

AN ANALYSIS OF THE VISUAL MEANING OF THE @PSIKOLOGIINDONESIA_ INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT AS A MEDIUM FOR MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNICATION FOR GEN Z IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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ABSTRACT

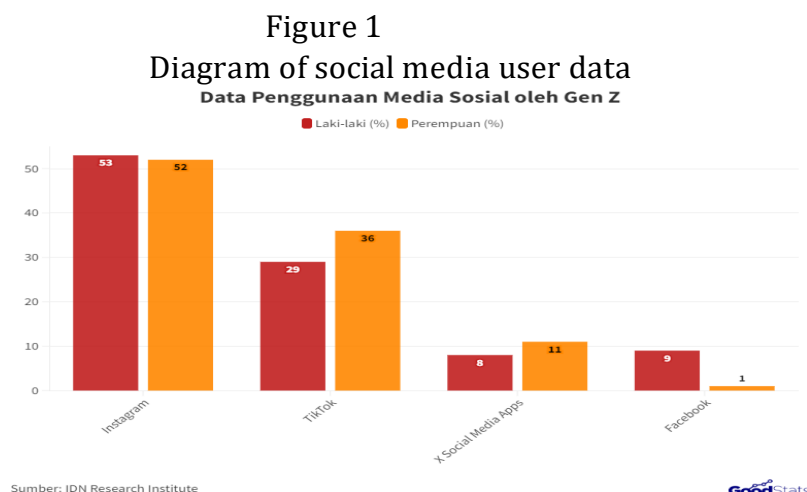
This study aims to analyse the visual meanings contained in the content of the Instagram account @psikologiindonesia_ as a medium for communicating mental health messages to Generation Z in the digital age. The study employed a qualitative approach using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis, which comprises icons, indices and symbols. Data were collected through observation of the five posts with the highest levels of engagement published during the research period. The findings indicate that the visual meanings represented in the content of @psikologiindonesia_ consistently convey mental health messages that are educational, reflective and persuasive. The visuals not only depict the realities of Generation Z's social media life but also encourage self-awareness, emotional regulation and healthy social media behaviour as means of maintaining psychological well-being. The combination of icons, indices and symbols in each post creates strong, systematic and easily understood meanings for the audience. Furthermore, the findings reveal that the content of the Instagram account @psikologiindonesia_ effectively conveys mental health messages through visual elements that are relevant to the needs of Generation Z, amidst the increasing use of social media as a source of mental health education.

Keywords: Visual Meaning, Semiotics, Mental Health, Social Media, Generation Z.

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has transformed the way people access information, including information on mental health. Social media no longer serves merely as a means of communication and entertainment, but has also become an educational medium that enables the rapid, widespread and easily accessible dissemination of information. Ease of access, high levels of interaction, and social media's ability to reach diverse sections of society make it an effective tool for supporting the dissemination of health information. According to Sampurno et al. (2020), social media can provide easy access to information whilst supporting the educational process through interactions between users.

Instagram is one of the most widely used social media platforms, particularly amongst the younger generation. Its focus on visual content—such as photos, videos and infographics—makes it an effective medium for conveying information in an engaging and easily understandable way. Furthermore, its interactive features facilitate two-way communication between content creators and their audience. The high level of Instagram usage indicates that this platform has great potential as a medium for communication and education across various fields, including health.



Source: IDN Research Institute

Generation Z is a group that is very tech-savvy and internet-savvy. Having been born and raised in the digital age, this generation accesses information more frequently via social media than through conventional media. The tendency of Gen Z to prefer visual and audiovisual content makes Instagram one of the most effective platforms for conveying a wide range of information. This situation opens up opportunities for various parties to utilise social media as an educational tool that is tailored to the needs and habits of the younger generation.

One issue that is increasingly being discussed on social media is mental health. Mental health refers to a state in which an individual is able to recognise their potential, manage life's pressures, work productively, and make a positive contribution to their social environment (Sarmini et al., 2023). However, the issue of mental health is still often met with stigma and a lack of public understanding. Therefore, there is a need for media capable of conveying information on mental health in an engaging and easily understandable manner, whilst reaching a wide audience, particularly the younger generation.

