

Nonverbal content analysis on food vlogger Instagram account @kulinersimamank

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ABSTRACT

Content is a crucial factor that must be considered in social media, as the quality of the content determines whether the intended message is effectively conveyed. One aspect often overlooked in the analysis of food vlogging content is the role of nonverbal communication cues. The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze nonverbal elements—such as facial expressions, gestures, paralinguistic features, and proxemics—in food vloggers' content, as well as their impact on audience engagement. This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing data triangulation techniques to ensure the validity and reliability of findings. The study is grounded in John Greene's action assembly theory, which provides a framework for understanding how nonverbal behaviors are constructed and interpreted within digital food vlogging contexts. The results demonstrate that the @kulinersimamank account effectively applies Greene's message production theory by integrating entertaining content with rich nonverbal cues. These include expressive gestures, dynamic facial expressions, and strategic use of kinesics and haptics, all of which contribute to building strong engagement with the audience. Through a deep understanding of culinary topics and the intentional use of nonverbal communication, this account fosters effective interactions and establishes an emotional connection with viewers.

KEYWORDS Social media content, Food vlogging, Nonverbal communication, Message production



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INTRODUCTION

Social media has experienced rapid development thanks to advances in information technology, making it a platform that is not only used to share information, but also as an efficient marketing tool in various industries, including the culinary industry. Digital technology is now an integral part of everyday life, from communication to entertainment and commerce. Social media platforms provide new opportunities for users to interact, connect and share content globally (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In Indonesia, as many as 160 million people or about 60% of the total population use social media, indicating a high interest in the vlogger trend in Indonesia (Fadli in Kurniawan & Ningsih, 2023). Instagram is one of the most frequently used platforms to create an attractive impression for the audience (Rispendi et al., 2024).

Instagram offers various types of content, including video messages, images, and infographics, as well as a live broadcast feature that can quickly reach a large audience (Subhah Nafsyah et al., 2022). Its ability to display visual content makes it an effective tool in connecting with consumers (Dahiya et al., 2019). Video content uploaded on Instagram can convey messages more effectively by combining informational and emotional factors (Latiep et al., 2023). Over time, Instagram has also been increasingly used for business promotion, especially in the food industry, which is one of the most popular categories (Rahmah, 2021). Instagram's popularity in sharing visual content allows this platform to influence user behavior as well as assist in promoting products or brands (Mulyani et al., 2024). In addition, the vlog platform has the advantage of conveying information more authentically because it can describe the vlogger's body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and emotions when presenting a product, thereby increasing the level of audience trust (Effendy et al., 2021).

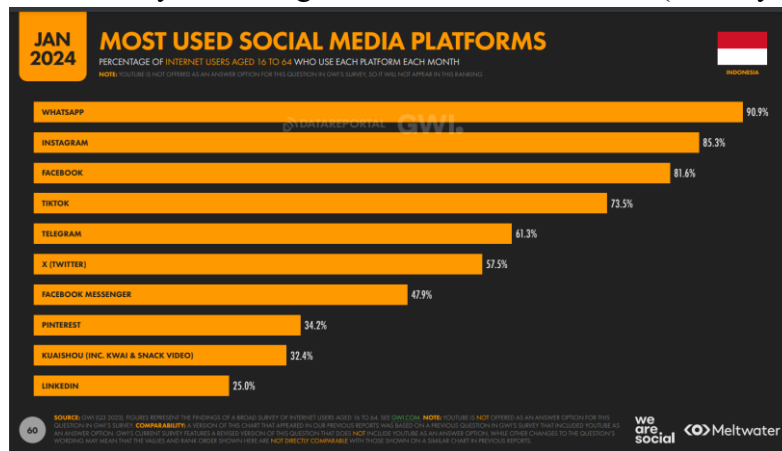


Figure 1. Data of Instagram Users in Indonesia

Based on the data in the figure, Instagram ranks second as the most used social media platform with a user percentage of 85.3%. Instagram's high popularity shows that the platform has a wide and active user base, making it an effective tool in disseminating information and influencing audience behavior. In addition, Instagram is known as a visual-based platform that allows users to share images, videos, as well as go live, which is highly relevant in research that focuses on digital marketing strategies, audience engagement, or vlogging trends. Compared to other platforms such as TikTok (73.5%) and X (Twitter) (57.5%), Instagram remains the top choice for many users in various aspects of communication, entertainment, and business promotion, especially in the culinary and creative industries. Therefore, the selection of Instagram in this study is based on its high usage rate and its potential as an effective marketing and communication medium. (We Are Social Indonesia, 2024).

