A Celebrification of Celebgram on Instagram: A Case Study of @Shireeenz

Lailatul Maghfiroh
Nurul Fitri Hapsari
English Department, Universitas Airlangga

Abstract

Celebrification becomes something usual in everyday life after the emergence of online media. With the emergence and rapid development of social network, celebrification now can be practiced by everyone. In this study, the writer aimed to examine how celebrification process is achieved by a DIY celebrity on *Instagram*. The writer used a DIY celebrity on *Instagram* named Sukainah Shirin Al-Athrus or @shireeenz. The writer used qualitative method to examine the issue in this study. To analyse the process of celebrification of @shireeenz, the writer used the concept of online self-presentation techniques. The writer discovered that Shirin promoted many social networks and used tagging and *hash tags* on her *Instagram* account. She also used comments, private chat group, and held *meet and greet* events to maintain the feeling of closeness and intimacy with the followers. The characteristics of media convergence possessed by *Instagram* support Shirin in successfully applying self-branding. The writer also found that in elevating her social status from an ordinary people to a celebrity, Shirin exhibited her closeness with famous fashion bloggers, designers, other celebgrams, and the real celebrities. The success of Shirin's celebrification cannot be separated from the fact that muslimah children in Indonesia actually do not have any perfect figures in fashion and celebrity world. Therefore, the appearance of Shirin is able to fulfill this empty slot in fashion and celebrity world in Indonesia. The writer argued that this success is a sign of the social changes in celebrity culture when *Instagram* as a social media is able to produce a DIY celebrity who is also consumed by mainstream media.

Keywords: celebgram, celebrification, diy celebrity, instagram, techniques of online self-presentation.

Introduction

Celebrification becomes something usual in everyday life after the emerging of online media. Graeme Turner defined celebrification as a process of ordinary people to become celebrity (Turner, 2006). This process concerned in individual level that transforms themselves into public figures, celebrity, filmstars, and etc. Nowadays, the chances to be celebrity have spread outside among elites and become an expectation of the population (Turner, 2006). One of media in which celebrification rapidly and easily occurs is *Instagram*. *Instagram* is a new social network published in 2010. *Instagram* is a social network which gives its users features to share their private photos in the media. *Instagram* also permits the users to take filtered photos and share them with other social network (Alper, 2013). According to the official blog of *Instagram*, the active users of *Instagram* reached 150.000.000 people, sixty hundred percent of whom are women. Thus, many owners of the online shop in *Facebook* or *Twitter* started to expand their business on *Instagram*. The owners of online shop on *Instagram* also use endorsement as a method to advertise their products. They use people who have many followers to endorse their product. Unlike mainstream media where endorsement will be paid by money, endorsement on *Instagram* will only be paid by goods that they are endorsed. The new celebrity started emerging because *Instagram* uses them as their product's models. *Instagram*'s users recognize "celebgram", the terms for those who has many followers and been endorsed by many online shops on *Instagram*. Thus, this study aimed to examine the process of celebrification done by a DIY celebrity in *Instagram*.

Because this study is a case study, the writer used a celebgram, Sukainah Shirin Al-Athrus or @shireeenz as the object of the study. Shirin is the first celebgram also appearing in television. Shirin joined *Instagram* since 2.5 years ago. In December 2014, she had 127.000 followers. She has already posted 679 photos and been endorsed by many online shops. In December 2013, Shirin launched her first book entitled *The Wonderful World of Shireeenz* which contains her daily activities and her hijab fashion

style. And finally, Shirin appeared on a television program entitled *Hitam Putih* as a guest star in March 2014. To analyze the process of celebrification of @shireeenz, the writer used a theory from Alice E Marwick explaining about how DIY celebrities use self-presentation techniques to boost their popularity, namely micro-celebrity, self-branding, and lifestreaming.

