalization-based descriptions and direct understanding of social life and psychology [41]. Exploratory research seeks to explore or describe what happened, including who, when, where, or related to the characteristics of a symptom or social problem, whether pattern, shape, size, or distribution [42].

4. RESULTS

Based on the results of the study, the author observed that the formation of Sumedang district heads' personal branding in Instagram employed Peter Montoya and Vandehey's concept. It has three aspects: individual, promise and relationship aspect [19]. The branding building process has started since the pair ran for regional head election. The campaign bore positive image and won regional head positions for them. The formation of good personal branding for politicians is one way that will lead to victory [43].

Their branding strategy delivered valuable aspects to the voters. The aspects included:
a. Individual aspect, showing intellectuality and intelligence. The regional head is a doctor in economics. In addition, he has unpretentious character and dynamic, hence grant him an open door to enter all circles of society, especially youth. Intellectuality and intelligence give a positive image to a person [29].
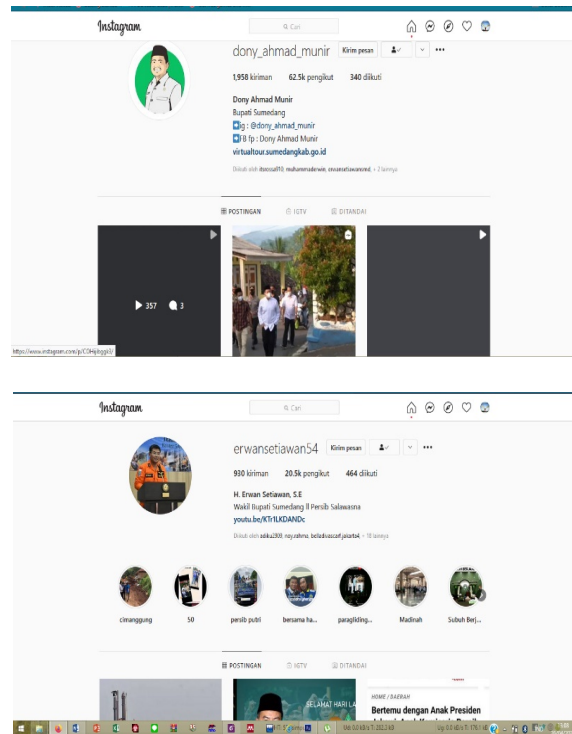
Figure 1: Regional Head's Instagram Account

b. Promise, was carried out through group approach such as farmers, motorcycle taxi drivers, ulama, and so on. The couple promised to improve the welfare of several representatives of social groups. Promise bridges a strong bond between leaders and his people, so that people will choose them [44].

c. Relationships encompass a person's power. The pair's career background is painted in various political positions, granting them access to other parties so that their candidacy is supported by many of them. This privilege gives them a bigger opportunity to get a greater number of voters. Leader candidates often have high position in the government or political party [45].

This pair of Sumedang regional heads utilizes social media Instagram for personal branding. Social media arises due to the development of the new world today. Social media allows users to interact, collaborate, share, communicate across borders and form virtual social bonds [46]. The implementation of IT and communication technology in government developed electronic government system (e - gov). The rapid development of ICT must be addressed as both opportunities and challenges that need to be anticipated by preparing an easy-access information technology network devices and systems for the community [47].

After the election, branding maintenance is handled by the PR and Publicity Division and Media Communication Team at Sumedang Regional Secretariat, which operate directly under the regional head. Their duties are different. PR and Publicity Division is responsible for written and visual reportage of Sumedang regional heads' official activities via Instagram account @humas_sumedang. Meanwhile, Communication Media Team is responsible for all regional heads' activities, both official and personal. This team manages personal accounts of the regent @dony_ahmad_munir and the deputy regent @erwansetiawan54.

Instagram performs as a medium for personal branding for the Regent and Deputy Regent aiming to give a positive impression to the community. Social media is a reflection of an individual's personality. It can describe our interests, opinions, and public perception of us. Social media is a place for expression and opinion [48].