Interest in this phenomenon arises because Instagram has become a digital space where people can share their eating experiences whether it is at a restaurant, home, or on a trip which indirectly shapes lifestyle and social identity. Various content providers have sprung up as a result of people's interest in food content on Instagram. Some people even utilize this situation to pursue a career or make a living, such as food vloggers and food influencers who have a large following on this platform. This is particularly interesting to investigate further because Instagram encourages the creation of quick, concise and engaging content, which allows for the widespread dissemination of food information in a short period of time. In this context,

food on Instagram is not just about taste, but also about how to convey messages and shape self-image in a fast-paced digital world.

User-generated content on a particular online platform is known as user-generated content (Naem & Okafor, 2019). Food-related material is one of the things that many social media users are interested in. Social media sites such as Instagram can be used to share their content, which can be pictures or short movies (Given & Ardianti, 2023). Various content providers have sprung up as a result of people's interest in food content. Some people utilize this situation as a means of making a living or pursuing a career, such as food vloggers (D. Safitri et al., 2023). Indirectly, food or eating activities become a means of social communication when eating has become a lifestyle. Social media posts about food then become a nonverbal communication technique (Rahma, 2022). In the field of culinary marketing, this phenomenon is increasingly important, especially in terms of audience engagement. Vloggers who review random popular foods or drinks or who define a region are the subject of food vlogging. Vloggers' reviews of food and drink result in an indirect and informal form of promotion based on their trust, expertise and appeal (L. A. Safitri et al., 2023).

Amidst these developments, food content producers, often known as food vloggers, have become important figures in the food and beverage sector (Marquerette et al., 2023). Collaboration between a food vlogger and a brand will affect brand awareness. (Yunimar et al., 2022). Social media users now often use information on various topics, including restaurant reviews, to compare reviews from independent reviewers, such as food vloggers, before choosing a restaurant (Saiful & Rachmawati, 2024). Indonesians and even foreigners can learn about Indonesia's culinary potential, thanks to the content of food vloggers who present and review Indonesian food (Salsabila et al., 2024). Instagram is where this nonverbal communication takes place, and each food vlogger must introduce their food in a unique way using their own nonverbal communication style (Putri, 2023).

One component that is sometimes overlooked in food vlog content analysis is nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication involves many factors, such as facial expressions, body language, which can affect how the audience understands and responds to messages. Characters and audiences interact primarily through nonverbal communication, where physical manifestations of emotions can reinforce the messages conveyed (Widiastuti in Anhar et al., 2024). The formulation of the problem for this research is that nonverbal communication plays an important role in fostering relationships between viewers and content creators and generating a more real and immersive experience. For example, a food vlogger's facial expressions can convey strong emotional cues about the food tasting experience. The viewer's opinion of the food served can be influenced by a smile, expression of surprise, or even displeasure. In addition, open and expressive body language can foster a sense of familiarity and connection, both of which can increase audience participation.

Content is the main means of communication and information dissemination. The main factor that must be considered in social media is content, because the quality of the content will determine whether or not the message is received (Subhah Nafsyah et al., 2022). Of course, this is closely related to message production. The field of message production aims to explain how human thoughts originate and how they are translated into various forms of verbal and nonverbal communication. A message is not created out of thin air, but rather goes through a process that the creator may or may not be aware of, which can affect the style of the message.

how a person uses their mind to structure knowledge and create communication (Stephen W. Littlejohn & Karen A. Foss, 2005). Social media users usually express the emotions they feel or experience in their messages. They go through stages such as the thought process and selection of words or diction before creating a message (Puspitaningrum, 2013).