To support this study, there are several studies related to this study. The first study is conducted by Gustav Lindahl & Mimi Öhlund entitled *Personal Branding through Imagification in Social Media Identity Creation and Alteration through Images*. By using Gartner's theory, Côté's identity capital, and Charon's symbolic interactionism, the findings show that *Instagram* could make their users express themselves and their identity more freely through the photos. By using photos, the users are not limited to promote their identity because images are assumed to be more efficient than texts in the matter of personal branding. The second related study was *the Presentation of Celebrity Personas in Everyday Twittering: Managing Online Reputations throughout a Communication Crisis* conducted by Collapinto and Benecchi. The study used qualitative content analysis method. The findings show that new technologies have created opportunities for both scandal subjects and scandal audiences to receive and present information by themselves. It means that social media could be a tool to maintain the crisis communications among celebrities. And, the last related study conducted by Marwick and Boyd was *To see and Be seen: Celebrity Practice on Twitter*. By using celebrity theories from many expertises, such as Marshall, Turner, Rojek, Gamson, and etc, this study found that real celebrities who are famous on mainstream media still use the techniques of micro celebrity to gain status and attention in online.

In this study, the writer used qualitative method. Qualitative method, according to Jackson, is a method emphasizing detailed and depth descriptions of social practices in order to understand how the participants explain and experience their world (Jackson, 1995). The strategy of inquiry used in this method is a case study. Case study is a depth analysis and intensive exploration of an individual case in order to obtain knowledge of a phenomenon (Fidel, 1984). Because this study is a case study of @shireeenz, the population of this study was all photos, comments and captions that have been posted in @shireeenz *Instagram* account since 1 january 2013 until 30 june 2014, about 474 photos. The samples were ten photos taken based on the concept of Alice E.Marwick about the techniques of online self-presentation consisted of micro-celebrity, self-branding, and lifestreaming. The samples photos were also chosen based on the highest likers in every category.

Micro-celebrities

As it stated above, *micro-celebrity* is a technique that uses people to boost their popularity by using video, blogs, and social networking sites. In her account, Shirin used many social networks, such as blogs, *Twitter*, and *youtube* to boost her popularity. To extend the range of her publication, she also boosted up her popularity through *tagging* and *hashtags*. In maintaining her popularity and creating intimacy to her followers, Shirin held a private chat by using LINE (chat application), held *meet and greet* and book signing events, and gave some comments directly to her followers.

One of the social networkes used by Shirin to boost up her popularity through *Instagram* is blog. To boost the viewers of her blog, @shireeenz promoted her blog on her *Instagram* account. Among 474 pictures in data population, @shireeenz promoted her blog twice. In promoting her blog, she posted a picture functioning as a teaser to her followers to open her blog. In the picture, Shirin smiles to the followers to 'tease' the followers to open her blog.

Figure 1

Through the caption, @shireeenz asked her followers persuasively to visit the blogs. From the caption, @shireeenz used persuasive words, *check out,* to motivate the followers to visit her blog. She also used the bracket symbol () and quotation marks to emphasize her blog address. These emphasizing words are intended to make the audiences focus more on this address. @shireeenz also used eccentric spelling. According to Danet & Herring (2007), eccentric spelling or intentional reproduction of spoken language used is an expressivity resource. Eccentric spelling attempts to reproduce actual articulation in typed messages as the major causes for these unconventional spellings (Indah, 2014, p. 9). In the caption, eccentric spelling can be found in the words Thaaaankzz!. This word is able to make the readers feel that she is expressive, happy, sincere, and looks friendlier. The writer assumed that the expressiveness in the eccentric spelling is the character of youth since eccentric spelling, according to a study conducted by Norizah Hassan et al represents teens and young adult in internet language usage as they have grown up in this technological era (Hassan, Hashim, & Philip, 2010, p.340). The way she said "Thaaaankzz!" showed her excitement to the followers. At the end of the sentence, @shireeenz also used emoticon to show her happy expression. Emoticon is a combination of keyboard characters designed to show an emotional face expression (Indah, 2014, p. 11). By using these techniques, @shireeenz succeeded to boost popularity of her blogs. Until December 9th 2014, she had gained 146.345 viewers.

