

The Influence of Digital Lifestyle and Personal Branding on Social Media on Students' Career Decisions

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to analyze the influence of digital lifestyle and personal branding on social media on students' career decisions, and to examine the role of reviews as a factor influencing both variables.

Method – This research uses a quantitative approach with Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) as the analysis technique. The sample consists of 100 students selected using purposive sampling.

Results – The results show that digital lifestyle and personal branding on social media have a positive and significant influence on students' career decisions. In addition, reviews also have a positive and significant effect on both digital lifestyle and personal branding. These findings indicate that digital information and online reviews shape students' behavioral patterns and self-image, which directly affect their career choices.

Implications – This study highlights the importance of digital literacy and personal branding awareness in career development for university students.

Originality – The originality of this research lies in the integration of the review variable as an initial predictor that links the influence of digital media to the career decision-making process in the digital era.

Keywords: Digital Lifestyle, Personal Branding, Social Media, Career Decision, Students.

Abstrak

Tujuan - Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh gaya hidup digital dan personal branding di media sosial terhadap keputusan karir mahasiswa, serta meninjau peran review sebagai faktor yang memengaruhi kedua variabel tersebut

Metode – Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kuantitatif dengan teknik analisis Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Sampel dalam penelitian ini berjumlah 100 mahasiswa yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling.

Hasil - Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa gaya hidup digital dan personal branding di media sosial berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap keputusan karir mahasiswa. Selain itu, review juga terbukti memberikan pengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap gaya hidup digital dan personal branding. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa informasi dan ulasan digital dapat membentuk pola perilaku serta citra diri mahasiswa yang berdampak langsung pada pilihan karir mereka.

Implikasi - Penelitian ini adalah pentingnya literasi digital dan kesadaran personal branding dalam pembinaan karir mahasiswa.

Orisinalitas - Orisinalitas penelitian ini terletak pada integrasi variabel review sebagai prediktor awal yang menghubungkan pengaruh media digital terhadap proses pengambilan keputusan karir di era digital.

Kata kunci: Gaya Hidup Digital, Personal Branding, Media Sosial, Keputusan Karir, Mahasiswa.

Introduction

In today's digital era, ideally, students as prospective professionals should not only rely on academic competence but also be able to build a self-image (personal branding) and navigate a healthy and productive digital lifestyle. Strategic use of social media can be a tool for expanding professional networks, showcasing portfolios, and building a positive self-perception in the eyes of the public and recruiters (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011). In higher education settings, students are expected to utilize social media as a platform to support career development, not simply for entertainment or social interaction.

However, conditions in the field indicate that many students are unaware of the importance of personal branding and are unable to optimally utilize social media in their career planning. Most still use social media passively or solely for personal gain, without considering its impact on their future professional image (Walther, 2011). Furthermore, an unfocused digital lifestyle can cause distraction, reduce productivity, and create confusion in determining career direction.

This study aims to address these issues by examining how digital lifestyle and personal branding on social media influence students' career decisions. By understanding the relationship between these three variables, it is hoped that the research results can provide strategic recommendations for students and higher education institutions to develop more targeted social media usage patterns and support career readiness. This research can also serve as a basis for developing digital literacy programs and information technology-based career development.

Several previous studies have shown that digital lifestyles are closely related to the decision-making behavior of young people, including career-related ones. For example, research by Moeller et al. (2010) found that high digital engagement can influence individual career aspirations and value orientations. Meanwhile, personal branding on social media has been shown to increase employment opportunities by creating positive impressions and self-differentiation (Montoya & Vandehey, 2008). This study seeks to combine these two perspectives in the context of Indonesian university students.

Thus, this research will not only provide theoretical contributions to the development of management science and digital consumer behavior, but also provide practical contributions by helping students shape digital identities that support career success. The findings of this study are expected to reinforce the importance of social media as a personal management tool in designing professional futures, while also serving as a reference for educational institutions in developing digital-based career development curricula.

Literature review

Digital Lifestyle

A digital lifestyle is an individual's behavioral pattern characterized by the intensity of digital technology and social media use in daily activities, including shaping preferences, consumption habits, and social interactions. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), a digital lifestyle reflects a person's lifestyle patterns expressed through activities, interests, and opinions, which in a digital context transform into a dependence on technological devices and online media. A digital lifestyle is characterized by several indicators, such as the intensity of social media use, dependence on technology in daily activities, frequency of digital content consumption, and the influence of digital trends on

decision-making (Susanti & Hidayat, 2021). With the increasing prevalence of internet use, a digital lifestyle has become a crucial factor influencing how individuals perceive themselves and make choices, including career choices.