The practice of creating messages on the social media platform Instagram is growing in popularity as a way to share information about people and social environments with other Instagram users. In light of the evolution of message production, users pay close attention to this when deciding what to do before posting on Instagram in both visual and audiovisual formats (Chanifah, 2019).

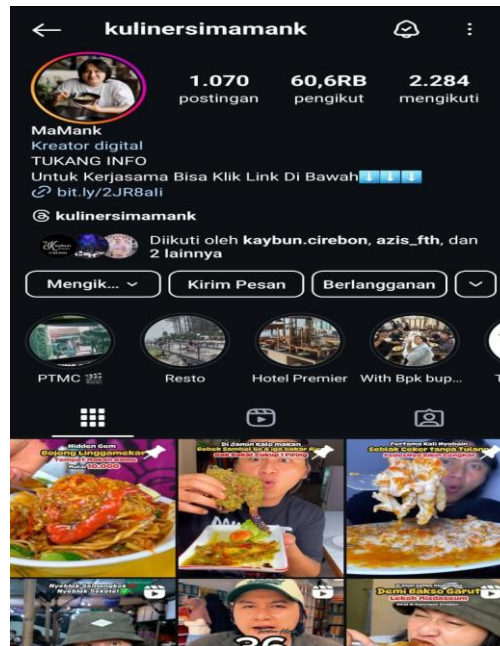


Figure 2. Social Media Instagram @kulinersimamank

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate and evaluate nonverbal cues in food vloggers' material and their influence on viewer engagement. Questions regarding the use of nonverbal communication aspects in food vloggers' material, which elements of nonverbal communication are most effective for capturing viewers' attention, and how nonverbal communication affects viewers' engagement with the content will be addressed in this study. By gaining a better understanding of nonverbal communication, food vloggers should be able to improve their material and provide viewers with a more dynamic and engaging experience.

This research, which examines the nonverbal communication found in the content of food vlogger @kulinersimamank, differs significantly from the previously mentioned studies in several ways. First, our study concentrates on the nonverbal elements of Instagram material, which has not been widely investigated in previous studies that have tended to look at technical features, verbal narratives, or visual qualities, such as those conducted by Hanafi & Asnur (2024) and Wijaya (2020). The importance of nonverbal communication - including body language, facial expressions, and the use of unspoken visual cues - in conveying messages to audiences is the focus of our more thorough research. Secondly, our research will determine how these nonverbals contribute to deeper audience engagement and impact, which may be a new approach that emphasizes nonverbal communication and emotional elements. Given today's digital society, which places more emphasis on visual and emotional communication

when interacting on social media, a deeper understanding of how nonverbal emotions affect audience reception and response to uploaded content is a creative approach that can be put into practice.

RESEARCH METHOD

A deep understanding of the phenomenon under study is essential for researchers, though it often requires additional energy, time, and costs. This research adopts a data triangulation approach, involving interviews with food vloggers, videographers, and audiences. The process begins with observing the content produced, followed by fieldwork that includes in-depth interviews and direct observation of the production process and message creation. This methodology aims to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics in content creation and how messages are processed and received by different stakeholders. Such an approach enables researchers to explore the nonverbal communication strategies employed by food vloggers to enhance content appeal on the @kulinersimamank Instagram account.

The study applies John Greene's theory of message production, emphasizing two key components: content knowledge and procedural knowledge. You know about things, and you know how to do things (Littlejohn, 2005: 115). In *Message Production Theory*, procedural knowledge is central, functioning as interconnected nodes—much like websites on the internet—that shape how messages are constructed and delivered. Additional interviews with account managers, the audience, and the creative team further enrich the understanding of content development and nonverbal communication dynamics.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis conducted using John Greene's Action Assembly theory, procedural knowledge and content knowledge are two categories of knowledge used to create nonverbal material on the Instagram account of food vlogger @kulinersimamank. During the content creation process, content producers retrieve, store and process information from various sources, including their own experiences, other vloggers' references and audience reactions. This information serves as the basis for creating nonverbal cues that effectively communicate details about the dish under consideration. In addition, content nonverbal cues stem from the creator's experience and intuition in interpreting the target audience and new trends, in addition to their technical expertise.