Self-branding

In all posted photos, Shirin always wears her hijab since her first posted photo. This appearance could result in people's compliment over her consistency in wearing hijab in her young age. Some of her followers gave a comment like 'wah pinternya masih kecil uda berhijab', which shows that Shirin brands herself as a Muslim girl who obeys Islam's order to use hijab. Moreover, Shirin often posts photos and captions that contain Islam values on her account. She often gives a caption about how Muslim women should use hijab by using quotes from Al-qur'an and Al-hadits. Shirin is also aware of every big day in Islam such as mauled nabi, ied Adha, and ied Mubarak and makes posting about it. It can be assumed that Shirin presents herself as a religious person on her account.

Shirin then is known as teenage hijab fashionista. She was often publicized in mass and online media. Vemale.com depicted Shirin as a celebgram who has unique hijab style. Another online news site, wolipop.com, introduced Shirin to the public as little hijabers. Gadis Magazine also introduced Shirin as hijab model that has many experiences in fashion. The magazine also stated that Shirin is a teenage girl who fulfills the religious obligation. She has used hijab since nine years old consistently. All of the images shown by media are the evidences of the successful self-branding. Marwick stated that the number of friends or followers, comments, replies, likes, and mentions in the social networks are the indicators of successful self-branding (Marwick A. E., 2010, p. 315). Marwick also added that the true self-branding success is for those who own small business or become freelancer that use internet as their primary tools to earn money.

Lifestreaming

As the writer has stated above, life streaming is sharing private information continuously to the networked audiences. Private information here means that people deliberately share what they eat, where they are, what kind of book that they read or all private information and make it track-able and available to others. On her Instagram account, Shirin posted about 1-2 photos every 2 days. In one and a half year, the population of the photos has reached the number of 474 photos. In her posted photos, Shiren often showed the places that she visited. She also posted photos in her private area, such as her bedroom, living room, park of the house, kitchen, and inside her car. Shirin also deliberately showed her family, her friends, and with whom she is connected. She showed her activities through explicit and implicit ways. Explicitly, she showed the followers information of what activities she did and what kind of place that she visited through the caption. Implicitly she did not write any explicit information through the caption, but the followers could infer it clearly from the background of the photos, which indirectly showed the place or the activities she did.

To make it more comprehensive, the writer divided life streaming techniques in three parts, namely public life, private life and social life. Public life means her activities in a public space which was depicted either in the pictures or in the captions, such as kinds of event that she has been invited to or she held by

herself for her followers. Private life means how Shirin showed her followers her private places or activities. The other part is social. Social life means how Shirin showed her relations to her friends and other celebrities. After the writer observed the population of the pictures, the writer found 24 photos that show her private space and 178 photos depicting her social life.

In public places, Shirin depicted mall as the most visited place. She depicted mall as her background to show the endorsement goods from the online shop owners. She also used the mall as a place for showing her hobbies, such as ice skating and playing some music instrument. Mall is also the place where she was shopping or just hanging out. Besides mall, Shirin also showed other public places, such as airport, hotels, restaurants, bookstore, school, amusement parks and Masjidil Haram, Mecca. With the background in the book store, Shirin promoted her own book to her followers. School is also portrayed by Shirin to post photos regarding her achievements and her friends.

Figure 2

Figure 2 is one of sample photos, which depicts how Shirin often shows to her followers that she has connection with other hijab celebrities and fashion designers. She showed her closeness to Dian pelangi (Hijab Fashion blogger and Designer), Ascia Akf (Fashion Blogger), Lulu El Hasbu (Hijab Fashion Designer), Zahratul Jannah (MUA and Celebgram), Marshanda (Celebrity), and Dewi Sandra (Celebrity). She also showed to her followers when she was invited to TV program as a guest star or when she was publicized in the wolipop and got an award as an influencial blogger and Instagrammers from Zalora.

Actually, life streaming technique is a strategy to boost social status in the form of publicity (Marwick A. E., 2010, p. 365). In this case, the purpose of Shirin showing her activities in public, her private life, her relationship to other celebgrams, fashion bloggers, designers, and celebrities is to boost her social status. On the other hand, how she showed her ability in playing piano, singing, publishing a book, being endorsed, and appeared on TV and got featured in newspaper implies that she wanted to achieve a celebrity status and to be acknowledged by her followers. In his book entitled Celebrity (2004), Chris Rojek stated that celebrity status comes in the three forms, namely ascribed, achieved, and attributed (Rojek, 2004, p. 17). Ascribed status means that the person got celebrity status from their parents or the line of celebrity descendants. Achieved status means that the person got celebrity status because of their work hard by competing their talents in the celebrity industry. Attributed status is gained from gossip and sensation through social media. The writer assumed that Shirin gets her achieved celebrity status. Nevertheless, in Shirin case, the writer argues that Shirin achieves her celebrity status from practicing micro-celebrity techniques mentioned by Graeme Turner as DIY celebrity.

