

Visual Journalism in the Future Media Era: An Analysis of Short Videos as a Government Communication Instrument on the Instagram Account of the Regent of North Bengkulu (@Arieseptiaadinata17)

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Abstract

The development of communication technologies and social media has significantly influenced the practice of visual journalism, particularly within the context of governmental communication. This study analyzes the use of short videos as a communication instrument by the Government of North Bengkulu Regency through the official Instagram account of the Regent (@arieseptiaadinata17). The research aims to examine how short videos are delivered, and received as forms of visual journalism in shaping public image, disseminating information, and enhancing citizen engagement. The study employs qualitative content analysis of short videos uploaded during a specified period, complemented by observations of audience interactions through comments, likes, and shares. The findings indicate that short videos function not only as information media but also as visual storytelling tools capable of personalizing the regional leader, strengthening policy transparency, and fostering emotional closeness between the government and the public. These findings affirm that social-media-based visual journalism plays a strategic role in governmental communication in the future media landscape, particularly in creating messages that are faster, more interactive, and more accessible to the public.

Keywords: visual journalism, short videos, government communication, Instagram, North Bengkulu.

INTRODUCTION

Social media is an integral component of new media that is consistently utilized in the contemporary era. On a daily basis, people consume social media to obtain information and to engage in communication. In Indonesia, the number of social media users continues to increase each year. In 2024, social media users reached 191.4 million, representing 68.9% of the total population. Among the most frequently used platforms in Indonesia, Instagram ranks within the top five social media platforms, emphasizing visual content in the form of videos and photographs.

Visual content is closely associated with journalism, particularly in the delivery of information that prioritizes video, photography, and visual

narratives. According to Pavlik (2019), visual journalism represents media adaptation to audience consumption patterns that increasingly emphasize speed, emotional engagement, and ease of message comprehension. Short-form video has emerged as the most prominent format, as it effectively integrates visual, audio, and storytelling elements within a brief yet impactful duration.

Within the governmental context, social media has become a strategic and effective tool for disseminating information to the public, building a positive institutional image, and enhancing civic participation. Mergel (2013) argues that the use of social media by governments enables more open and responsive two-way communication compared to conventional media. Governments no longer function solely as information providers, but also as actors that build relationships and trust with citizens.

Short video displays on Instagram play a significant role in shaping the public image of political leaders. Kruikemeier et al. (2018) note that visual content depicting the everyday activities of political leaders can enhance perceptions of closeness, authenticity, and public trust. This aligns with the visual communication concept in governmental Instagram videos, where the visualization of policies and leadership becomes a central element in establishing legitimacy in the digital era.

Local governments in Indonesia have adopted visual communication strategies as an innovation in public service delivery and as a means of providing transparent information (information openness). One example is the local government of North Bengkulu Regency, led by the Regent, who actively utilizes his Instagram account (@arieseptiaadinata17) by employing short video features to convey information related to his activities as a regent. These include videos showcasing governmental activities as well as direct interactions with the community. This practice demonstrates that contemporary governmental communication has shifted toward a two-way model and increasingly embraces visual communication that is more humanistic, interactive, and narrative in nature.

The utilization of short videos in governmental communication as a form of visual journalism still requires in-depth academic examination, particularly regarding how such video content is presented and received by the public. Qualitative content analysis serves as an appropriate approach to understanding the effectiveness of Instagram usage by the Regent of North Bengkulu.

Therefore, this study is relevant in examining the utilization of short videos on the official Instagram account of the Regent of North Bengkulu as a practice of visual journalism in governmental communication. It is expected to contribute theoretically to journalism studies, particularly in the field of visual journalism, as well as to communication studies, especially governmental communication. Additionally, this research is anticipated to offer practical contributions for local governments in optimizing social media use as a medium for public communication.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Visual Journalism in Social Media

Visual journalism emphasizes the use of visual elements as the primary means of conveying information and constructing meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). According to Newton (2001), visuals in journalism do not merely function as illustrations, but also serve as narrative media capable of shaping audience perceptions and emotions. In the context of digital media, short-form videos are able to deliver messages rapidly, concisely, and in an engaging manner, effectively capturing audience attention.

Short-form videos that employ a visual storytelling approach enable public information to be communicated in a more personal and contextualized way, thereby allowing messages conveyed in the videos to be more easily received and understood by the public.

Government Communication and Leadership Image

Government communication theory emphasizes that governments have a responsibility to disseminate policy and program information in a transparent, accountable, and public-oriented manner (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The emergence of social media has created significant opportunities for governments to communicate directly with citizens in a transparent and open way.

