

Visual Storytelling: A Contemporary Approach to Online Journalism for the Millennial Generation

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ABSTRACT

Visual Storytelling is sharing information through videos, photos, visual designs, and illustrations. Visual Storytelling is used to attract the attention of the audience or reader, describe characters and settings, and make the storyline more vivid and interesting. This case study examines the topic of digital visual content, information dissemination, art, and culture for local Indonesian products on the Instagram account Folkative. Folkative is a company targeting a young audience, primarily millennials. Founded to inspire, inform, and represent the diverse creative culture of Indonesian youth, Folkative accomplishes this through the creation of content and interactive online events aimed at the youth of today. The communication style of the Folkative Instagram account has a significant impact on online activities and the evolution of millennial communication patterns. This research employs a qualitative approach using the case study method. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 5 informants selected through purposive sampling criteria. The results of this study indicate that the form of content, quality perception, and reader attitudes support the dissemination of content through the Instagram account Folkative. Visual design, which presents the power of images, has become a suitable medium for storytelling, and it is favored by the millennial generation, particularly in the context of journalism. This transformation has shifted the style of journalism from traditional audio and text-based formats to visual art that narrates current and meaningful information for the audience, thus enhancing the literacy interests of the digital native generation.

Keywords: visual storytelling, digital journalism, millennial generation, social media

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of social media in Indonesia is attributed to the expansion and easy accessibility of information regarding communication technology advancements. Social media comprises three key components: information infrastructure, communication tools, and social media users (Parks, 2012). Essentially, social media functions as an effective information disseminator. On the other hand, it also exhibits high social dynamics, enabling other social media users to engage in open communication (Rianto Rahadi, 2017). The percentage of social media users is higher compared to users of mass media in print and electronic media. This factor is supported by its ease of use, such as being accessible through mobile phones, laptops, or other internet devices. Social media also represents a new form of media that has emerged as a technological innovation in the media industry. Social media serves as a platform for collective participation, utilized for sharing or exchanging information and opinions, and it can foster a sense of connectivity and belonging (McLuhan & Gordon, 1964).

Folkative is an online media platform that utilizes the social media platform Instagram as a means to disseminate information. The Folkative Instagram account focuses on distributing information among its target audience, which primarily consists of the younger generation, often referred to as millennials, the majority of whom are active users of social media. The communication style employed by the Folkative Instagram account for interacting with its followers ensures that the information is readily comprehensible and easily accessible to a wide audience, particularly the millennial generation. Effective communication is also employed in the delivery of information, ensuring the smooth flow of information and interactions within the Folkative Instagram account.

