



## Mass Media Instagram in the Perspective of Popular Culture

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### **Abstract**

Mass media which relates to the broadcasting domain now use social media, *Instagram* in particular, as one of the platforms in distributing their news. The use of this platform is considered beneficial both from consumers as the user of the *Instagram* application or information accessors and media companies as a source of information. Using descriptive qualitative methods, this study looks at the expansion of news platforms from the perspective of the study of popular culture. Solopos' Daily *Instagram*, @koransopolis, is the object of study, considering that this local media, including the mainstream media, is a reference for the people Solo, a city in Indonesia, and surrounding areas in seeking information. The use of perspective of cultural studies is expected to be able to explain how the position of the new media when entering the realm of social media which tend to have a DNA character that more likely to enter the interpersonal domain. Interpersonal domain actually prioritizes communication between users in the framework of having fun or maintaining a network with friends. The media, on the other hand, ignores the framework of communication between users. The perspective of popular culture is expected to also be able to explain how consumers' attitudes towards the media that enter the public space and their benefits for them. This study is important because the media as one of popular culture cannot be separated from technological developments as well as the implications that arise from the latest technology products. The result of this study shows that Mass Media *Instagram* actually only give an information not a brief and full news for the citizens. The content of the information adjust the need and character of the followers in *Instagram* platform. The content in the information adjusts the taste and character of the followers. Meanwhile, followers considered that the information shared by the mass media Instagram was news although incomplete.

**Keywords:** Pop Culture; Mass Media; Instagram; Social Media

### **Introduction**

*Instagram* is one of the digital innovations that recently appear in the reformation era. Although it was newly discovered in 2010, *Instagram* has become a social media that is accessed by many people after *Facebook*. Unlike *Facebook* which still prioritizes text, *Instagram* actually prioritizes visualization

through images, infographics, and videos. Instagram is similar to television which makes it easy for followers to capture any information in visual form.

Kjeil H. Landsverk in the *The Instagram Handbook 2014* has pointed that since in the beginning, *Instagram* is the most widely used application for photo sharing activity (Landsverk, 2014). Nowadays, besides photos, Instagram application users can also upload infographics and even short videos. Instagram users can even choose which photos that are considered the best photo, edit them with a filter, and then upload them. In another hand, some other users who liked the photos or videos uploaded have the chance to provide 'like' even comment so that interpersonal communication between users present. This is like what Fidler has argued about new media such as Instagram is a slice between the two types of domains namely interpersonal and broadcasting. In this case, new media allows users to share material for many users while communicating with them (Fidler, 2003: 69).

Instagram is no longer connected to the personal communication and just for fun activities only. It gradually changes into making this application to be looked at by the business world for the promotion room since Instagram character is very strong from the visual side. Research has found that the marketers realize that Instagram has greater potential than Facebook. Researchers doing research in L2 digital consulting firm, just to take an example, has found people tend to always access Instagram although Instagram has fewer users compared to Facebook users (Landsverk, 2014: 2).

This opportunity is being popular reaching the mass media *mainstream*, such as, electronic and even *online*. One of the company groups in Indonesia, focussing on mass media, *Solopos Grup*, has used *Instagram* to present their product online such as *Solopos newspaper*, *Solopos.com*, *Solopos TV*, and radio *Solopos FM*. At first, *Solopos Group*, initially used Instagram to promote its platforms until then became an independent entity that is part of business diversification.

This article examines *Instagram* @koransolopos as part of the *Solopos Group* from the perspective of popular culture. Popular Culture or sometime called as Mass Media is culture that has no standards; formulation; repetitive and has surface characteristics; glorifying trivial pleasures; sentimental; momentary; misleading; and sacrificing the values of seriousness, intellect, respect for time, and authenticity. (Strinati, 2016: 17). This opinion of Strinati is influenced by McDonald's view which calls culture to ignore deep realities and simple pleasures, changing to anesthetized surface reality and enjoyment.

The use of *Instagram* as one of the channels of mass media information distribution is interesting to be examined. Instagram of *Solopos*, just for example, which has 58.200 followers, has presented 6.204 feeds which include photos, infographics, *newsflash*, and video. All the uploaded items in the Instagram of @koransolopos are dominated by the fragments of news that on captions or photo captions lead followers to subscribe the digital solopos newspaper (e-paper).

