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**Personal Branding in the Digital Era: Social Media Strategies for
Graduates**



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Personal Branding in the Digital Era: Social Media Strategies for Graduates

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Abstract

Purpose: This study represented an important effort to delve into the dynamics of personal branding on social media and its impact on the career trajectories of graduates.

Methodology: By adopting a quantitative approach through a questionnaire-based survey from 280 respondents, the research sought to gather empirical data that could shed light on the patterns and trends associated with personal branding practices among this demographic. By designing survey questions aligned with the research objectives, the study aimed to capture a comprehensive picture of how graduates utilized social media for personal branding and how this activity correlated with their career advancement.

Findings: The results showed a noticeable and meaningful connection, with a correlation coefficient (r-value) of 0.707, indicating statistical significance ($p = 0.05$). This indicated a robust relationship between the variables under examination. The strong correlation underscored the importance of personal branding on social media in assisting graduates with their job search endeavors on these platforms. This capability allowed them to establish direct connections with recruiters and improve their career opportunities significantly. Additionally, the rapidly evolving nature of social media platforms may have introduced complexities in capturing the most current trends and practices related to personal branding.

Unique contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Symbolic Interactionism theory can be used to examine the idea of personal branding and how people utilize social media to present themselves and shape perceptions. Moreover, this theory could prove beneficial for future researchers or scholars keen on delving into related themes, providing a fundamental reference for their investigations. The research proposed a variety of suggestions that could enhance understanding regarding the personal branding strategies that help graduates achieve their professional goals. These recommendations encompass recognizing the importance for recruiters, gaining insights into graduates' online activities, and grasping candidates' skills and interests, all of which are essential for recruiters to make well-informed choices and extend invitations to potential team members.

Keywords: *Personal Branding, Social Media, Graduates, Career Opportunities*

INTRODUCTION

In the age of Web 2.0, the internet and social media are integral aspects of everyday life (Sitamraju, 2018). The integration of the internet and social media has established a platform for individuals to enhance their visibility and broaden their social connections across various domains. As social networking continues to evolve, personal branding has become ingrained in people's routines, with individuals using social media platforms to showcase themselves, share their daily experiences, and garner attention while expanding their online presence (Simplilearn, 2024). This study aims to investigate the significance of personal branding on social media. Personal branding is portrayed as a tool for self-improvement, utilizing various strategies to bring about positive transformations, particularly in career advancement. Originating from the self-help realm and having a marketing focus, it is increasingly recognized as a valuable and practical tool for helping individuals maximize their potential contributions.

Due to the rapid advancements in internet technology, individuals are utilizing the internet not only to access diverse platforms for information but also to manage their own online profiles. Social media has had a significant impact on human behavior, influencing not just online activities but also offline actions in daily life. In the years 2019 and 2020, global internet users spent an average of 145 minutes daily on social media, a slight increase from 142 minutes in the previous year. Currently, social networks have a global penetration rate of 54% (Tankovska, 2021). The number of social media users in Malaysia has shown a consistent rise. Undoubtedly, social media offers numerous benefits and conveniences, becoming an indispensable aspect of people's lives. Malaysian social media users spend an average of six hours daily across various social media platforms (Ho, 2019).

In the era of Web 2.0 social networking, the concept of personal branding has rapidly evolved, becoming a crucial marketing task for individuals seeking to enhance their opportunities and visibility (Marin & Nila, 2021). Social networking refers to online communication platforms that facilitate relationship building with others over the internet. Numerous social media platforms exist in the market, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, among others. Solomon (2016) notes that these platforms offer users a means to present themselves or showcase their personal profiles to their followers or friends. Social media users perceive these platforms as highly accessible and user-friendly, leading them to adopt certain behaviors or attitudes, whether positive or negative, indirectly.

Marin & Nila's (2021) highlights the prevalent practice of self-promotion in people's daily routines. Several studies have also affirmed that in contemporary times, social media stands out as the most straightforward and efficient method for establishing a personal brand, upholding one's reputation, and gaining visibility in a specific industry or niche market (Labrecque et al., 2011; Hood et al., 2014; Jacobson, 2020). Social media emerges as the optimal platform for personal branding due to its widespread use and the tendency of nearly everyone to explore the online realm when seeking information about individuals and their activities.