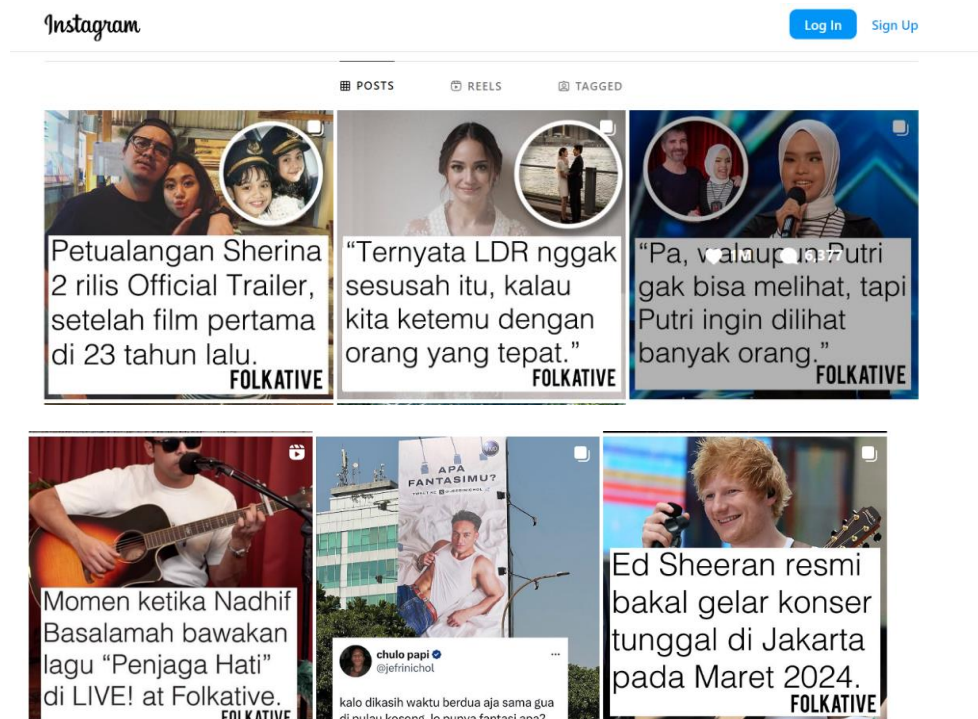


Figure 1. The visual presentation of Folkative's journalism
Source: Instagram Folkative, first name (2023)

The presence of consistent and engaging interactions is evident in the comment section of the Folkative Instagram account, where users frequently engage with the content. The free dissemination of information aims to facilitate the social media users in receiving and absorbing the information distributed through these platforms. A 2011 study on new media in the United States discovered that social media carried 50% fewer news compared to television, with only 29% of news found in print media such as newspapers, and 33% in broadcast news media like radio (Susanto, 2017). The appropriate method of communication for the millennial generation is storytelling. Storytelling is a communication technique that entails narrating something pertinent to an activity or event and conveying it orally or visually to share experiences and information with others (Bachtiar S. Bachri, 2005).

Storytelling is an effective method for disseminating information because narration represents the conveyance of information in a semi-formal language that piques the interest of the millennial generation in consuming content. The benefits

of storytelling include the development of imagination, empathy, and various other emotions, the enhancement of reading enthusiasm, the establishment of closeness and harmony, the cultivation of cognitive abilities and imagination, the refinement of speaking skills, the fostering of sociability and communication abilities, as well as the transfer of values and habits. Storytelling fosters the development of internal connections between teachers and students, the cultivation of character, and the enrichment of knowledge, emotional intelligence, social aspects, and perceptual dimensions (Kusmiadi & Yuyun Nurfalah, 2008).

Among the top four most popular social media platforms used by the Indonesian population, this case study focuses on Instagram, the second most popular social media platform in Indonesia. According to the 2020 APJI survey results, Instagram is an application for sharing images and videos (Ria Listianingrum, 2021). Instagram has experienced rapid growth as a social media platform. In addition to its user base, Instagram's features have also expanded rapidly, making it a widely utilized social media application in Indonesia. The Instagram social media program holds the third position in terms of popularity, following WhatsApp and Facebook, with a total of 53 million active users, comprising 49 percent female and 51 percent male (as cited in tekno.kompas.com, "Research Reveals Social Media Usage Patterns of Indonesians," July 31 to August 10, 2018). With the expanding functionalities of Instagram, numerous companies from various industries have recognized its potential as a marketing tool for presenting their products or companies more broadly and simply (Made Resta Handika, G. S. 2018). The usage of social media is predominantly driven by the millennial generation. The term 'millennial generation' originates from the word 'millennials,' coined by two American historians, William Strauss and Neil Howe, in their book 'Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation' (Neil Howe, 2000). They introduced the term 'millennial generation' in 1987. Another perspective, as put forth by Elwood Carlson in his book 'The Lucky Few: Between The Greatest Generation and The Baby Boom' (2008), defines this generation as those born between 1983 and 2001. The millennial generation is also commonly referred to as Generation Y. This term gained popularity and was featured in op-eds in major American newspapers in 1993 (Carlson, 2008).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Media communication refers to a process of exchanging information through various media channels, including television, radio, magazines, newspapers, and digital platforms. Media communication encompasses not only the technical aspects of producing and delivering information but also considers the cultural, social, and psychological impacts of the messages conveyed. Media communication is divided into two theories, namely:

a) Visual Storytelling

Visual storytelling is a technique of conveying messages through the use of images, illustrations, videos, and various other visual elements as primary tools in delivering those messages. The objective of visual storytelling is to capture the audience's attention, evoke emotions, and aid the audience in better understanding the message. Visual storytelling can be utilized across multiple mediums such as advertisements, films, television, and social media. Key components of visual storytelling include a robust narrative, engaging visual usage, and appropriate placement of textual visuals. According to McLuhan, visual storytelling entails employing various forms of visual media to express ideas and messages (McLuhan & Gordon, 1964). According to Walter, visual storytelling is both an art and a science of narrative through images, graphics, and videos. He contends that visual storytelling offers numerous benefits, including:

1. Enhancing attraction and engagement: Communicating visually can capture attention and increase user engagement with the presented content.
2. Reinforcing brand and message: Images and videos aid brands in conveying their messages more clearly and persuasively.
3. Improving comprehension: Visuals can assist users in understanding information more easily and quickly compared to text alone.
4. Amplifying influence and persuasion: Visual storytelling can enhance the impact and persuasiveness of the conveyed message.

Walter also emphasizes the importance of visual narrative design with appropriate strategies relevant to the brand and target audience. This

perspective underscores the significance of visual storytelling as a powerful tool in modern communication strategies, particularly in a digital landscape saturated with information. By leveraging the compelling nature of visuals, brands and content creators can effectively engage and persuade audiences, ultimately driving meaningful connections and achieving communication goals. (Walter, 2014).

b) Visual Journalism



Figure 2. Folkative Visual Journalism Presentation
Source: Instagram Folkative (2023)

Visual journalism involves the use of visual elements such as photos, graphics, illustrations, and videos to convey news or information. In the fields of journalism and photography, initially, they operated separately. Journalism developed around 1798, and photography emerged in 1839. Over time, both underwent revolutions in form and function. Journalism and photography have not yet fully integrated because there has been no individual or figure to initiate the merger of these distinct fields. Visual Journalism is the practice of strategically

combining words and images to convey information. Visual journalism, in literal terms, is the visual work of journalism that holds news value or messages worthy of public knowledge and is disseminated through mass media (Muhammad Azhari, t.t.).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to elucidate the role of online journalism in capturing the interest of the Millennial Generation in viewing Visual Storytelling information on the Instagram account 'Folkative.' According to Sugiyono, qualitative research methodology is rooted in post-positivism philosophy, utilized to investigate under scientific conditions (experiments) where the researcher serves as the key instrument. Data collection techniques are conducted through triangulation (combination), and the analysis is of a qualitative nature, emphasizing a greater focus on meaning over generalization (Prof. Dr. Sugiyono, 2013).

The research method employed is the case study method. According to Creswell, this method encompasses several key characteristics. Furthermore, Creswell delineates several characteristics of a case study, namely: (1) the selection of a 'case' for examination; (2) the case is bound by time and place; (3) the case study method involves the utilization of diverse sources of information in the data collection process to provide a detailed and in-depth portrayal of responses to a specific event, and (4) by applying a case study approach, researchers delve into and elucidate the context or setting of an occurrence. With these four characteristics, a case can serve as a subject of study (John W Creswell, 1998).

In this study, the content of the Instagram account @folkative is regarded as a case to be meticulously observed by the researcher within the timeframe of 2022-2023.

The primary data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with 5 followers of the Instagram account @folkative, encompassing both male and female individuals, within the age group of 17-30 years, including students and working professionals, all falling under the category of Millennial Netizens aligned with the target demographic of the @folkative account. Meanwhile, for secondary

data, various sources such as journals, books, articles, websites, reports, and other pertinent materials were utilized to bolster the argumentation within the research, which is centered on the reception of users regarding the utilization of media convergence in the context of visual storytelling on the Instagram account @folkative. This serves as the subject of a literature study addressing the Role of Online Journalism for the Millennial Generation through Visual Storytelling on the Folkative Instagram account.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research delineates several findings that the researcher can present and analyze. The acquired data have been pre-examined to eliminate any invalid or unnecessary data that could affect the research data analysis results.

The Dissemination of Information through Social Media

Social media is a digital platform for disseminating information and engaging in interactions through text, photos, audio, and videos. From among the perspectives provided by our informants, we have selected a few for inclusion in our research, in order to bolster the findings of our study.