In its implementation, the knowledge stored in the creator's mind will undergo a technical and natural selection process. The technical process in content production includes strategic planning, such as the selection of shooting angles, lighting, and facial expressions to enhance visual appeal. Meanwhile, the natural selection process happens spontaneously, with the artist adjusting expressions, gestures and tone of voice naturally based on the situation. By combining these two techniques, food vloggers can produce interesting and engaging nonverbal messages, thus increasing audience engagement with the content offered. The findings and discussion of this study are divided into two main components, which will be further explained in the following sections:

Nonverbal Communication in @kulinersimamank Food Vlogger Content

In one of @kulinersimamank's food vlog posts, he explains about the popular culinary dish, Pecel Lele 300 Cabe, which has gone viral for its incredible spiciness. With an excited and slightly surprised smile, the host pointed out how, although the eatery had just opened, it was quickly flooded with customers. Aside from offering challenging spicy flavors, the popularity of this place has also been boosted by a digital marketing strategy through social media that has caught the attention of foodies.

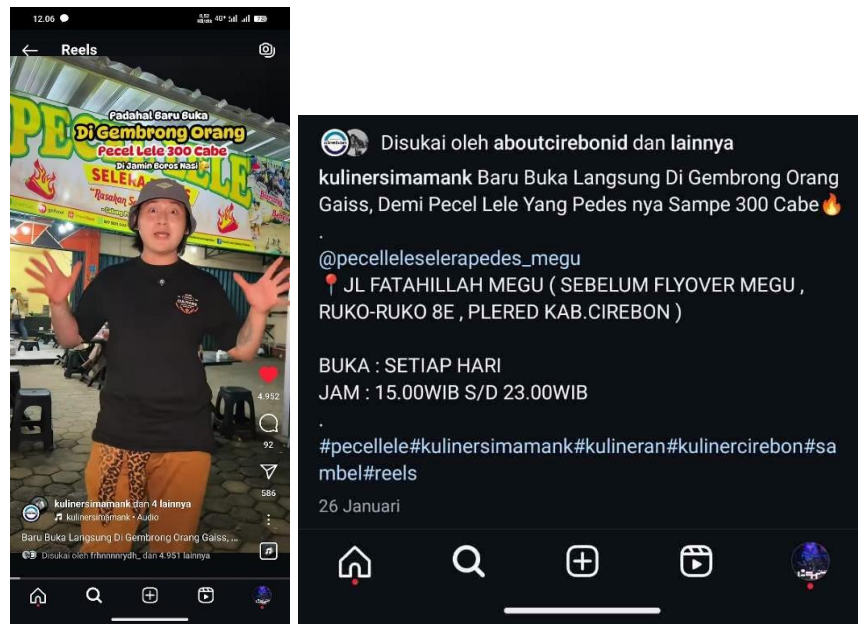


Figure 3. Content on @kulinersimamank account

The results of the analysis of nonverbal communication on the @kulinersimamank Instagram account show that they effectively utilize various nonverbal elements to attract attention and build relationships with audiences. One of the most visible is the utilization of gestures and facial expressions. @Kulinersimamank often features big smiles and open hand gestures in every post. This not only creates a sense of warmth and openness, but also invites the audience to feel closer and more involved with the content presented. These positive facial expressions are a strong social signal, showing that they enjoy sharing their culinary experiences with their followers.

In addition, kulinersimamank's nonverbal communication relies heavily on a comfortable and confident demeanor. Each photo shows them in an open and friendly position, which gives a pleasant impression and encourages audience participation. Good posture not only reflects confidence, but also shows that they are comfortable with what they are doing, so the audience feels more connected and interested in interacting further.