In the realm of media and communication studies, there is significant value in exploring human behavior within the context of social media. This study introduces a novel concept known as "personal branding," which draws inspiration from branding models typically used for products and applies them to individuals. Personal branding entails a strategic approach aimed at elevating an individual's reputation and visibility from relative obscurity to a prominent status (Harr, 2020). It involves a deliberate process of crafting an impression for an individual, group, or organization. Through personal branding on social media, individuals have the opportunity to share their stories and transform their ideas into tangible realities, capturing the attention and interest of others.

The primary focus of the study is on recent graduates who have completed their education at a university or college and are eager to actively shape their future. The enthusiasm and self-motivation of these graduates to learn and grow are advantageous. Additionally, given that many of them are young and have limited work experience, their professional profiles are essentially blank slates that need to be filled with personal branding elements.

The selected subjects find themselves at a crucial juncture in their lives where they must make independent decisions and take responsibility for their actions, whether they feel fully prepared or not. Personal branding offers several benefits for these individuals, including enhancing self-awareness, recognizing their self-worth, gaining insights into their careers, and fostering enthusiasm. However, the researcher believes that the challenge lies in their lack of self-awareness, which can hinder their ability to accurately perceive their self-image and may impede or misdirect the branding process.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Limited research has delved into a detailed exploration of personal branding on social media concerning career opportunities for graduates. Previous studies have primarily focused on job search strategies and career advancement, emphasizing the understanding and effective utilization of contemporary networking platforms. For instance, a study by Harris & Rae (2011) emphasized that building and maintaining a personal brand is increasingly becoming a distinguishing factor between proactive and reactive individuals in society. Additionally, another study discussed how personal branding could enhance employability (Khedher, 2019). However, these studies did not fully elucidate the correlation between personal branding and graduate employability. Thus, this study aims to bridge this gap by examining the relationship between personal branding on social media and graduate employability.

Additionally, research focusing on personal branding in social media among graduates is relatively nascent compared to studies targeting other demographics such as top-level executives, celebrities, journalists, and YouTubers (Karaduman, 2013; Wincci & Mohammad, 2015; Brems et al., 2017; Tarnovskaya, 2017). Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the significance of personal branding on social media, particularly in its capacity to enhance career prospects for

recent graduates. Personal branding enables them to cultivate a positive image and engage with potential employers or companies through social media platforms.

RESEARCH QUESTION

RQ1: What are the specific trends and patterns observed in the practice of personal branding in social media among graduates?

RQ2: What are the specific trends and patterns observed in the use of social media for career opportunities among graduates?

RQ3: Does personal branding on social media have a relationship with career opportunities for graduates?

During the Web 2.0 era, a significant majority of individuals engage with social media on a daily basis. Müller (2021) reported that approximately 86% of Malaysians actively use social media as part of their daily routines. Social media serves as a platform for individuals to communicate their messages and receive information. Through social media, users can explore profiles and learn about individuals' backgrounds, enabling them to utilize the platform to promote or present themselves publicly. Visiting someone's profile allows others to easily discern their areas of expertise or specialization. Therefore, the objective of this study is to (1) examine the trends and patterns of personal branding on social media among graduates and (2) the analyse the relationship between personal branding in social media and career opportunities for graduates.

Additionally, these findings could be valuable for upcoming researchers or academics interested in exploring similar topics, serving as a foundational resource for their studies. This can aid in comprehending the types of personal branding strategies that contribute to graduates reaching their career aspirations. Furthermore, the outcomes of this study hold significance for recruiters, offering insights into graduates' online behaviors. Understanding candidates' abilities and passions is crucial for recruiters to make informed decisions and extend invitations to potential team members.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Symbolic Interactionism Theory

This research will utilize Symbolic Interactionism theory to explore the concept of personal branding and how individuals employ social media to showcase themselves and construct impressions. Personal branding primarily revolves around self-presentation and managing one's image (Goffman, 1959). This theoretical framework originates from and evolves through interpersonal interactions, suggesting that actions towards individuals or objects are shaped by the meanings attributed to them by others. People leverage symbols with culturally understood significance to communicate effectively.