'I believe that disseminating content on social media is permissible as long as the content is positive and devoid of public deception. In today's era, people rely on social media to access further information on subjects of interest.' (Chaski, 2023).

'I consider it of utmost importance, as in this modern age, nearly every stratum of society employs social media. Disseminating information through these platforms allows us to easily acquire both national and international updates.' (Tuffahati, 19).

'In my opinion, the distribution of information through social media is becoming increasingly rapid and sophisticated in the current age. Many of our insights are derived from social media, and its influence is profound in our daily lives.' (Fadila, 19).

'It carries risks, whether positive or negative, contingent upon the perceptions and opinions of those who view it, especially when information is obtained solely from headlines without a comprehensive understanding of the entire content.' (Meli, 24).

'I tend to have reservations about its accuracy as the information I often encounter on social media tends to prioritize clickbait, aiming to pique readers' interest to find out more.' (Ridha, 18).

Based on the statements provided by the five informants above, three of them expressed agreement with the utilization of social media as a means for disseminating information. This consensus is largely attributed to the modern era's widespread adoption of social media platforms by nearly all segments of society. Leveraging social media for information dissemination is perceived as highly advantageous, allowing easy access to both domestic and international information. Two of the informants, however, expressed reservations about the use of social media for information dissemination. They raised concerns regarding the prevalence of clickbait tactics in such platforms, which are employed to captivate readers and prompt them to explore further content.

This diversity of opinions underscores the significance of utilizing social media, particularly Instagram, as a potent medium for conveying information. Platforms like Instagram, exemplified by the Folkative Instagram account, have proven to be highly effective channels for information dissemination due to the extensive reach of social media. This scope facilitates the efficient spread of information not only to the local populace but also to international audiences. Consequently, social media has become a pivotal medium for open information sharing and social interaction, both in response to domestic and foreign content. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of openness within Instagram, which fosters user interaction, enabling swift and widespread information absorption (Presti dkk., 2023).

Nonetheless, the openness of social media as a conduit for information dissemination also comes with inherent drawbacks. Misinformation can easily proliferate through social media, as content may not always align with its titles, taglines, or stated content. This can result from the existence of various accounts and outlets that spread hoaxes and similar content on social media platforms, often motivated by a desire to garner high ratings or views. Platforms like Folkative serve as a reference point for other media outlets, illustrating how social media can be effectively harnessed to deliver information by leveraging distinctive features, such as visual design and other unique attributes, akin to those employed by the Folkative Instagram account.

The dissemination of information employing visual design

The dissemination of information using visual design is widely employed to capture the readers' attention. Among the opinions of the informants, we selected some of them as the subject of our research to strengthen our research findings.

'In my opinion, the use of visual design in information dissemination is not an issue at all because through visual design, communication and information presentation take on forms that can eliminate the potential for miscommunication compared to relying solely on written or oral styles. Given the constantly changing nature of society and the increasing complexity of problems, design, as one of the approaches to problem-solving, necessitates special consideration by designers in communicating through images. Designers must also create visual designs that are easily understood, comprehended, and accepted by the public.' (Amalia, 21).'

Visual design methods are indeed more readily accepted by most people, but it is still important to acknowledge that each individual has their own style of absorbing information. In other words, it cannot be generalized that everyone absorbs information more easily through visual design than through other methods.' (Aulia, 22).

'Certainly, it is very effective, and young people are bound to be more interested when information is disseminated using visual design. Because if the information

dissemination is ordinary, it is likely to be less attention-grabbing and boring.' (Aditya, 20)

'In my view, the dissemination of information using visual design is innovative and creative. The presence of visual design in the information makes it easier for us to digest the information.' (Fadila, 19)

'For me, it's good, but not everyone can read visually, especially for those who use technology but are elderly. They may have trouble understanding what visual design is.' (Desna, 25)

Based on the statements of these five informants, there are some who support the use of visual design in information dissemination because it is highly effective and creative, making it easier for readers to comprehend the provided information. On the other hand, some informants caution against using visual design, as not all readers can interpret information visually, particularly elderly individuals who may struggle to understand technology and visual design.