One Instagram account that is actively providing mental health education is @psikologiindonesia_. This account consistently shares a variety of content on mental health, such as stress management, emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, and an understanding of psychological conditions. With over 927,000 followers, @psikologiindonesia_ demonstrates the high level of public interest in mental health information shared via social media. Furthermore, the interactions on each post indicate active audience engagement in the communication process being fostered.

The success of conveying mental health messages via Instagram is determined not only by the content of the information shared, but also by how the message is presented through visual elements. The use of illustrations, colours, typography and specific symbols can shape meanings that influence the audience's understanding of the message being conveyed.

However, research specifically examining the presentation of mental health education messages on the Instagram account @psikologiindonesia_ using a visual semiotic approach remains relatively limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyse the presentation of mental health education messages on the Instagram account @psikologiindonesia_ as a digital communication medium using Charles Sanders

Peirce's semiotic approach.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Health Communication*

Mental health plays a vital role in an individual's life, as a healthy mental state enables a person to carry out their daily activities optimally as a living being.

Good mental health also contributes to an individual's development in a more positive direction in the future. Mental health is a state in which an individual is able to recognise their own potential, manage normal life stresses, work productively, and contribute to their surrounding environment. Conversely, mental health problems are understood as a condition in which an individual is unable to adapt to environmental demands and situations, which ultimately leads to certain limitations in carrying out their daily functions (Sarmini et al., 2023).

B. *Visual Communication*

The term 'visual communication' is derived from two words: 'communication' and 'visual'. Communication is a process of conveying a message or information

from the sender to the receiver, which enables a response or feedback, either directly or indirectly.

Meanwhile, 'visual' refers to anything that can be perceived by the sense of sight, such as visual forms or images. Based on this definition, visual communication can be understood as the process by which a communicator conveys a message to a recipient through visual media or images, so that the message is received and understood in visual form (Juniarti et al., 2025, p. 57).

C. *Communication Media*

The word 'media' derives from the Latin *medius*, which literally means 'middle' or 'intermediary' between the sender and the receiver of a message (Nurhayati, 2021, p. 14). According to Effendy, as cited in Setiadi, communication is a process whereby a person conveys a message to another, either directly through speech or indirectly through media. This process involves the transmission of ideas, concepts or information from one individual to another using various communication channels.

In an organisational context, according to Suparna, Rachmawati and Winoto, communication is a fundamental skill essential for every member to fulfil their roles and responsibilities in order to achieve the organisation's objectives. Therefore, libraries need to establish effective communication to support the fulfilment of their functions and duties, both internally and externally. Libraries can utilise various media to communicate, whether through face-to-face meetings or online.

D. *Social Media*

Social media is a means or platform of communication used by its users to interact and communicate online via the internet. Through social media, users can communicate with one another by sharing messages in various formats, such as text, images, audio and video. Some types of social media commonly used today include blogs, wikis and various other platforms.

Social media is one of the trends in the development of Information Technology (IT) in the Information Age or digital era. Social media refers to various internet-based applications built on the concepts and technologies of Web 2.0, which enable users to create and exchange content with one another. The term 'social media' itself has become extremely popular and is used by people of all generations. Through social media, activities that previously had to be carried out in person or face-to-face can now be conducted virtually, either synchronously (in real time) or asynchronously (not at the same time) (Abdillah, 2022, p. 1).

E. *Instagram*

Instagram, often abbreviated to IG, is an app-based social media platform that allows users to share photos and videos. The app also provides a variety of filters that can be used

before sharing content on other social media platforms (Wikipedia). The name 'Instagram' is derived from a combination of the words 'insta' and 'gram'. The word 'insta' refers to 'instant', indicating that users can share content quickly. Meanwhile, "gram" comes from the word "telegram", which means the rapid transmission of information, implying that photos and videos can be shared immediately.

Instagram is a social media platform focused on image and video content, where users can share various forms of visual content with their audience. Since its launch in 2010, the platform has continued to grow and has become one of the most widely used social media platforms across the globe (Baskoro, et al., 2023, p.19). This growth has established Instagram as a key channel for the dissemination of information, including in the context of health communication in the digital age.