Media Convergence and Celebrification of @Shireeenz

Media convergence is a condition of the interconnection of computing, content, and communication as the consequences of the emergence of internet (Flew, 2014). In another word, media convergence is interconnection of information or something cross medium. One of the examples of social media who can interconnect two or more things cross medium is *Instagram*. *Instagram* is a new social network which is published in 2010. *Instagram* is a social network which gives their user facility to share their private photos in the media. *Instagram* also provides captions in unlimited characters. In this case, *Instagram* is able to connect photos which literally only can be seen and enjoyed by those who took the photos to the public space that can be enjoyed and seen by everyone.

Besides of the character of media convergence owned by *Instagram*, *Instagram* also provides the users features to interconnect its users' posting photos to the other social media. The users can also easily upload

photos to multiple social media networks instantly (Facebook, *Twitter*, etc) (Alper, 2013). In other words, *Instagram* provides their users features to publish their posted pictures to greater audiences. *Instagram* also provides comment column and a like sign as symbols to appreciate the users' posted photos.

Because of these features, *Instagram* is able to engender the celebrification of the users. The celebrification requires techniques to present self to public. In *Instagram*, it is also really possible for the users to do what Marwick defined as the techniques of online self-presentation. Thus, by giving the link for her posts to her other social media accounts, Shirin can present herself to greater audiences.

The writer argues that the other success factor of Shirin's celebrification is *hijaber* phenomenon booming in Indonesia. At that time, @shireeenz presented herself as a *hijaber* in the kid's body. People started adoring Shirin because she was assessed as a unique kid who has good taste in her fashion hijab and cloth. Many people followed her and liked her posting that make him started famous on *Instagram* and started endorsed by many online shops. A fashion designer, Dian Pelangi, started to see the potencial talents of Shirin. She started invited Shirin on Hijab fest which is actually the event from adult womanand encourage Shirin to make a book about her hijab style.

As this issues goes, moreover, society cannot neglect that nowadays children use internet. A study conducted in 2012 found that 63% children in Indonesia have signed in on social networks service, the highest percentage compared to Japan, India, Egypt, and Chille (GSMA & NTT DOCOMO, 2013, p. 12). When children use social networks, the writer assumed that child users are aware with issues and trends on the social networks itself. When trends of celebgram appears on Instagram, child users are also aware with this phenomenon. Before Shirin was considered as celebgram, most of celebgrams are adults. However, after the Shirin booming as celebgram with her stylish cloth and hijab, child users seemed to have found their appropriate figure. As what has been explained before, Shirin is able to present herself as the one who is popular, smart, multitalented, stylish person but still religious. The writer assumed that Shirin represents the perfect dreams of these pre-adolescents users.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, Shirin as a DIY celebrity has promoted herself through many social networks and has used *tagging* and *hashtags* in her *Instagram* account. She also used comments and private chat group, as well as held *meet and greet* events to maintain the feeling of closeness and intimacy with her followers. The characteristics of media convergence possessed by *Instagram* support Shirin in successfully constructing her self-branding. The writer also found that in elevating her social status from an ordinary person to a celebrity, Shirin exhibited her closeness with famous fashion bloggers, designers, other celebgrams, and the real celebrities. The success of Shirin's celebrification cannot also be separated from the fact that muslimah children in Indonesia actually do not have perfect figures in fashion and celebrity world. Therefore, the appearance of Shirin can fulfill this empty slot in fashion and celebrity world in Indonesia. The writer argued that this success is a sign of social changes in celebrity culture when *Instagram* as a social media is able to produce DIY celebrity also consumed by mainstream media.