The utilization of visual design in information dissemination by the Instagram account Folkative refers to the creativity of a graphic designer in the digital realm to create an appealing impression on its readers. This impression includes aesthetic values found in the designs posted on the Folkative Instagram account, aiming to enhance a reader's interest through the visual designs provided. Many of the visual designs in Folkative's Instagram posts emphasize aesthetic values, such as the use of clear, simple, and easily readable fonts. Furthermore, the consistency demonstrated by the Folkative Instagram account, using a color scheme of white and black as the background, creates a pleasant and non-disruptive visual experience for readers, enhancing the comprehension of the information presented.

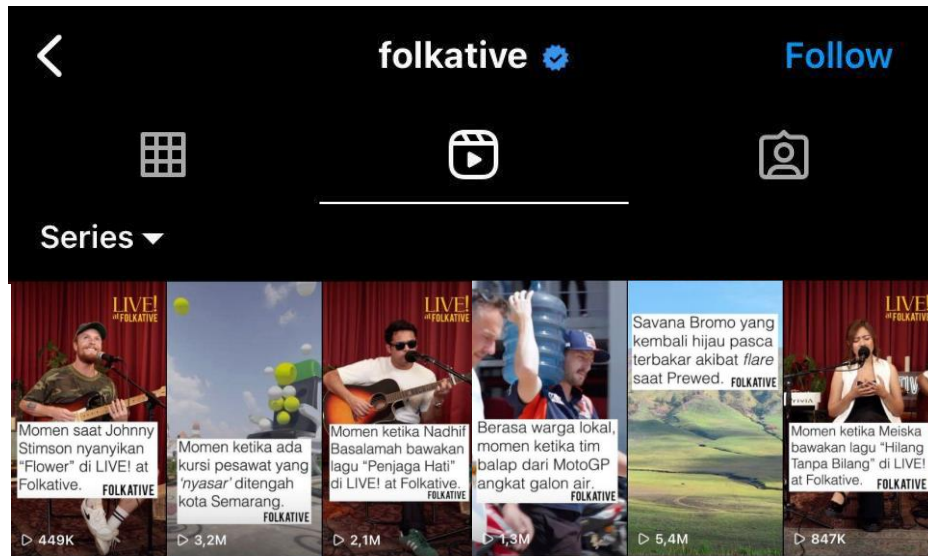


Figure 3. The visual content of Folkative reaches millions of viewers.
Source: Instagram Folkative, first name (2023)

Nevertheless, the utilization of visual design in disseminating information, as exemplified by the Instagram account Folkative, does entail certain limitations. These limitations manifest in the form of constrained perception or interpretation by the elderly population. This stems from the fact that some elderly individuals lag behind in adopting technology, such as social media and the internet. Such discrepancies can be attributed to the inadequacy of preparation on the part of both the individuals themselves and their immediate associates in imparting technological advancements, particularly in the realm of communication and information technology, including social media. Consequently, the information dissemination on social media platforms, akin to Folkative, primarily impacts technology-savvy users and those who possess a genuine understanding of visual design. Nonetheless, it should not be ruled out that there may be instances of elderly individuals who comprehend the technology and visual design aspects as proficiently as the millennial demographic.

Visual storytelling as an attractive variable on Instagram accounts: A Study on Folkative

Visual Storytelling in the Instagram account 'Folkative' effectively captures the attention of Instagram users. Among the viewpoints provided by our informants,

we selected several of these viewpoints for our research in order to strengthen our findings.

'What I find particularly captivating about this Instagram account is when the account owner provides information about news that is widely discussed by the public through social media. In these instances, the account owner offers further insights into the news that is being discussed, which allows me to stay informed about trending or popular news topics on the 'Folkative' Instagram account. Additionally, 'Folkative' disseminates information through unique visual designs that distinguish it from other accounts.' (Chaski, 19).

'The information provided is highly current and can be considered the fastest compared to other platforms. The headline copywriting is clear, and at times, it's slightly unique or bold, making it very appealing.' (Fatmarani, 22).

'The news provided is the latest and is presented succinctly (to the point). The use of English language in the captions also helps in improving foreign language skills.' (Nurmala, 21).