Figure 2: Sumedang Regency Heads' Instagram Account

The authors found that this couple applied Montoya and Vandehey's personal branding concepts. There are eight concepts known as The Eight Laws of Personal Branding [29].

a. The Law of Specialization

Dony Ahmad Munir is a well-known academic, a doctor, an expert in economics and accounting. He is also religious, so his personal branding goes with a "pious, smart and calm person" image. He uses religious approach in accordance with the demographic in Sumedang which is predominantly Muslim. This is also included in the concept of specialization (The Law of Specialization).

The hallmark of a great personal brand is specialization or expertise in particular strength, skill or achievement. Specialization encompass several aspects such as behavior lifestyle, mission, product, profession [49].

b. The Law of Leadership

Leadership figure is reflected in the achievements both leaders have recorded, for example the establishment of Sumedang as a Tourism Regency that improve the community's economy. Society needs a leader who can make decisions despite uncertainty and provide a clear direction. A personal brand is equipped with power and credibility inherited by the individual's perfection that grants them leadership [50].

c. The Law of Personality

A religious personality became an image for Donny and also Erwan Setiawan who is also known as friendly, open and sporty person. These images are related to their personality.

A great personal brand must be based on the person's real characters and come with all its imperfections. Personality distinguishes a person from others. This aspect removes some of the stresses that exist in The Law of Leadership that a person must have a good personality, but does not have to be perfect.

d. The Law of Distinctiveness

Erwan Setiawan is the son of a senior PERSIB (Football Association of Indonesia Bandung) higher-up. Sumedang is also one of the headquarters Bobotoh (PERSIB fans) evidenced by the establishment of Kampong PERSIB. These two facts bestow an image of real PERSIB supporter to Erwan, which in turn, do him a favor of gaining mass support. His Instagram posts become popular especially to young people who become followers.

An effective personal brand needs to be distinguishable. Many marketing experts build a brand with similar concept as most brands in the market to avoid conflict. However, this is actually a mistake because conformity will never make any brand stand out [6].

e. The Law of Visibility

The regional heads are quite active in sharing all their activities with the community through offline and online media, making them remembered by the public. In addition, Dony's religious character and sporty Erwan are continuously pictured by their posts in social media.

To be successful, a personal brand must be seen consistently until the brand is recognized. Visibility is more important than ability sometimes. To be visible, one needs to promote, market, take every opportunity to have some luck [51].

f. The Law of Unity

As regional leaders, all their behavior and activities will become public consumption. Their status as head of the family symbolizes a manager who is able to manage everything. Thus, maintaining family image becomes their concern as well. They must be able to keep harmony within the family.

Personal life must be in line with moral ethics and attitudes reflected by the brand. Personal life should be a mirror of the idea instilled in a personal brand.

g. The Law of Persistence

The images of religious Dony and unpretentious, sporty Erwan, have been instilled in the eyes of the public for years.

Personal brand takes time to grow. As the process goes on, it is important to keep an eye on each stage and trend. Instilled brand can also be modified with rigorous advertising and public relations. However, it is better that one must stick to the initial personal brand without ever doubting and intending to change it.

h. The Law of Goodwill

During their reigning period, some of their promises from the campaign have been realized while the rest is ongoing process. Whenever a promise is fulfilled, one positive feedback will accumulate, strengthening the image of reliable leaders and fulfilling The Law of Goodwill.

A personal brand will give better results and last longer if the person behind it is perceived in a positive way. The person must be associated with a value or idea that is generally recognized as positive and useful [52].