Not every piece of news and infographics uploaded on Solopos *Instagram*, but the news that is popular or trending. The selection of news that is trending is based on the level of public readability by considering the two things needed in Instagram's existence, firstly, the number of followers and secondly, the amount of appreciation or likes. Thus, in another world, the Instagram content must serve the followers.

*Instagram* is a product of popular culture and a place where modern society constructs identity not to mention having specific purposes for promotion in the business world. Instagram account of @koransolopos, is specifically used to share information daily. However, the information uploaded is adjusted to Instagram followers who are millennials with a concentrated age range of 13-44 years.

These followers make *Instagram* media which is actually more interpersonal domain as a source of reference information like other mass media *Instagram*. It is because the ease of access to the Instagram and cost factors that can be called free since it is presented for free through online compared to

the printed news that must be firstly bought when we want to read the news. In hence, this research reveals how mass media Instagram seen from the perspective of popular culture.

### **Methodology**

This research was a descriptive qualitative research which enhanced the theory of popular culture. There were three main ways of collecting data; first, doing interview with Instagram followers and chief editor of *Solopos*; second, doing Instagram observation in *Solopos*, including the type of photo uploaded and follower responses, and the third, reviewing written documents, such as journals that discuss *Instagram* and mass media, as well as the results of mass media research and research institutions specializing in the field of media and global information.

### **Result and Discussion**

#### ***Instagram as Mass Media from the Consumption Side***

Mark Zuckerberg's social media users, like Instagram and Facebook, are classified as increasing in Indonesia. *Bisnis.com* in 2019 then launched a news report that said the number of Instagram and Facebook users in Indonesia was called the fourth highest in the world. Instagram users, there were 56 million people or 20.97% of the total population in the country. That number ranks fourth in the world. The three other higher rank are the United States has 110 million users (33.44% of the total population), Brazil as much as 66 million (31.38%), and India as much as 64 million (4.68%). In addition, in Indonesia, most Instagram users are in the age range of 18-24 years.

Meanwhile, *katadata.co.id* in the same year published an article dealing with the reasons Indonesian people use social media like *Instagram*. It was mentioned in that article, based on a GlobalWebIndex survey that has purpose to find out the behavior of Indonesian citizens in social media, it shows that 61 percent of respondents answered to fill their free time. Respondents also use social media for networking (networking) with other people (54%), seeking entertainment content (54%), and sharing photos and videos (53%). The reasons for using Instagram because of many friends who use social media have the smallest percentage (51 percent).

Looking at the data, the reasons for spending leisure time, networking, and looking for entertainment content are highly correlated as a marker of the existence of Instagram as a popular culture in Indonesia. Like movies, songs, or television, Institutions play a role in overcoming the saturation of industrial society which is busy with work affairs. This condition reflects their type of consumption on popular culture which is based on the need for fun.

Meanwhile, the results of interviewing 10 Instagram followers of the @koransolopos, showed the same tendency. A total of 10 respondents from the average age 24-44 years mentioned that Instagram is a social media which is useful to get rid of boredom. The average respondent accesses social media for 2 to 5 hours a day with an average of 7 minutes to 30 minutes. In accessing Instagram, it is not only for social networking, seeing the lives of public figures, but also getting information. The average respondent followed mass media *Instagram* account more than one, starting from @koransolopos, @kumparan, @liputan6, @ kompas.com, and others.

By following the mass media Instagram, citizens claim to get the latest information quickly. It is because of the exceed speed that they have. The concept is not like a fast food store where everything is requested and taken by itself. Instead, *Instagram* offers information without citizens having to ask for and search for themselves. In the midst of free time and activities looking for entertainment and networking, mass media accounts with the latest information appear like advertisements on TV. The activities of scrolling the touch screen simply stop in an interesting account based on the desire or needs of citizens.

Watie has said that Instagram as part of the new media has interactivity ability. This ability to offer interactivity of Instagram allows users to have choices of information to be consumed while controlling the output of information (Watie, 2011: 70).

From the 10 people interviewed, all agreed that the mass media must have Instagram because they need quick and concise information. Concise here is a keyword because the Instagram platform is actually in terms of the distribution of information that is very different from Facebook that allows sharing links directly. On Instagram, account owners are very limited or can be said not be able to include mass media website links so citizens can access their portals. It is said limited because the effort to share the link can only be done in Instastory, not in all the feed uploaded.