The space utilization in each material is also carefully handled. Kulinersimamank makes fantastic use of space, arranging the food and themselves in unique ways. This not only makes the photo more visually appealing, but also draws the viewer's attention to important things in the image, such as the food being served. The use of vivid colors and appealing aesthetics in the food images creates a delicious ambience, enticing viewers to taste the food displayed.



Figure 4. Nonverbal Communication Demonstrated by @kulinersimamank

The individual's facial expressions and hand gestures while eating are the most obvious nonverbal communication in the photo. His face expresses satisfaction with his eyes closed and lips slightly pursed, as if he is truly enjoying the taste of the food he is eating. This statement is often used to convey satisfaction without the use of words, creating the impression that the dish being tried has a pleasant taste.

Besides facial expressions, hand gestures play an important role in nonverbal communication in this photo. The person is giving a thumbs-up, a universally recognized symbol of appreciation or acceptance. This gesture, along with his facial expression, reinforces the idea that he is not only enjoying the dish, but also recommending it to others. This gesture could be an indirect promotion of the dish being consumed.

The background and surroundings also provide context to the nonverbal communication in the photo. A simple café with an open kitchen and kitchenware in the background conveys a more casual and authentic atmosphere, enhancing the idea that the food is traditional or local. Also, the people working in the background show that this is a busy restaurant, adding to the idea that the dishes served are worth eating. The overall composition of this photo reinforces the nonverbal message that the dish is delicious and worth recommending.

Based on John Greene's Action Assembly theory, nonverbal communication consists of various elements that are combined to produce meaning. In the context of kulinersimamank, nonverbal communication actions such as gestures, facial expressions, and body posture are used to convey positive messages and attract audience attention. Kulinersimamank aggressively combines these components to provide an entertaining experience for its fans. Open smiles and gestures, for example, not only convey warmth but also encourage the audience to feel closer and more involved.

The Action Assembly Theory developed by John Greene emphasizes the importance of context and communication elements in building effective interactions. In the context of kulinersimamank, the application of this theory is seen through two main aspects: content knowledge and content knowledge. Content knowledge includes an in-depth understanding of culinary, such as different types of food, and culinary culture, which enables kulinersimamank to present relevant and interesting information to the audience. Meanwhile, content knowledge

relates to the way information is delivered, where *kulinersimamank* successfully utilizes nonverbal communication elements, such as facial expressions and body language, to create warm and fun interactions. By combining these two knowledges, *kulinersimamank* is not only able to capture the audience's attention, but also build a loyal and engaged audience. These positive interactions create a sense of emotional closeness between followers and the brand.

Content Message Production

The Instagram food vlogger account *@kulinersimamank* produces content messages in a series of systematic and creative stages, in accordance with John Greene's message production theory. This process begins with careful planning, where *@kulinersimamank* conducts in-depth research on the latest food trends and interesting local cuisine. This research includes information on different types of cuisines, restaurants, and visual features that can appeal to the audience. With a thorough understanding of its followers' interests, the account is able to create relevant and engaging content, thus increasing engagement with the audience.

After the planning stage, the shooting and video process is the next important step. *@kulinersimamank* uses good lighting techniques and interesting compositions to showcase food in an appetizing way. The use of creative shooting angles is also key in capturing the audience's attention. For example, close-up shots of the food being served can bring out the textures and colors, making the audience feel as if they can taste the food. This not only enhances visual appeal, but also creates a more immersive experience for followers.