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Symbolic interactionism is employed as a theoretical framework to analyze how individuals utilize social media for self-expression. This choice of theoretical lens is pertinent due to its emphasis on social media managers' self-perceived personalities and personal branding strategies in relation to others within their professional practices. Goffman's conceptualization of the presentation of self serves as a theoretical perspective that enhances the description of an individual's personal branding on social media (1959). Identity formation is intricately tied to how we perceive ourselves and the image we project to others.

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This process involves impression management, a concept defined by Goffman (1959) as the deliberate presentation and development of identity. Goffman's dramaturgical perspective suggests that all actions are performed within a social context, with individuals aiming to create and sustain a favorable impression on their audience. Individuals actively engage in strategic behaviors to construct and uphold positive images that elicit positive perceptions from others. Blumer (1969) further refined symbolic interactionism into three key premises: human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them (2) meanings are derived from social interaction and group life (3) meanings are handled in and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters.

Solomon (1983) elucidated symbolic interactionism as a mechanism through which individuals define themselves through the consumption of products. Products carry a social significance that is harnessed to shape social realities for consumers and their social circles. This social meaning attributed to products often outweighs their actual functional utility. While the concept of products with social meaning has been studied extensively in the context of consumption, it is not limited solely to products; it can also be applied to individuals. People utilize social media as a platform to communicate and showcase aspects of themselves such as their skills, expertise, or daily experiences. Many of the exchanges individuals engage in have more of a social significance than a purely functional one.

Past studies such as those by Berms et al. (2016) and Jacobson (2020) have also employed symbolic interactionism as their theoretical framework. These researchers have examined personal branding and the ways in which individuals leverage social media to portray themselves publicly. Therefore, the use of symbolic interactionism theory in this study on the personal branding of graduates through social media, focusing on users managing their reputation and creating impressions to enhance their personal value and social capital, appears to be appropriate. This theory is set as a base to this research topic as it aligns with how graduates select social media platforms and use images to present themselves to the public. They aim to highlight their ideal qualities, convey messages and information, and establish connections to access job opportunities.

The Dynamics of Personal Branding"

Personal branding is a strategy aimed at showcasing oneself to society. It serves as a means for individuals to demonstrate their skills, expertise, and personality to the world. It involves narrating one's story and how it mirrors their behaviors, expressions, attitudes, both verbal and non-verbal (Geysler, 2020). Personal branding encompasses the perception others have of you, representing how you present yourself to the public. This perception can be a blend of personal interactions, media portrayals, and the impression formed based on online content like social media profiles.

Peters (1997) first introduced the concept of personal branding in his article "The Brand Called You," suggesting that it has become increasingly relevant in the digital age. Personal branding revolves around the notion that everyone can cultivate their own brand, with the primary goal being self-marketing. This concept is akin to personal selling, as an individual's personality traits are key to achieving success. Activities such as managing and enhancing social media profiles, maintaining blogs, and developing personal websites all contribute to personal branding. As Shepherd (2005) explains, personal branding involves highlighting and promoting an individual's strengths and personality to the public. It can serve various purposes, including building relationships, enhancing social standing, or expressing oneself effectively.

Past studies have identified two fundamental concepts that serve as theoretical underpinnings for personal branding. The first concept stems from Richardson and Bourdieu's (1986), which utilizes the notions of social capital and cultural capital to elucidate how personal branding operates within organizational contexts. This framework offers a valuable conceptual basis for comprehending the phenomenon of personal branding. The second concept draws from Goffman's dramaturgical theory (1959), which characterizes personal branding as self-presentation. In everyday interactions, individuals concentrate on managing their image or identity to leave a memorable impression on the public, a process commonly referred to as impression management.

Personal Branding through Social Media Platforms

Social media presents a straightforward and effective method for individuals to establish a personal brand, cultivate a reputation, and gain visibility within a specific niche or industry. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) highlight that social media enables businesses to directly connect with individuals in a cost-effective and efficient manner. Henderson and Bowley (2010) further note that social media has shifted the focus of online services from mere consumption to communication and collaboration, opening up new possibilities for interaction between businesses and their communities. Given the widespread use of digital platforms by virtually everyone, social media emerges as the premier platform for developing a personal brand, as it allows individuals to easily reach out, learn more about others, and showcase their activities.