This limitation makes the owner of a mass media account, just like @koransolopos, provides more complete information on each item uploaded. Subjects, predicates, objects, all events of the information are always present so that the reader understands the information conveyed. This is what makes consumers feel they have consumed a brief story through the mass media *Instagram* account without trying to check to the full information on website.

Although 10 respondents stated that the contents of news in Instagram @koransolopos were not equivalent to the daily Solopos newspaper as printed version, they considered the information shared on Instagram was sufficient to meet their needs. From 10 respondents involved in this research, only two subscribed to the printed newspapers, *Solopos* and *Kompas*, while others only relied on social media and online media. Respondents define themselves as people who need information to increase knowledge about neighborhood. The mass media Instagram is considered appropriate as a fast, updated, and lightweight conveyor of information.

The need for information and the action to follow mass media Instagram, @koransolopos for example, can be categorized as a consumption practice. The consumption practice is related to the action of following the Instagram account of the mass media needed and vice versa.

Pierre Bourdeau said that the practice of consumption is not only seen as an economic act, but also culture as a social distinction. Lifestyle is an important area for fighting between various groups and social classes. For Bourdeau, cultural consumption tends to be conscious and deliberate or does not fill social functions in the form of legitimizing social classes. For example, the culture used by the dominant class is to ensure its reproduction as a dominant class. (Storey, 2008: 148).

The concept of Bourdeau can be translated into the practice of *Instagram* users (respondents aged 24-44 years) who access mass media Instagram. Their reasons in using mass media instagram are the same that is to increase knowledge because @koransolopos, even though it is in the form of social media whose character is more likely to enter the interpersonal domain, it is still considered as a mass media in a more varied form. @koransolopos as a new media that is considered to keep up with the times because of modern societies, especially those who are still in the productive age, consume it as part of their daily lives.

Instagram is part of modern society, a marker of modern life. Meanwhile, Instagram mass media signifies knowledgeable modern circles besides having fun. This is the distinguishing factor of those who use Instagram only to find entertainment, ignoring how the type of information conveyed by the mass media on Instagram, which is important or not, deep or only surface, the real news or not.

The German sociologist, Goeorge Simmel, said individuals culminated the fake individualism through the pursuit of status, fashion, markers of individual eccentricity. The significance of this behavior is not the specific content, but the form that appears different so this makes that person stand out (*ibid*). In the case of mass media Instagram, the consumed account will be clearly seen on the account homepage. The account is used as a marker of personal identity in cyberspace.

### **Mass Media Instagram from the Production Side**

For media practitioners, Instagram is very important in expanding the reach of information dissemination. Social media, Instagram in particular, is seen as ideal for spreading that information in an easier way and at a lower cost.

Chief Editor Solopos, Rini Yustiningsih, said Instagram Solopos, namely @koransolopos deliberately created to serve the generation Z more digital activities in social media, especially Instagram. The digital needs of the Z generation are different from the two previous generations namely the X generation and the baby boomers generation.

*Solopos* as a mass media company comes in a variety of platforms to reach each reader. The newspaper platform has readers with an average age of 35 years and above while the digital platform has a reader market with an average age of 20 years and above. Meanwhile, most accessors of social media platforms, @koransolopos, for example, are aged 15 years to 35 years. Content on each platform is different and if there are the same content then the emphasis and style of delivery is different.

The contents of the Instagram @koransopos platform are very different from the contents of Solopos General Daily (printed version or website version). Content taken from Solopos (printed or website version) for Instagram must be in accordance with the majority users which is dominated by the generation Z. The content is lightweight content. It can be said that @koransolopos content in Instagram is actually more similar to *Solopos.com* content even though Solopos's digital media actually already has Instagram itself.

Economically, the content adjustment is also related to the monetization step taken by *Solopos* as a profit-based company. Like Instagram business managed by selebgram or community, the number of followers (followers) as well as the number of likes on Instagram greatly influences entrepreneurs in deciding to advertise or vice versa. To make followers stick, @koransolopos managers must be able to provide content according to users needs.

Adjusting the character of Instagram as a social media that is very popular in the community and its users, the information uploaded on @ *solo**pos.com* is very short and surface information, very different from the content in the newspaper Solopos which delivers detailed and in-depth news.

Based on Teun A Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis theory, there is a very striking difference between the news presented in the newspaper and the fragment of the news uploaded on Instagram. According to Van Dijk, in understanding news and capturing the ideology contained in it, the reader must describe the anatomy of the news itself (Eriyanto, 2001: 227). Anatomy of the news consists of macro structure, superstructure, and micro structure (*ibid.*).