Personal Branding on Social Media

Personal branding on social media is defined as an individual's strategic efforts to shape, promote, and manage their online self-image to build a positive reputation and expand future opportunities. According to Peters (1997), personal branding is how someone markets themselves by emphasizing their uniqueness, strengths, and desired image to gain wider recognition. In the context of social media, personal branding encompasses several indicators: consistency in message delivery, originality of content, personal credibility, interaction with the audience, and reputation built online (Montoya & Vandehey, 2009). Strong personal branding on social media can increase visibility and open wider career opportunities for students in the digital age.

Career Decisions

Career decisions are the process of selecting a career path or profession based on interests, abilities, personal values, and available opportunities. According to Greenhaus, Callanan, and Godshalk (2010), career decisions are the result of evaluating and selecting alternatives deemed most appropriate to an individual's life goals and needs. Career decisions are influenced by several indicators, such as suitability to interests and talents, perceptions of job prospects, social influences, and lifestyle preferences (Sugiyanto & Sutanto, 2018). Choosing the right career will impact job satisfaction and future professional success.

Conceptual Framework

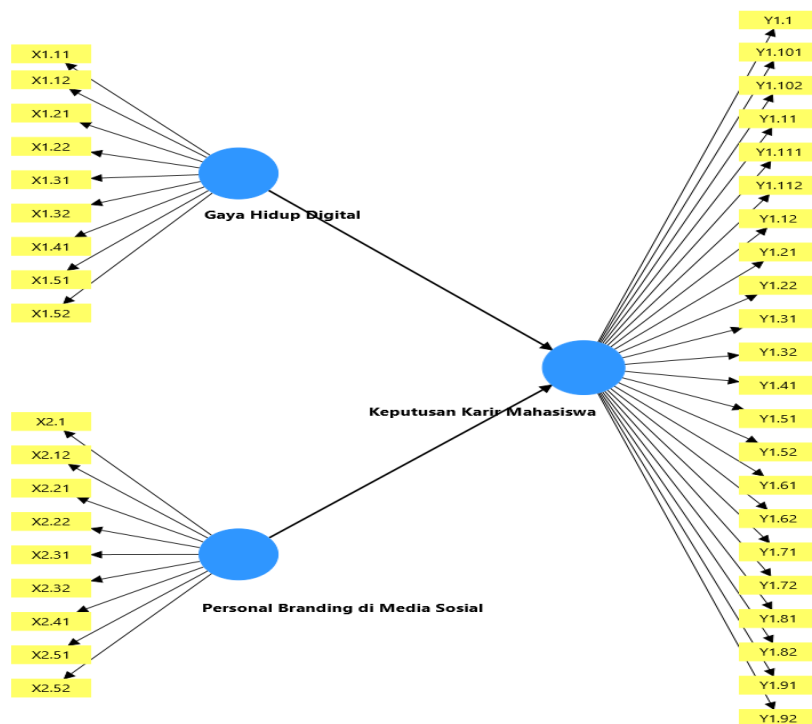


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Hypothesis

1. Lifestyle influences students' career decisions
2. Personal branding on social media influences students' career decisions
3. Digital lifestyle and personal branding on social media influence students' careers

Research methodology

This research is a quantitative study with an associative approach that aims to determine the influence of digital lifestyle and personal branding on social media on students' career decisions. The quantitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on measuring the relationship between variables and statistically testing hypotheses. This research was conducted on active students at university X, specifically final-year students who are preparing for career choices. The population in this study was all final-year students at the university. Sampling was carried out using a purposive sampling technique with the criteria of students who have actively used social media for at least the past year. Based on calculations using the Slovin formula with a 5% error rate, the number of samples determined in this study was 100 respondents.

Table 1. Validity Test Results

No	Answer	Code	Score Value
1	Strongly disagree	STS	1
2	Disagree	TS	2
3	Neutral	N	3
4	Agree	S	4
5	Strongly agree	SS	5

Source: Sugiyono 2017

The data used in this study is primary data collected directly through questionnaires distributed to respondents. Furthermore, this study also utilized secondary data obtained from books, journals, and scientific articles relevant to the research topic, which were used to strengthen the theoretical foundation and discussion. The data collection technique used a closed-ended questionnaire structured based on indicators for each research variable. The questionnaire used a Likert scale with five levels of assessment ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Prior to questionnaire distribution, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure the instrument was appropriate and reliable.

The variables examined in this study consisted of two independent variables and one dependent variable. Digital lifestyle (X1) is defined as students' habits and lifestyle patterns related to the use of technology and social media in their daily lives, as measured by indicators such as intensity of social media use, dependence on technology, and the influence of digital trends (Susanti & Hidayat, 2021). Personal branding on social media (X2) is a student's effort to build a positive reputation on social media, measured by consistency in message delivery, originality of content, credibility, interaction with audiences, and digital reputation (Montoya & Vandehey, 2009). Meanwhile, career decisions (Y) are the process of selecting a career path based on interests, talents, environmental influences, and job prospects, as measured by indicators of suitability

with interests, personal abilities, social environmental influences, and career prospects (Sugiyanto & Sutanto, 2018).