Social media serves as a potent tool for enhancing self-esteem as it enables individuals to bolster their self-affirmation. It provides a platform through which individuals can promote their personal brand and easily connect with their desired audience. Marin and Nila (2021) emphasize the importance of presenting a positive image when establishing a personal brand on social media, cautioning against actions that could potentially harm one's reputation or image due to unforeseen errors. They suggest that a person's social media presence should be cultivated as an asset throughout their career. However, the abundance of information on social media poses a challenge in crafting a distinctive and memorable identity.

Career Opportunities through Social Media

Platforms like LinkedIn and Facebook have gained popularity among businesses because they streamline the recruitment process and attract top-tier candidates (Jobvite, 2018). Traditionally, companies advertised job openings in newspapers to fill positions, but now they predominantly post recruitment notices on digital platforms such as their websites and popular job portals. The job market has evolved significantly, offering diverse opportunities for job seekers, including internships, social media platforms, and entrepreneurship among young adults. In this expansive digital realm, individuals have a multitude of options to choose the most suitable method for their job search. While recruiters increasingly use social media to assess candidates, individuals are also leveraging these platforms to promote themselves and appeal to potential employers.

According to Wetsch (2012), surveys conducted among recruiters indicate that utilizing social media for identifying exceptional new employees is an efficient and cost-effective approach. The widespread use of social media by recruiters is now a common practice. Consequently, the investment in recruiting via social media is rising, while traditional recruitment methods are declining. Jobvite (2018) highlights that job seekers who do not utilize social media and solely rely on traditional recruitment strategies may face obstacles compared to those who are adept at using social media. Campbell (2010) emphasizes that recruiters are leveraging social media platforms like LinkedIn to specifically target suitable candidates.

This research addresses this gap by investigating how individuals in the social media sector build their identity and leverage their personal branding to market themselves for securing and retaining employment.

Through social media, candidates now have the opportunity to engage actively with recruiters, a practice welcomed by recruiters as it enhances their efficiency. As job seekers enter a job market where social media skills are highly valued, it is crucial for them to understand that they are entering an environment where companies actively use social media to find qualified individuals.

The importance of personal branding has been a widely discussed topic, as evidenced by several studies (Khedher, 2014; Petruca, 2016; Ledbetter & Meisner, 2021). It's crucial for students to understand that their online behavior can significantly impact how potential or future employers perceive them. Some individuals may initially resist the idea that content or images shared on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter could be scrutinized by employers during the recruitment process (Human Resources, 2015; Heathfield, 2020).

Human Resources departments have been utilizing social media platforms for some time now to monitor potential hires. According to Jobvite (2018), LinkedIn stands out as the most preferred social media platform for recruitment at 77%, followed by Facebook at 63%. However, posting inappropriate photos, engaging in alcohol or drug-related content, or making discriminatory remarks can have a detrimental impact on one's chances of being hired. Conversely, showcasing information related to job qualifications, skills, and demonstrating how well one could fit into an organization can have a positive effect.

Being mindful of these issues allows individuals to effectively manage their social media profiles. Social media can also be leveraged to expand one's social capital, defined as the ability to utilize resources and engage in mutually beneficial social interactions within a network (Gehl, 2011). Another study by Trang, McKenna, Cai & Morrison (2023) highlights the significance of genuinely developing online personal branding strategies and techniques to close the gap between Gen Z's ideal and perceived images in personal branding on social media during job searches. Personal branding serves as a means for individuals to cultivate their social capital, thereby adapting more flexibly to evolving job markets. Graduates, in particular, can use social media to project a positive image, enhance their social capital, and consequently increase their career opportunities.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research was to underscore the significance of personal branding among graduates and to propose a tailored personal branding framework specific to this context. The study targeted graduates who had secured employment in Penang, Malaysia. For the research purpose, quantitative methods like online survey questionnaires were utilized to examine the trends and patterns of personal branding on social media among Malaysian graduates. For this study, a non-probability sampling method was employed. The survey questionnaire comprised a total of 26 questions, organized into four distinct sections labeled as Section A, Section B, Section C, and Section D. Section A focused on demographics, prompting respondents to provide details such as age, gender, geographical location, education level, and current employment status to gather precise data. Section B inquired about social media usage and preferences regarding the

preferred social media platform among respondents. Section C investigated how respondents leveraged social media for personal branding purposes. The construct was adopted from Personal Branding in Social Media by Stankiewicz & Bortnowska (2016) while Section D delved into the relationship between social media utilization and career opportunities which was adopted from Social Media for Career Opportunities by Mowbray & Hall (2020).