Macro structure or also called thematic, according to Van Dijk, is the theme or topic of a story While the superstructure or schematic is a sequence of news which is integrated in full. Finally, microstructure is a supporting element that aims to emphasize certain parts that highlight the ideology of the writer or the media in general. This micro structure can be diction, sentence structure, infographics, photos, and others (*ibid.*).

On Instagram, citizens will not get the substance of the news because what is consumed is not the whole news formula (structure, superstructure, and micro structure) but the protrusion of micro structures in the form of photos and infographics as macro-forming elements. Hence, the need for news that actually focuses on understanding the conditions of the world around (through narratives built on superstructure elements) as a foothold in stepping is not achieved. Instead, what is obtained is only fleeting information that becomes trending which does not give any awareness as an individual in taking the right steps in life.

Through the hashtag #soloposkorankredibel or #korankredibel, *Solopos* media made its images as a credible information provider that is very different from the character of the other media that spread

disinformation news. That is why *Solopos* in all its platforms can be a reference for the community even if only in the form of social media, Instagram as an example. The character of Instagram as a popular culture product is similar to television which emphasizes aspects of visualization, and its interpersonal nature. And it does not matter because image as a credible media is more inherent.

This credible newspaper image also creates an individual impression that individuals who consume credible news is different from those who do not have enough education who prefer to consume hoaks. This is what is called the practice of cultural consumption with the ultimate goal of giving modern human an identity. Adorno said that individualization in the mass culture industry is an ideological process that hides the standardization process. Adorno emphasizes superficiality and uniformity. The cultural industry, he argues, is in contact with false needs and false solutions, not with real needs or solutions (Strinati, 2013: 77).

Based on Adorno's opinion, the image of a newspaper is credible even though its platform is no longer in the form of a newspaper so that it changes the substance of the news, consumed raw by the public, especially citizens. Although what they really need is an understanding and deepening of the news, the authenticity of that need is immersed in the image of consuming mass media whose distribution channels are through social media. Information in the form of fragments of news or independent infographics (not related to reporting in print) is considered as a substitute for news. All respondents considered the information shared at *instagram @koransolopos* to be news although it is incomplete. The information has met their needs in terms of content and speed.

One respondent who works as an honorary teacher said accessing printed newspaper was the same as subscribing to *Solopos* newspaper in the form of social media. He considered that there was no need to subscribe to the newspaper because *Solopos*'s social media content was the same as the newspaper even though it wasn't as complete as the newspaper. Looking at this time, it can be correlated that what people need is the speed of information, but printed newspapers cannot meet those needs. It needs a short break to release the news and there are several publications codes before publishing in the newspaper until the consumers could read them.

John Fiske as quoted by John Storey in the book Cultural Studies and Study of Popular Culture says 'the economics of writing' seeks to discipline readers to decipher the texts rather than 'read them'. To decipher a text is to subject oneself to its truth while reading about the reader's immediate social history. So, reading involves negotiating between the text produced and reading from below (ibid: 98).

Media practitioners consciously create 'economic writings' that Instagram followers love. They are actually very aware that social media is actually a free time filler tool as well as an entertainer. With mass media imagery as a source of information, media practitioners create a cultural consumption of information imaged as news.

## **Conclusion**

Since 5-7 years ago, mass media *Instagram* has become part of Indonesian people's lives. Many of them consider *Instagram* to be the same with other mass media which are printed and digital media as an accurate and credible news provider. So even though the news is distributed on social media platforms which tends to enter the interpersonal domain, the public considers the information uploaded on *Instagram* to be equivalent to the news presented through online and printed channels.

From the perspective of popular culture, people's decision to access mass media *Instagram* application is a form of cultural consumption that determines a person's identity. This is related to images formed by mass media that campaign themselves as a source of accurate and credible news on a multiplatform basis, whether print, digital, electronic, or social media.

So even though the informations uploaded on Instagram are still very questionable whether they are just information or news because they only contain micro elements as macro support (ignoring the superstructure), but people consider the uploaded information on *Instagram* has fulfilled their needs. This condition illustrates Adorno's opinion on popular culture which emphasizes superficiality and uniformity. The cultural industry, according to Adorno, is in contact with false needs and fake solutions, not real needs and solutions.

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