Data obtained from the questionnaire will be analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis techniques with the aid of SPSS software. Classical assumption tests such as normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity will be conducted first to ensure that the model meets the requirements of the regression analysis. Next, a t-test (partial) and an F-test (simultaneous) will be used to examine the significance of the influence of digital lifestyle and personal branding on students' career decisions. To determine how much influence the two independent variables have on the dependent variable, the coefficient of determination (R^2) value will be used, which shows the level of contribution of digital lifestyle and personal branding in explaining students' career decisions.

Results and Discussion

Validity Test

The validity test in this study was conducted using the outer loading value for each indicator. An indicator is considered valid if it has an outer loading value > 0.70 . Based on the outer loading matrix output, all indicators in the variables Digital Lifestyle, Personal Branding on Social Media, and Student Career Decisions have outer loading values above 0.70. This indicates that all indicators used in this research instrument are valid in measuring the constructs of each variable (Hair et al., 2019). High construct validity indicates that the instrument has been able to accurately represent each variable and can be used in further analysis.

Table 2. Validity Test Results

	Digital Lifestyle	Student Career Decisions	Personal Branding on Social Media
X1.11	0.744		
X1.12	0.774		
X1.21	0.872		
X1.22	0.819		
X1.31	0.761		
X1.32	0.787		
X1.41	0.798		
X1.51	0.794		
X1.52	0.805		
X2.1			0.869
X2.12			0.708
X2.21			0.803
X2.22			0.714
X2.31			0.717
X2.32			0.792
X2.41			0.846
X2.51			0.844
X2.52			0.794
Y1.1		0.738	
Y1.101		0.733	
Y1.102		0.773	

	Digital Lifestyle	Student Career Decisions	Personal Branding on Social Media
Y1.11		0.826	
Y1.111		0.836	
Y1.112		0.860	
Y1.12		0.824	
Y1.21		0.749	
Y1.22		0.743	
Y1.31		0.812	
Y1.32		0.796	
Y1.41		0.750	
Y1.51		0.812	
Y1.52		0.783	
Y1.61		0.848	
Y1.62		0.815	
Y1.71		0.795	
Y1.72		0.781	
Y1.81		0.819	
Y1.82		0.826	
Y1.91		0.803	
Y1.92		0.805	

Validity testing is carried out by looking at the outer loading matrix, an item is said to be valid if the Outer Loading Value is greater than 0.7.

Reliability Test

Construct reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (rho_c), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values. Based on the test results, the Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables exceeded 0.90, indicating a very high level of internal consistency. The AVE values for each variable were also above the minimum limit of 0.50, namely 0.633 for Digital Lifestyle, 0.623 for Personal Branding on Social Media, and 0.636 for Student Career Decisions. Thus, all variables in this study met the reliability criteria, both internally and convergently (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Digital Lifestyle	0.927	0.931	0.939	0.633
Student Career Decisions	0.973	0.974	0.975	0.636
Personal Branding on Social Media	0.924	0.928	0.937	0.623

A variable is considered reliable if AVE > 0.5.

Based on the output, all variable indicators are declared valid.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, where the square root of the AVE (diagonal value) must be higher than the correlation between other constructs. The results show that the diagonal values for Digital Lifestyle (0.796), Personal Branding on Social Media (0.789), and Student Career Decisions (0.797) are all greater than the correlation between variables in the corresponding column and row. This confirms that each construct has its own uniqueness and there is no overlap between constructs, thus fulfilling discriminant validity.

Table 4. Results of Discriminant Validity Test

	Digital Lifestyle	Student Career Decisions	Personal Branding on Social Media
Digital Lifestyle	0.796		
Student Career Decisions	0.866	0.797	
Personal Branding on Social Media	0.790	0.864	0.789

Discriminant validity using the Fornell – Larcker criterion, the FLC value must be greater than the correlation with other variables.

Inner Model Test (R-Square and t-Test)

An inner model analysis using the R-square value showed that the variables Digital Lifestyle and Personal Branding on Social Media were able to explain 83.7% of the variation in students' career decisions. According to Chin (1998), an R-square value > 0.67 indicates a strong predictive power of the model, thus the model used in this study can be said to have high explanatory power.