'Many Twitter users repost news from 'Folkative,' and the concise and captivating headline design of the news articles piqued my interest to follow this account.' (Ridha, 18).

'I am intrigued by the 'Folkative' Instagram account because it offers information that is packaged as a single source of knowledge for me and other young individuals who explore Indonesia's creative culture. Additionally, they present information in an engaging and easily understandable manner for the youth. This makes it even more appealing to me; the information is up-to-date and to the point.' (Amalia, 21).

The statements from these five informants indicate that what makes the 'Folkative' Instagram account appealing is the combination of up-to-date information, a concise and clear presentation, and the use of visual design in conveying the information through headlines.

The aforementioned serves as evidence that the information conveyed through the Folkative Instagram account is readily comprehensible to the Indonesian populace due to the simplistic and visually appealing design. The utilization of language and vocabulary in the Copywriting employed by the Folkative Instagram account is easily understandable by the public, owing to the linguistic clarity that is in alignment with the information presented, without diminishing the inherent meaning within the communication.

This assertion is reinforced through the utilization of Storytelling within the Folkative Instagram account when disseminating information via its social media platform. The language employed therein is notably lightweight and easily grasped by the public, characterized by contemporary idiomatic expressions, including colloquial phrases. Consequently, this engenders interest within the public for reading and fully comprehending the information being presented. The account further addresses various topical issues with lucidity and detail, making the information disseminated readily acceptable to the public. The warm impression conveyed through visual storytelling, combined with the use of everyday and contemporary language by Folkative, serves to enhance public interest in reading. This facilitation aids readers in attributing meaning to the information being conveyed.

The Distinctions between the Instagram Account 'Folkative' and Other Information-Oriented Accounts

In the realm of social media, particularly within Instagram accounts, information dissemination extends beyond folkative Instagram accounts exclusively. In this contemporary era, information dissemination accounts encompass diverse categories and employ unique strategies to captivate readers and encourage their consumption of shared information. Given the proliferation of information dissemination accounts, folkative accounts have forged distinct approaches to engage their readers effectively. To reinforce our research findings, we have gathered statements from several informants:

"What sets folkative accounts apart from other information accounts is their prominent infusion of 'creative culture' into their reporting. This is manifest in their innovative use of language, headlines, captions, and digital text, meticulously crafted to embody the Folkative style. Additionally, folkative accounts have honed their focus on a younger demographic, particularly millennials. Consequently, folkative accounts offer succinct news items, often encapsulated within 1-2 sentences, all while retaining their creative flair. This contrasts with conventional news reporting, which typically necessitates a minimum of one paragraph to convey a news piece. These concise expressions are deliberately designed to optimize the efficiency and speed of information delivery, targeting a direct and unembellished communication of the intended message." (Amalia, 21).

"In my observation, the key distinguishing factor of folkative accounts lies in their design. They feature a unique and minimalist design characterized by a white background and black font. This simplicity appeals greatly to the youth who prefer concise content. Furthermore, there is a growing trend on Instagram, where various other information dissemination accounts have adopted the visual storytelling approach popularized by folkative accounts." (Aditya, 20).

"Folkative accounts thrive because they align themselves with contemporary phenomena and cater to the interests of the younger generation. They frequently post fun facts backed by research and actively engage their followers in discussions through the comments section, thereby breathing life into the news pieces they share." (Aryo, 20).

"In my opinion, folkative accounts stand out by presenting information in a distinctive manner. The account owners have a profound understanding of the extensive use of social media platforms by today's youth. This insight has driven them to disseminate information with a visual style and design that piques the interest of young readers, ultimately resulting in an expanding readership for the content shared by folkative accounts." (Chaski, 19).

"Folkative accounts often disseminate information that is relatively unknown to the general public. Additionally, they maintain a considerable audience, which contributes to the accuracy of the information they deliver." (Jeje, 21).

The statements from these informants collectively underscore the marked distinctions between Instagram folkative accounts and other information dissemination accounts. Instagram folkative accounts intricately employ creative language, clear headlines, captivating captions, and visually engaging digital text in line with the unique Folkative style. Their information is presented concisely and accurately, ensuring easy comprehension for readers.