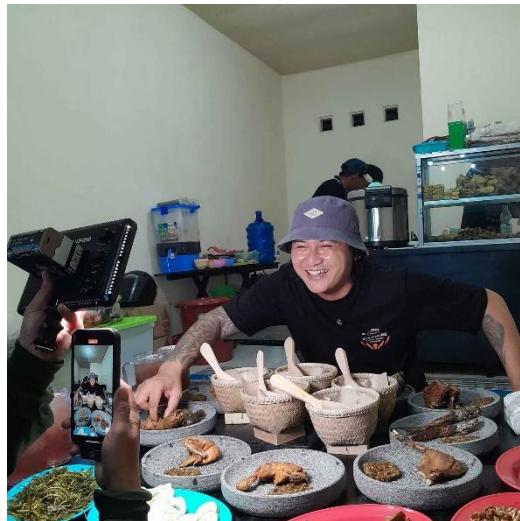


Figure 5 Content Message Production Process of *@kulinersimamank*

In this picture, the content production process carried out by food vlogger *@kulinersimamank* reflects an effective visual communication strategy in the digital industry. Based on Action Assembly Theory, the production of messages in this content involves not only technical video recording, but also the planning of nonverbal expressions to attract audience attention. Vloggers consciously construct narratives through cheerful facial expressions, hand gestures that accentuate the food, and direct interaction with the camera and recording device. All of these elements are part of procedural knowledge, where food vloggers have internalized interesting messaging techniques through repeated experience and practice.

Apart from the expression and gesture aspects, the production of this content also shows the coordination between the vlogger and the recording team. One can be seen recording on a

cell phone. The choice of shooting angle is very important in food content production, as the right angle can strengthen the appeal of the dish and build a sensory experience for the audience. From the perspective of Action Assembly Theory, the use of recording devices shows how the production of messages is structured and staged, starting from visual planning to the execution of motor movements that support recording.

Furthermore, the environment in which this content is produced also influences the delivery of the message to the audience. Vloggers are seen interacting directly with the food in a simple and authentic setting, creating a sense of immediacy and authenticity that is important in the world of food vlogging. The presence of various kitchen utensils, food served on cobek, and natural lighting add to the impression that this content focuses on the real experience of eating, not just over-promotion. In message production theory, this shows how food vloggers use content knowledge to build strong visual stories that are easily accepted by audiences, resulting in more engaging and credible content.

After shooting, the editing procedure becomes very important to improve the visual quality of the information. At this stage, @kulinersimamank adjusts colors, adds filters, and edits the film to ensure that every aspect of the dish is perfect. Editing also includes adding relevant and interesting text or captions that provide more context to the viewer. A good caption not only describes the food pictured, but can also express a personal story or experience with the dish, eliciting an emotional response from its followers.

After the content production process is complete, the next stage is publication. The content that has been created is then published through social media platforms, in this case the Instagram account @kulinersimamank, which currently has 64 thousand followers. One of the videos analyzed in this study discusses the experience of tasting 300 chili catfish pecel that went viral due to its extreme spiciness and attracted many customers even though it had just opened. In the publication of this content, the description used reads “Newly Opened Immediately Gembrong People Gaiss, For the sake of Pecel Lele Which Spicy Sampe 300 Cabe 🔥 @pecelleleselerapedes_megu 📍 JL FATAHILLAH MEGU (BEFORE FLYOVER MEGU, RUKO-RUKO 8E, PLERED KAB.CIREBON) OPEN: EVERY DAY, HOURS: 15.00 WIB S/D 23.00 WIB”, which aims to attract the attention of the audience and provide a brief description of the video content. In addition, to increase reach and engagement, this video is accompanied by several relevant hashtags, such as #pecellele #kulinersimamank #kulineran #kulinercirebon #sambel #reels which helps in search optimization on Instagram. This video was first uploaded on January 26, 2025 at 7 pm, and to date has received 4,600 likes and 91 comments.