The questionnaires were created digitally using a computer, specifically through the use of Google Form. These survey questionnaires were then distributed to respondents through different online platforms. Utilizing Google Form offered the advantage of simplifying data collection for the researcher. Researchers selected the appropriate social media platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, to distribute survey questionnaires as this was crucial for obtaining successful data from the surveys. Prior to sending out the survey invitation link or attaching the questionnaire form to potential respondents, researchers sought approval through the chatbox feature. In cases where respondents did not complete the questionnaire within 10 days, reminders were sent. Respondents had the option to choose their preferred platform from a range of options, enabling the researcher to reach out to a diverse pool of graduates. A total of 280 respondents were obtained from the survey questionnaires. After respondents had answered the questions, the data summary was automatically generated in the response section, aiding the researcher in data analysis using Statistical Packages Social Sciences version 27.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics on Demographic of Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age		
19-20	28	10
21-24	233	83.2
25-28	19	6.8
Gender		
Male	140	50
Female	140	50
Highest education level		
Diploma	28	10
Undergraduate	213	76.1
Postgraduate	39	13.9
Employment status		
Employed, full-time	123	44
Employed, part-time	60	21.4
Not employed, looking for job	97	34.6
On average, how often do you update your social media profile?		
Never	22	7.9
1 - 2 times per month	139	49.6
3 - 4 times per month	78	27.9
5 - 6 times per month	22	7.9
7 - 8 times per month	6	2.1
More than 8 times per month	13	4.6
What's the top social media platform for job hunting?		
Facebook	89	31.8
Instagram	11	3.9
Twitter	3	1.1
LinkedIn	171	61.1
Others	6	2.1

Table 1 above showed the age distribution of the respondents. Respondents aged 19-20 years old made up 10% (N=28), a significant 83.2% (N=233) fell within the 21-24 years age group, and the remaining respondents aged between 25-28 years old comprised 6.8% (N=19). The gender distribution showed an equal split, with both male and female respondents each constituting 50% (N=140) of the sample.

In terms of educational attainment, respondents with diploma qualifications made up 10% (N=28), the majority of respondents, accounting for 76.1% (N=213), held undergraduate degrees. Meanwhile, postgraduate degree holders represented 13.9% (N=39) of the sample. In terms of employment status, 44% (N=123) of respondents were employed full-time, 21.4% (N=60) were employed part-time, and 34.6% (N=97) were not employed and were currently looking for a job.

The frequency of updating social media profiles varied among respondents. Specifically, 7.9% (N=22) of respondents never updated their social media profiles, while the majority updated their profiles 1-2 times per month, constituting 49.6% (N=139). Additionally, 27.9% (N=78) updated their profiles 3-4 times per month, 7.9% (N=22) updated 5-6 times per month, 2.1% (N=6) updated 7-8 times per month, and 4.6% (N=13) updated their profiles more than 8 times per month.

In regards to the preferred social media platform for job searching, the majority of respondents believed that Facebook was the best platform, with 31.8% (N=89) selecting it. LinkedIn followed closely behind, chosen by 61.1% (N=171) of respondents. A smaller percentage of respondents believed Instagram was suitable for job searching (3.9%, N=11), followed by Twitter (1.1%, N=3). Additionally, 2.2% (N=6) of respondents chose other social media platforms as their preferred choice for job searching.

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation on Personal Branding in Social Media

Variables	Mean	Std Dev
1. I upload photos to create a professional image on social media.	4.92	1.08
2. I share short videos about my profession on social media.	4.10	1.33
3. I share my opinion and comments about my profession on social media.	4.12	1.33
4. I update my personal status on social media.	4.86	1.06
5. I share the events that I organised and participated on social media.	4.99	1.06
6. I share personal achievements on social media.	4.81	1.17
7. I create posts about my profession on social media.	4.50	1.23
8. I create a professional profile to attract the recruiter's attention on social media.	4.80	1.29

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with eight statements regarding their engagement in personal branding on social media, ranging from '1' for Strongly Disagree to '6' for Strongly Agree. According to Table 2, the average scores indicated that most respondents believed personal branding on social media was significant. The statement with the highest average score was 'I shared the events that I organized and participated in on social media,' which scored $M = 4.99$ and $SD = 1.08$ while the statement with the lowest average score was 'I shared short videos about my profession on social media,' which scored $M = 4.10$ and $SD = 1.33$.