F. *Generation Z*

Generation Z, Gen Z, iGen or Centennials refers to the generation born between 1996 and 2010, following the Millennials or Gen Y. Generation Z has grown up with the internet and social media; many are currently pursuing higher education at university, whilst some have already graduated and entered the workforce in 2020. Generation Z has grown up with technology, the internet and social media, which sometimes leads to them being stereotyped as tech-addicts, anti-social or social justice warriors. This context has produced a hyper-cognitive generation that is highly adept at gathering a wealth of information sources and integrating virtual and offline experiences.

Generation Z is a generation that was indeed born in a highly advanced era, an era in which the internet has permeated all walks of life. Consequently, Generation Z is also known as the NET generation. Generation Z, or Gen NET, is heavily reliant on technology, skilled at using various information tools, never without their smartphones, and always connected to the internet. Generation Z can access any information via the gadgets in their hands. Some members of this generation already have a substantial income (Amrullah, 2024, p. 42).

G. *Charles Sanders Peirce's Theory of Semiotics*

Semiotics is a method of analysis used to understand the meaning embedded within a sign. According to Charles Sanders Peirce's Theory of Semiotics, semiotics is grounded in logic because logic studies the way humans reason, and Peirce posits that the process of reasoning takes place through signs (Saleha, 2023, p. 66).

In his approach, as outlined in the journal article (Kartini, Indira Fatra Deni, 2022), Peirce divides signs into three main elements that form a relationship

the triad—namely, the sign (ground), the object, and the interpretant—which came to be known as the ‘triangle of meaning’. These three elements are understood as the process of semiosis. Both developed the theory of semiotics independently; Saussure in Europe from a linguistic background, whilst Peirce in the United States based his work on philosophical principles. The term ‘semiotics’ itself derives from the Greek ‘*semeion*’, meaning ‘sign’, and ‘*seme*’, which refers to the process of interpreting signs.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilising descriptive research and content analysis. The qualitative approach was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning, content and communication strategies used by the Instagram account @psikologiindonesia_ in conveying mental health education messages as a communication medium in the digital age.

The research subject consists of mental health education content posted on the Instagram account @psikologiindonesia_. Content was selected using a purposive approach, taking into account posts containing educational messages regarding mental health, such as stress management, emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, and other psychological issues relevant to Generation Z.

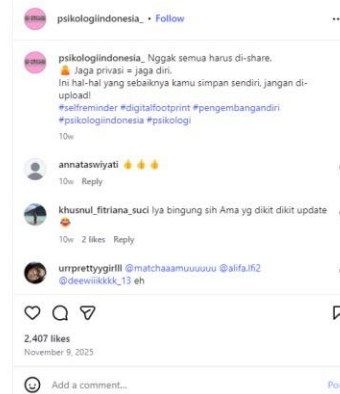
The research data comprised primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through observation of posts on the Instagram account @psikologiindonesia_, whilst secondary data was sourced from books, scientific journals, articles, and literature relevant to digital communication, social media, mental health, and content analysis. Data collection was carried out through observation and documentation in the form of screenshots of posts relevant to the research focus.

Data analysis was carried out using content analysis, by examining and interpreting the elements of the messages contained within the Instagram content. Through this process, the researcher identified the format of the messages, the use of visual elements, and the communication strategies employed by the @psikologiindonesia_ account in conveying mental health education to its audience. The results of the analysis were then interpreted to understand how mental health messages are packaged and communicated via the social media platform Instagram.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Instagram account @psikologiindonesia_ is an educational psychology account that actively shares information on mental health via its feed, carousel, Reels and Stories. The content published focuses on mental health, emotional management, social relationships and personal development. The language used is simple, communicative and tailored to the characteristics of Generation Z.

1. Poster Analysis 1: Things You Shouldn't Post on Social Media



This poster addresses the issue of oversharing on social media. The main icon is an illustration of a woman holding a smartphone. The message is conveyed through depictions of social media usage, whilst the symbol is represented by a headline urging the audience to be more prudent when sharing personal information. This poster highlights the importance of privacy awareness and self-control when using social media.