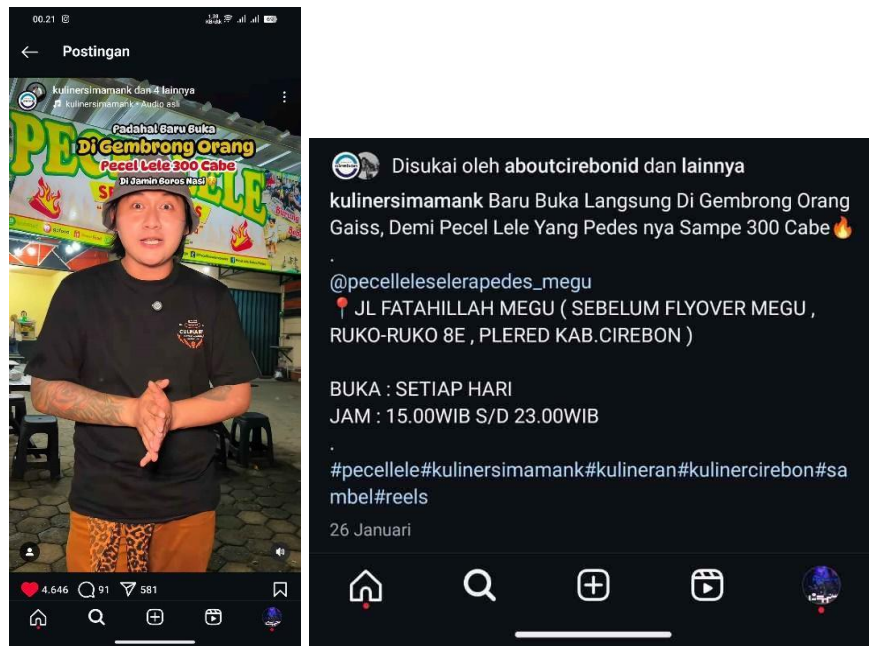


Figure 6. Publication Process of @kulinersimamank Content Message

After going through a series of structured content production processes, from planning, shooting, editing, to publishing, the @kulinersimamank Instagram account has managed to gain significant engagement from its audience. This success is reflected in the number of likes, comments, and interactions obtained on each upload, including the 300 chili catfish video which has received 4,600 likes and 91 comments since it was first published. This high engagement shows that the production and publication strategies applied, such as the use of interesting shooting angles, strong storytelling, and the utilization of relevant hashtags, are able to increase the attractiveness of content on social media. In addition, informative descriptions and authentic delivery styles also contribute to building emotional connections with followers, encouraging them to interact more actively.



Figure 7. @kulinersimamank account engagement data in the period Oct 26 - Nov 24, 2024

In the period from October 26 to November 24, the analyzed Instagram accounts managed to reach 1,428,861 accounts, with the majority of the reach coming from non-followers (97.3%), while followers contributed only 2.7%, showing an increase of 10.4% compared to the previous period. The total impressions gained reached 5,298,710 times, with a 1.2% increase. When viewed by content type, Reels were the most effective format with a reach of 1.4 million accounts, followed by Instagram Stories (52.2k accounts), Regular posts (591 accounts), and Videos (11 accounts). This data shows that the Reels-based content strategy has the most impact in reaching a wider audience, especially for users who have not followed this account, and signifies positive engagement performance in the last 30 days.

Based on John Greene's theory, message production is not just about creating content, but also involves understanding the audience and how the message will be received. In this case, @kulinersimamank shows a good understanding of its audience, by presenting content that is not only informative but also entertaining. Overall, the content production on the @kulinersimamank account reflects a good application of John Greene's message production theory. Through a well-planned process and creative execution, the account manages to deliver a strong message about culinary, while building engagement with its audience. Thus, @kulinersimamank not only serves as a platform for sharing culinary information, but also as a medium that inspires and educates its followers about the world of food.

CONCLUSION

Positive facial expressions, friendly gestures, open body language, and confident posture in @kulinersimamank's content foster strong emotional bonds and trust with followers, encouraging deeper engagement and a sense of belonging. The combination of attractive food photography and expressive enjoyment not only entices audiences to try the featured dishes but also enhances the account's reputation as a reliable culinary reference. The dominance of nonverbal elements—such as facial expressions, gestures, food presentation, lighting, and shooting techniques—has proven highly effective in attracting new audiences, as seen in the high engagement rates and significant reach of Reels content. These visual strategies, along with a deep understanding of both content delivery and culinary knowledge, create meaningful interactions that drive comments, sharing, and ongoing discussions, ultimately increasing follower loyalty and making the account a trusted source of culinary information. For future research, it is recommended to further explore the specific impact of different nonverbal cues on various audience demographics and to analyze how these strategies can be optimized across different social media platforms.

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