The reflection of the statement on personal branding in social media above manifested a trend where respondents actively engaged in sharing their experiences and activities on social media platforms. This trend aligned with the concept of personal branding, where individuals strategically showcased aspects of their lives to shape their online identity and cultivate a certain image. Sharing events that one organized or participated in served multiple purposes within the context of personal branding. Firstly, it allowed individuals to showcase their interests, passions, and activities, providing a glimpse into their lifestyle and personality. This helped create a more relatable and authentic online presence, which was often valued by audiences and potential employers alike.

Likewise, sharing events also acted as a way to network and connect with others who shared similar interests or were involved in similar industries. By sharing experiences and participating in relevant events, individuals were able to attract like-minded individuals, expand their social circles, and potentially create professional opportunities. Moreover, sharing events on social media contributed to building a personal brand narrative. Consistently sharing meaningful and engaging content related to events established a cohesive story about one's interests, expertise, and values. This storytelling aspect was crucial in personal branding as it helped shape perceptions and associations that others had about an individual. Overall, the trend of sharing events on social media as part of personal branding reflected a strategic approach to leveraging online platforms to showcase experiences, connect with others, and craft a compelling personal brand identity.

Table 3

Mean and Standard Deviation on Social Media and Career Opportunities

Variables	Mean	Std Dev
1. Social media is my main source of job search information.	5.02	1.10
2. I am a member of the social media groups where job search information is posted.	4.89	1.13
3. I 'liked' social media pages where job search information is posted.	4.43	1.23
4. I followed the social media accounts where job search information is posted.	4.86	1.12
5. I actively used social media to look for job opportunities.	4.84	1.14
6. I contacted someone through social media and asked them about a job.	4.90	1.12
7. I am more comfortable asking people for job search information on social media rather than face-to-face.	4.87	1.16
8. I have been advised by a professional (eg. lecturer, tutor, careers advisor) to use social media websites as part of my job search.	4.32	1.47

According to the data in Table 3, the average score suggests that most respondents believe social media is beneficial for securing career opportunities. The statement with the highest average score, 'Social media is my main source of job search information,' received a value of $M = 5.02$

and $SD = 1.10$ while the statement with the lowest average score, 'I have been advised by a professional (e.g., lecturer, tutor, careers advisor) to use social media websites as part of my job search,' received a value of $M = 4.32$ and $SD = 1.47$

The results indicated a significant reliance on social media platforms for gathering information related to job opportunities. This trend reflected the evolving landscape of job search strategies, where traditional methods like job boards and company websites were supplemented or even replaced by social media channels. Hence, it also showed a pattern of individuals who were actively using social media platforms as a primary resource for exploring job openings, researching companies, and gathering insights into industry trends. Social media offered a dynamic environment where job seekers could access real-time information, engage with industry professionals, and stay updated on the latest job market developments.

Besides, this reliance on social media for job search information highlighted the importance of digital presence and networking in today's job market. Job seekers who were active and engaged on social media platforms could tap into a vast network of contacts, join relevant groups and communities, and leverage these connections to discover hidden job opportunities and gain valuable industry insights. Moreover, this pattern signified a shift towards personalized and targeted job search strategies. Rather than passively waiting for job listings to appear on traditional platforms, individuals were proactively using social media to curate their job search experience, tailor their applications, and showcase their skills and expertise to potential employers.

Overall, the pattern reflected a growing recognition of the role that social media played in modern job hunting strategies, emphasizing the importance of digital presence, networking, and personalized approach in navigating today's competitive job market.

Table 4

Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Personal branding in Social Media	0.91	8
Social media for Career Opportunities	0.89	8

Table 4 exhibited the reliability test used was Cronbach's alpha, which evaluated the level of agreement among different observers. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher was generally considered to indicate good reliability, while a coefficient below 0.50 would suggest low reliability. The results presented demonstrated the reliability coefficients for Personal Branding in Social Media $\alpha = 0.91$, and for Social Media for Career Opportunities $\alpha = 0.89$. These

coefficients indicated that both constructs exhibited good and acceptable levels of reliability and consistency between items.