According to Lee and Shin (2012), the use of digital media by governments can contribute to the formation of a positive public image and the enhancement of public trust. In this study, short-form video features on Instagram are regarded as a medium for implementing governmental communication. Moreover, short videos can portray the personal character of a regional leader while simultaneously informing the public about governmental activities and performance. Such representations have the potential to strengthen institutional legitimacy within local governance.

Social Media as an Interactive Communication Space

Social media theory explains that digital media are characterized by interactivity, participation, and rapid message dissemination (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Instagram, as a visually oriented social media platform, enables users to interact directly online through various features such as likes, comments, and shares.

Within the context of government communication, social media functions as a public dialogue space that facilitates two-way communication between governments and citizens (Mergel, 2013). Therefore, social media serves as a highly strategic tool for disseminating information while simultaneously gathering public responses and aspirations.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research method using a qualitative content analysis approach. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative research focuses on interpreting phenomena within their natural contexts by utilizing various methods to understand the meanings individuals or groups assign to social phenomena. Similarly, Creswell (2014) explains that qualitative research aims to explore and understand meanings derived from social or human problems through open-ended data collection and inductive analysis processes.

This approach was selected to examine in depth the utilization of short-form videos as a form of visual journalism in governmental communication through the Instagram social media platform. The focus of the study is directed toward the manner in which visual messages are conveyed, as well as audience responses to the published content.

The object of this research consists of short video content uploaded to the official Instagram account of the Regent of North Bengkulu Regency, namely @arieseptiaadinata17. The videos analyzed were those uploaded during the most recent two-month period, specifically November and December. During this period, the uploaded videos visually demonstrate how governmental communication is conducted and how public responses are reflected through the interactive features available on Instagram.

Data collection techniques included qualitative content analysis, observation of audience interactions, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, categorization, and interpretation. The data were obtained by selecting videos that were relevant to the research theme.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes short-form video content uploaded to the official Instagram account of the Regent of North Bengkulu Regency (@arieseptiaadinata17) over a two-month period, specifically November and December. The analysis focuses on the characteristics of visual journalism, forms of governmental communication, and audience responses to the published content.

Short-Form Video Content Theme Patterns

The content uploaded to the Instagram account of the Regent of North Bengkulu demonstrates relatively consistent thematic patterns. The themes represented in the uploaded videos reflect the functions of government communication, particularly governmental activities in implementing public programs, both in terms of disseminating information to the public and constructing the image of a political leader.

During November and December, a total of 13 video posts were identified, consisting of 7 videos in November and 6 videos in December. The thematic distribution of the videos is as follows:

Video Themes in November:

- Government activities related to the repair and development of damaged roads
- Government activities during the opening ceremony of recreational and traditional sports festivals
- Government activities during the closing night of recreational and traditional sports festivals
- Government activities at the North Bengkulu Job Fair event
- Social interaction with the community through the creation of TikTok videos with high-achieving students
- Social interaction with the community through welcoming ceremonies for high-achieving students
- Government activities during a joint prayer event for provinces in Sumatra affected by flooding

Video Themes in December:

- Social interaction with the community through welcoming ceremonies for high-achieving students
- Government activities aimed at building synergy with religious leaders
- Government activities providing assistance to West Sumatra Province affected by flooding
- Government activities anticipating increases in staple food prices
- Government activities providing assistance to the community on Social Solidarity Day
- Government activities awarding rewards to high-achieving university students

Overall, the uploaded videos indicate that short-form video content is utilized as a strategic communication medium to showcase governmental activities while simultaneously building symbolic relationships with the community and indirectly contributing to the personal branding of the Regent of North Bengkulu.

Characteristics of Visual Journalism in the Content

From a visual journalism perspective, the short-form video content is predominantly composed of on-site footage, with the Regent of North Bengkulu serving as the primary actor. Each video incorporates short textual elements, voice-over narration, and musical background tracks. The short text functions to present the video title or theme, as well as supporting captions that clarify the intended message. The voice-over serves as a complementary element of governmental communication embedded within the video content. Additionally, the background music is consistently aligned with the video's theme, contributing to a more vivid atmosphere and ensuring narrative coherence with on-site events.

These visual elements reflect the practice of narrative visual journalism, in which visuals do not merely complement information but function as the primary meaning-making components. The brief duration of the videos necessitates concise and selective message delivery, resulting in visuals and narratives that are structured succinctly and are easily comprehensible to social media audiences.

Public Response and Audience Engagement

Video uploads on the Instagram account of the Regent of North Bengkulu demonstrate active audience responses across all posts. Public engagement is constructed in a two-way manner through Instagram's interactive features. This is evident in audience responses via likes, comments, and shares.