Partial significance tests were conducted using the t-statistic and p-value. The results showed that Digital Lifestyle had a positive and significant effect on students' career decisions with a t-value of 7.082 and a p-value of 0.000. Similarly, Personal Branding on Social Media showed a positive and significant effect on students' career decisions with a t-value of 6.657 and a p-value of 0.000. Because both p-values were less than 0.05, it can be concluded that both independent variables partially significantly influenced students' career decisions. This means that the higher the digital lifestyle and personal branding of students, the higher their tendency to make active and focused career choices.

Table 5. Inner Model Test Results (R-Square)

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Student Career Decisions	0.837	0.833

Based on the output, the R-Square was 0.837.

This indicates that Digital Lifestyle (X1) and Personal Branding (X2) simultaneously influence Career Decisions (Y) in students by 83.7%.

Note:

- Strong: R-Square greater than 0.67
- Moderate: R-Square between 0.33 and 0.67
- Weak: R-Square between 0.19 and 0.33

Table 6. Inner Model Test Results (t-Test)

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Digital Lifestyle -> Student Career Decisions	0.489	0.492	0.069	7.082	0.000
Personal Branding on Social Media -> Student Career Decisions	0.477	0.476	0.072	6.657	0.000

Reject H0 if p-value < 0.05

Based on the output, it is found that:

1. Student Lifestyle has a positive and significant partial effect on Student Career Decisions
2. Personal Branding on Social Media has a positive and significant partial effect on Student Career Decisions

Model Fit

The overall model fit was tested using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value. The results showed that the SRMR value was 0.072, which is below the threshold of 0.08. Based on general criteria, SRMR < 0.08 indicates that the model has a good level of fit and is worthy of further interpretation (Hu & Bentler, 1999). This strengthens the overall validity of the model in explaining the relationship between digital lifestyle, personal branding, and students' career decisions.

Table 7. Inner Model Test Results (t-Test)

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.072	0.072
d_ULS	4.272	4.272
d_G	5.532	5.532
Chi-square	2069.504	2069.504
NFI	0.600	0.600

Based on the output obtained, the SMR = 0.072 indicates a good model fit.

Model fit uses the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value. In general, a good SRMR value to indicate model fit is:

- a. SRMR < 0.08: Indicates a good model fit.
- b. SRMR between 0.08 and 0.10: Indicates an acceptable model fit, although not perfect.
- c. SRMR > 0.10: Indicates a poor model fit.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that students' career decisions have a positive and significant influence on two important variables: Digital Lifestyle and Personal Branding on Social Media. These findings indicate that digital opinions, reviews, and narratives play a strategic role in shaping students' behavior patterns and perceptions regarding online activities. The more positive reviews or references students receive through digital platforms, the greater their tendency to adopt a digital lifestyle and build a strong personal brand as part of their future career strategy.

Therefore, it can be concluded that students' career decisions function not only as a medium for information but also as an instrument of social influence capable of driving the transformation of the younger generation's digital behavior. The implication of these findings is the importance of improving students' digital literacy and critical awareness of digital reviews, so that they are not merely passive consumers of information but are also able to utilize it productively to support self-development and career planning.

Based on the data analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that digital lifestyle and personal branding on social media have a positive and significant influence on students' career decisions. This indicates that students who are accustomed to digital activities and are aware of how to shape their online self-image tend to be more active and focused in determining career choices. In addition, the review variable has also been proven to have a positive and significant influence on digital lifestyle and personal branding, which indicates that digital opinions or reviews are able to shape students' behavior and perceptions in living their digital lives and building strong personal branding.

With an R-squared value of 83.7%, this model indicates that the combination of digital lifestyle and personal branding can explain a significant portion of the variation in students' career decisions. This reinforces the importance of digital media in shaping the career orientation of young people in the technology era.

Suggestion

1. Students are expected to improve their digital literacy skills and awareness in strategically building their personal branding. Considering that career decisions directly impact their digital lifestyle and online self-image, students need to use social media wisely, not only for entertainment but also as a means to strengthen their professional identity and expand their career network.
2. Higher education institutions are advised to provide training programs or workshops related to digital career planning, personal branding management, and the critical use of digital reviews. These activities can take the form of collaborations with industry practitioners, inspiring alumni, or technology-based training that prepares students for career challenges in the digital era.
3. Digital platform and social media providers can take a greater role in providing educational content that supports students in developing a healthy and authentic personal brand. Algorithms also need to be directed to present quality content, so that

- the opinions and reviews shared have informative and inspirational value for the career development of the younger generation.
4. Parents and the social environment need to understand that students' career decisions today are influenced not only by academic grades but also by digital exposure. Therefore, it is important to provide support and a healthy space for exploration for students in building a future career that aligns with their interests and potential, both in the real world and online.
 5. Future researchers can expand this research model by adding mediating variables such as self-efficacy, digital mindset, or influencer credibility, as well as comparing results across groups (e.g., based on major, gender, or level of social media use) to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of career decisions in the digital age.

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