Table 5

Pearson Correlation Analysis

		Personal branding in social media	Social media for career opportunities
Personal branding in social media	Pearson Correlation	1.000	0.707 ^a
	Sig. (2 tailed)		0.000
	N	280	280
Social media for career opportunities	Pearson Correlation	0.707 ^a	1.000
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0.000	
	N	280	280

The data from Table 5 indicated a clear positive result with ($r = 0.707$), which was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), demonstrating a substantial positive relationship between the variables being analyzed. This strong correlation suggested that personal branding on social media played a crucial role in aiding graduates in their job search efforts on social media platforms, enabling them to directly connect with recruiters and enhance their career prospects. Social media had facilitated a faster and more efficient method for graduates to search for jobs, highlighting its effectiveness as a tool in the job search process.

As the Internet and social media became increasingly important, graduates needed to understand the value of using social media to shape their personal identity. This present study was in line with the concept of personal branding that became ingrained in the daily lives of individuals (Marin & Nila, 2021). Graduates leveraged social media platforms to enhance their personal branding efforts, particularly in updating their social media profiles. This indicated that a significant portion of graduates utilized social media platforms as a tool to shape their personal identity. The findings underscored a prevalent trend and pattern of personal branding on social media among graduates, showcasing a high level of engagement.

These graduates actively shared events they organized or participated in on social media, often uploading photos to project a professional image and build their personal brand. The present findings aligned with previous research (Stankiewicz & Bortnowska, 2016), reinforcing the established concept of the significance of personal branding on social media (Karaduman, 2013; Wincci & Mohammad, 2015; Brems et al., 2017; Tarnovskaya, 2017). Specifically, personal branding on social media offered graduates a platform to craft a professional image and create an appealing social media profile that captured people's attention. In addition, social media indeed played a significant role in assisting graduates in securing career opportunities. Online recruitment practices had become commonplace, providing graduates with avenues to access career opportunities through social media platforms, and it concurred with a study by Mowbray & Hall (2020), which revealed that younger individuals particularly favored using social media as a primary source for employment-related information.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study affirmed that graduates could indeed leverage social media to access career opportunities. Many graduates relied on social media as their primary source of job search information and even reached out to contacts through social media to inquire about job openings. These findings were consistent with previous research and contributed to bridging the gap in understanding the relationship between social media usage and graduate employability (Khedher, 2019). Consequently, social media emerged as a valuable tool for graduates seeking to enhance their career prospects and access a wider range of opportunities. The results also revealed that graduates utilized social media to craft their image and present themselves online while enhancing their career prospects.

In summary, personal branding on social media could significantly enhance career prospects for graduates. By actively managing personal profiles, showcasing achievements, and sharing professional insights, graduates could effectively build their personal brand. Social media served as a powerful platform for accessing career opportunities, enabling graduates to connect with relevant groups and stay informed about job openings. This study underscored the robust features of social media platforms that facilitated personal branding, providing graduates with the tools to effectively present themselves and access career opportunities swiftly and efficiently.

Recommendations

Quality Over Quantity: Emphasize the importance of maintaining a high-quality online presence rather than focusing solely on the frequency of posts. Encourage graduates to curate content that reflects their expertise, values, and professional identity effectively.

Strategic Networking: Highlight the significance of strategic networking on social media platforms. Encourage graduates to not only showcase their achievements but also engage in meaningful conversations, join relevant groups, and connect with industry professionals to expand their network.

Brand Consistency: Stress the importance of consistency in personal branding across different social media platforms. Graduates should ensure that their profiles, content, and interactions align with their personal brand and career goals.

Privacy and Security: Remind graduates to prioritize privacy and security settings on social media platforms. They should be mindful of the information they share publicly and regularly review their privacy settings to protect their personal and professional reputation.

Continuous Learning: Encourage graduates to stay updated with social media trends, algorithms, and best practices. Continuous learning and adaptation to the evolving digital landscape are crucial for maintaining a competitive edge in personal branding.

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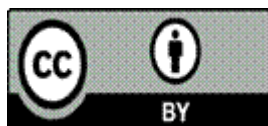
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