During the November and December posting period, the average number of likes per video reached 1,497. This figure indicates a high level of public appreciation for the video content uploaded to the Regent's Instagram account. Furthermore, the comment feature reflects two-way communication between the Regent of North Bengkulu and members of the public who viewed the videos. The comments observed were predominantly positive, ranging from expressions of gratitude and encouragement to the use of heart emoticons within the comment section. Several examples of public comments are presented below :



Furthermore, regarding the number of shares, each video upload consistently received shares, with an average of 13 shares during the November–December period. This feature indicates that the audience did not merely watch or comment on the uploaded short videos, but also actively redistributed the content to a broader audience. As a result, the videos reached wider viewership and increased public visibility of governmental communication messages.

DISCUSSION

Short-Form Video as a Practice of Digital Visual Journalism

Observations reveal that the Instagram content of the Regent of North Bengkulu reflects the practice of narrative visual journalism, in which visuals serve as the primary element in conveying public messages. Visuals presented through Instagram videos are constructed as a form of governmental communication. This finding aligns with visual journalism theory, which posits that visuals are capable of simplifying complex information and rapidly constructing meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Videos recorded directly in the field, spontaneous expressions of the main actor (the Regent of North Bengkulu), and direct interactions with the community depicted in the videos strengthen the function of visuals as a narrative medium. These videos function not merely as documentation of governmental activities, but also implicitly contribute to branding efforts, both personal branding of the Regent and institutional branding of the local government.

Government Communication Theory Perspective

From the perspective of government communication theory, the dominance of field-based activities and social interactions portrayed in the Regent's Instagram videos demonstrates a communication strategy aimed at fostering closeness with the community and promoting transparency. Such practices contribute to the formation of positive public perceptions and increased trust, consistent with Grunig and Hunt's argument that symmetrical two-way communication facilitates the development of public trust and legitimacy.

The high level of public engagement reflected in likes, comments, and shares indicates that social media functions not merely as a one-way information channel, but also as a space for symbolic dialogue between the government and citizens. Notably, comments posted by members of the public were consistently responded to by the Regent, reinforcing the interactive nature of the communication process.

Audience Engagement and Message Effectiveness

Analysis of audience engagement through Instagram features demonstrates that content employing a humanistic approach and visual storytelling generates higher levels of public response. This finding emphasizes that emotional appeal, relevance, and social proximity are critical factors in the effectiveness of public communication.

Therefore, short-form videos function not only as informational media but also as tools for building emotional connections and public trust. In an increasingly digital era, governments must adapt to the platforms most frequently used by the public in order to establish effective and meaningful communication.

Implications of the Findings

Overall, the findings suggest several key implications:

- Instagram short-form videos function as tools of governmental visual journalism.
- Social media facilitates transparent and participatory government communication.
- Social media serves as a governmental communication branding tool and a platform for dialogue between the government and the public.

The utilization of short-form videos during the November–December period demonstrates that social media plays a strategic role and generates positive impacts on governmental communication practices in the digital era and in the context of future media development.

CONCLUSION

The utilization of short-form videos on the Instagram account of the Regent of North Bengkulu represents a strategic adaptation to the development of social media–based visual journalism within governmental communication practices. Based on the analysis of video content uploaded during the November–December period, short-form videos are shown to function not only as a medium for disseminating public information, but also as an effective visual storytelling tool for building the leadership image of the Regent and fostering closer relationships with the community.

The findings indicate that videos uploaded during the observed period exhibit consistent patterns, predominantly featuring governmental activities, social interactions with the North Bengkulu community, and representations of leadership. Instagram content employing a humanistic approach and direct on-site visuals tends to generate higher audience engagement, as reflected in the number of likes, positive comments, and consistent use of the share feature across all uploads. These findings underscore the importance of visual and

narrative elements in enhancing the attractiveness and acceptance of governmental communication messages.

From the perspective of visual journalism theory, short-form Instagram videos serve as a medium that simplifies message delivery by the Regent of North Bengkulu, strengthens visual meaning, and presents governmental realities in a more contextual and accessible manner for the public. Moreover, the use of social media enables more open, transparent, interactive, and two-way communication, thereby strengthening relationships between the local government and the people of North Bengkulu.

In conclusion, social media-based visual journalism plays a strategic role in governmental communication in the contemporary digital era. The use of short-form videos packaged in a narrative and humanistic manner can enhance the effectiveness of public information dissemination, build public trust, and encourage more active online civic engagement through social media platforms.

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