Works Cited

Alper, M. 2014. War on *Instagram*: Framing Conflict Photojournalism with Mobile Photography Apps . Journal of New Media and Society, 16(8), 1233–1248.

Anis, A. 2014. THE NEGOTIATON OF NON-MEMBERS OF HIJABERS SURABAYA COMMUNITY IN CONSUMING HIJAB FASHION PROPOSED BY THE COMMUNITY. Surabaya: Unpublished.

APJJI. 2012. Profil Pengguna Internet 2012. Indonesia: Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Jaringan Internet Indonesia.

Colapinto, C., and Benecchi, E. 2014. The Presentation of Celebrity Personas in Everyday *Twitter*ing: Managing Online Reputations Throughout a Communication Crisis. Media, Culture, and Society, 36((2)), 219-233.

Creswell, J. F. 2009. Qualitative Procedures. In J. F. Creswell, Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (pp. 200-227). California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Danet, B., & Herring, S. C. 2007. The Multilingual Internet: Language, Culture, and Communication Online. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fidel, Raya. "The Case Study Method: A Case Study." LISR 1984: 273-288.

Flew, T. 2014. Media Convergence. Retrieved 3 January, 2015, from Encyclopaedia Britannica: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1425043/media-convergence

GSMA and NTT DOCOMO. 2013. Children's use of Mobile Phones An International Comparison 2012. Japan: GSM Association and The Mobile Society Research Institute NTT Docomo Inc.

Hassan, N., Hashim, A., and Philip, A. 2010. Language Use in the Construction of Interpersonal Relationship. Malaya: Unpublished.

Indah, W. 2014. The Use of Internet Language Features by Male and Female in the Comments of 9gag Account on *Instagram*. Surabaya: Unpublished.

Instagram. 2013. *Instagram*. Akron, Ohio, United States of America.

Jackson, Winster. Doing Social Research. Candada: Scarborough Publisher, 1995.

Lindahl , G., and Öhlund, M. 2013. Personal Branding Through Imagification in Social Media; Identity Creation and Alteration Through Images. Stockholm University. Unpublished.

Marwick, A. 2007. The People's Republic of Youtube? Interrogating Rhetorics of Internet Democracy. Canada: Association of Internet Researchers 8.0.

Marwick, A. E. 2010. STATUS UPDATE: CELEBRITY, PUBLICITYAND SELF-BRANDING IN WEB 2.0. PhD Thesis.

Marwick, A., and Boyd, D. 2011. To See and Be Seen: Celebrity Practice on *Twitter*. Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies, 17((2)), 139-158.

Muktiono, D. I.. 2013. Celebrity Status in RCTI's Idola Cilik: The Consumption of the Popular Media by Indonesian Children. Mozaik vol 13 no 2, pp. 126-135

Park, J., and Pujazon-Zazik, M. 2010. Pujazon-Zazik,To Tweet, or Not to Tweet: Gender Differences and Potential Positive and Negative Health Outcomes of Adolescents' Social Internet Use. American Journal of Men's Health, 4((1)), 77–85.

Raamat, R., Keller, M., Martensen, A., and Tufte, B. 2008. Young Estonians and Danes as online shoppers: A comparative study. Young, 303-324.

Riduwan, F. 2013. MAKNA JILBAB BAGI KOMUNITAS HIJABERS SURABAYA. JURNAL SOSIOLOGI ISLAM, 66-87.

Rojek, C. 2004. Celebrity. London: Reaktion Books.

Samana, K. A. 2012. Ekspresi Diri NET GENERATION melalui *Twitter*. Surabaya: Unpublished .

Sentf, T. 2012. Microcelebrity and The Branded Self. In J. Burgess , and A. Bruns, Blackwell Companion to New Media Dynamics. New York: Blackwell .

Turner, G. 2004. Understanding Celebrity. London: SAGE publications Ltd.

Turner, G. 2006. The Mass Production of celebrity; Celetoids, Reaity TV and the 'Demotic Turn'. International Journal of Cultural Studies, 9(2), 153-165.

Wee, L., and Brookes, A. 2010. Personal Branding and the Commodification of Reflexivity. Cultural Sociology, 4((1)), 45-62.