2. Analysis of Poster 2: 5 'I Don't Care' Attitudes That Are Good for Mental



Health

This poster features a visual of a woman with a relaxed expression and her hands raised as a symbol of releasing psychological pressure. The white and pink colours convey a sense of calm and self-acceptance. The poster's main message is the importance of reducing dependence on the judgements of others as a form of healthy coping mechanism.

3. Analysis of Poster 3: 5 Reasons Why Your Life Should Be More Private



This poster features an illustration of a man holding a smartphone as a symbol of a social media user. This activity serves as an indicator of awareness regarding digital privacy. The symbol is reflected in the headline, which urges the audience to maintain boundaries between private life and the public sphere. This poster emphasises the importance of personal data protection and mental health in the digital age.

4. Poster Analysis 4: Being Kind to Others



This poster highlights the values of empathy, social care and interpersonal support. The visual narrative suggests that kind and supportive behaviour can contribute to the mental health of both individuals and the wider social environment. This content encourages the formation of healthy social relationships.

5. Analysis of Poster 5: What is Stoicism



This poster uses an illustration of a philosopher as a symbol of wisdom and calmness of mind. The grey and white colours reinforce the themes of rationality, emotional stability and clarity of thought. The poster teaches the values of Stoicism as an approach to managing emotions, accepting reality and building mental resilience in the face of the pressures of modern life.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and analysis of the visual meanings in the content of the Instagram account @psikologiindonesia_ as a medium for mental health communication for Generation Z in the digital age, it can be concluded that the visual meanings presented in the content of the @psikologiindonesia_ account, taken as a whole, serve as an effective, educational and relevant medium for mental health communication for Generation Z.

This is evident from the results of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis of the five pieces of content with the highest number of interactions, which show that every visual element—be it an icon, an index or a symbol—plays a significant role in shaping a mental health message that is easily understood by the audience. More specifically, the conclusions of this study are as follows:

Firstly, in terms of visual meaning (*interpretant*), the content presented by the @psikologiindonesia_ account consistently contain reflective messages focused on enhancing self-awareness, managing emotions, and promoting healthy behaviour on social media. This is evident in content such as calls to limit *oversharing*, adopting a positive 'couldn't care less' attitude, maintaining privacy, and understanding emotional management within social and family relationships. These meanings demonstrate that visuals serve not merely as aesthetic elements, but as a medium for psychological education that encourages changes in the attitudes and mindsets of Gen Z.

Secondly, based on a sign-based analysis, the use of human illustrations (both men and women) interacting with their smartphones have become the key icons representing the lives of Gen Z in the digital age. The cues conveyed through body language, facial expressions and digital activities reinforce psychological contexts such as social pressure, emotions and self-reflection. Meanwhile, symbols in the form of text or headlines are used directly as educational messages that are communicative and easy to understand.

Thirdly, in terms of visual design elements—such as typography, illustrations and colour—all content demonstrates consistency in conveying meaning. Sans-serif typography, with an emphasis on headlines (*in bold* and capital letters), serves to attract attention whilst reinforcing the main message. Simple yet representative illustrations help the audience grasp the context quickly. Meanwhile, the use of colours such as white, blue, grey and other soft hues conveys a sense of calm, safety and reflection, which aligns with the objectives of mental health communication.

Fourthly, the pattern of content produced indicates that the @psikologiindonesia_ account actively and consistently presents educational content

in various formats such as posters, comics and Reels. With a total of 171 posts over three months, the majority of the content focuses on mental health education. This indicates that the account not only conveys information but also serves as a sustainable communication platform for building mental health awareness amongst Gen Z.

Fifthly, the visual messages produced also demonstrate persuasive and preventative functions, whereby the content not only provides information but also encourages the audience to engage in self-reflection, manage their emotions, and develop healthy digital behaviour. With a style of language that is simple, relatable, and in line with the characteristics of Gen Z, the messages conveyed are more readily accepted and internalised.

Thus, the visual meaning conveyed by the content on the Instagram account @psikologiindonesia_ presents mental health messages tailored to the needs of Generation Z through the use of icons, symbols and imagery relevant to their lives in the digital age.

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