Based on observations and interviews with Mr. Rifki S, Ardi, the head of Media Communication Team, there are 6 aspects to the pair's brand focus on Instagram which are in line with Montoya and Vandehey's concept, namely:

a. Personal life and family matters. This image represents how well regent and deputy regent manage their family. A happy and harmonious family mirrors how good they are at their job.

b. Professionalism. The idea illustrates that regional leader is not an easy job. Only smart and capable people can serve.

c. Humility. Several posts show how close the regent and deputy regent to all groups of society. The public perceive both as humble in nature, highly sociable and approachable by commoners.

d. Religiosity. They have religious programs to support the image. For example, the joint reciting program on IGTV called "Maghrib Mengaji Online" (MMO). It is one of Sumedang Regency Government's flagship programs in supporting the Vision of "Religious Morals". Koran teachers contributed greatly to the implementation of MMO.

e. Achievement and development. This kind of posts increase public support and sympathy for the head of the region.

f. Tourism and culinary sector promotion. Sumedang has tremendous potential in tourism because it has very beautiful nature and landscapes.

Instagram has become a tool for politicians to create personal branding and interactive communication with the community so that their ideas can be accepted and affect favorably to their electability [53].

5. DISCUSSION

Social media plays a supporting role in mediating political communication between community members, politicians, and political parties. Along with traditional media, social media provides an alternative avenue for political communication, making it more direct and interactive. By using social media, the community members can now more easily target public officials and politicians to convey their aspirations, ideas, and criticisms of political issues and agendas. Social media has contributed positively to the development of political communication by providing a new

platform that facilitates more direct and interactive political communication [54]

From the statement above, some of the benefits of Social Media for politicians, in this case, regional heads, are as follows:

1.   Social media becomes a medium of political communication and is used as a medium in shaping their positive image and as a communication medium to maintain engagement with their supporters or potential audience. [55]

2.   Social media plays a role in disseminating important information and this is the most efficient and effective way. Nowadays politicians tend to embrace social media communication as their strategy to communicate with their potential audience [54]

3.   Social Media Increases the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Political Marketing and brings politicians closer to their audiences. Social media allows politicians and their audiences to communicate directly.

4.   Social Media Mediates Political Communication with a Wider Audience. The use of social media, in the context of international politics, has helped politicians to communicate with a wider audience of different nationalities and languages.

However, although the use of social media for political communication provides benefits to politicians, it also presents some weaknesses that politicians should pay attention to. One of the possible disadvantages of using social media for politicians is that the operation of social media requires adequate skills and resources. Since not all politicians are internet literate and have sufficient communication skills, it can be very difficult for them to keep up with social media apps [55]. In addition, operating social media is also time-consuming. The nature of social media platforms that allow two-way communication will force politicians to allocate a lot of time to respond to comments and audience posts which can make it difficult for politicians to respond to content from the audience. To deal with this problem, politicians then tend to appoint someone to provide feedback to their audience which creates another burden for human resources and management [55].

Another disadvantage is that using social media as a medium of political communication in the public sphere online will make politicians have less control over the information available about them in cyberspace [56]. It will make it increasingly difficult for politicians to maintain their positive image of potential constituencies as social media users may be able to generate and disseminate as much misleading information on politicians as possible on social media channels.

6.   CONCLUSIONS

The process of forming personal branding has started since the pair ran for regional head election and continued when they served as regional leaders of Sumedang regency. Their personal branding strategies on Instagram implemented Peter Montoya and Vandehey's concept which has three aspects and eight laws.

Instagram is a powerful tool to convey any branding image to the public to receive favorable responses. The adaptation of Montoya and Vandehey's concept is palpable on their Instagram posts. Personality aspect reflects intellectual and earthy characters. Promise aspect is evident from posts about ongoing development representing their ability to fulfill campaign promises. Relationship aspect is mirrored by posts of receiving a guest of honor or attending an invitation from public officials at home and abroad so as to give the impression that the pair is trying to make Sumedang better known to the world.

The posts displayed on Instagram have also fulfilled all the main concepts of personal branding (the eight laws of personal branding). They are the law of specialization, the law of leadership, the law of personality, the law of distinctiveness, the law of visibility, the law of unity, the law of persistence, and the law of goodwill. The heads of the Sumedang regency fit the characteristics of a strong personal brand because it has distinctive, relevant and consistent elements.

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