Instagram Folkative accounts disseminate information through distinctive attributes, including precise language, well-defined headlines, and aesthetically appealing text components.

The selection of topics also closely aligns with the accompanying headlines, ensuring that information is easily accessible to the public without generating confusion about the subject matter under discussion. Dissemination of information regarding contemporary phenomena and events is a strategic choice made by Instagram Folkative accounts to seize the attention of the public, particularly the younger demographic, thereby enhancing public interest in reading due to the unique characteristics of their accounts. Their audience reach is extensive, facilitated by the platform of social media. In this context, readers not only respond indirectly but also actively engage in direct discussions through the comments section, fostering a dynamic and interactive relationship between the information dissemination medium and the audience.

Instagram Folkative accounts disseminate information using their distinctive features, which include clear and accurate sentence structure, well-defined headlines, and visually appealing text elements. The choice of topics also appears to be accurately aligned with the headlines of the information provided to the public. Therefore, information dissemination becomes accessible to the public without causing confusion regarding the topics currently in discussion.

Dissemination of information about current phenomena and events is a strategic choice made by Instagram Folkative accounts to capture the attention of the public, especially the younger demographic, thereby enhancing public reading interest with their unique account characteristics. The reach of their audience is extensive, given that social media serves as the platform. In social media, readers can respond not only indirectly but also engage in direct discussions through the comment section. This interaction fosters a two-way relationship between the information dissemination medium and the audience, creating a livelier atmosphere during interaction.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussions on the role of online journalism for the millennial generation through visual storytelling on the Instagram account Folkative, the following conclusions can be drawn:

The dissemination of information by the Instagram account Folkative using social media can be considered quite effective and well-received by the public. This is done to convey current and trending information to a wide range of the population. However, the dissemination of information through social media also has its drawbacks, namely, the ease of spreading hoaxes or information of questionable accuracy.

The Instagram account Folkative employs visual design in disseminating information because the use of visual design enhances the reading interest of the Indonesian population. This is based on the increased interest of the Indonesian population in following various information shared on the Folkative Instagram account. The dissemination of information using visual design is favored by the Indonesian public, particularly those interested in Folkative's visually appealing and easily understandable design, without diminishing the meaning of the information conveyed.

The information presented by the Instagram account Folkative is easily comprehensible to the public due to its visual design and easily understood copywriting, especially among the younger generation.

This demonstrates that the information disseminated by Folkative through its Instagram account uses language, words, and sentences that are very clear, concise, and easily understood by the public compared to other information dissemination channels that often employ less clear and difficult-to-understand language and sentences, particularly for the laypeople who may struggle with complex terminology.

The Instagram account Folkative has its own distinctive features, including the use of easily understandable language and very modern visual design in line with the preferences of today's social media users. These characteristics set it apart from other information dissemination channels on social media. This is demonstrated by its simple visual design and easily comprehensible copywriting, which are well-received by the Indonesian public. The development of digital narratives through social media by this account also emphasizes creativity through design and various other creative elements. Thus, the public can easily assess and read the information provided comfortably through the aesthetics of the text and design.

All these aspects demonstrate that the dissemination of information carried out by the Instagram account Folkative is easily accepted by the public, thanks to its distinctive features, namely, simple and attractive visual design, copywriting that is easily understood by the public, the use of hotly discussed topics, and storytelling techniques used to convey information clearly and comprehensibly. The Instagram account Folkative also proves that the use of visual design with simple fonts and coloring can enhance the reading interest and literacy of the public to delve deeper into the trending information, making the public less prone to making premature conclusions regarding a matter on social media. The various languages used in the Instagram account are also easily understood, especially by millennials, as they frequently employ contemporary terminology and slang. In this context, online journalism conducted by the Instagram account Folkative plays a significant role in providing the millennial generation with access to various trending information correcting inaccurate information, and making it clear. Moreover, Folkative's role as online journalism is also demonstrated by its distinctive features in building and enhancing the reading interest and literacy of the Indonesian public, especially millennials.

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