


POLICE DIGITAL NARRATIVE IN THE TRANSFORMATION ERA: NETNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF INSTAGRAM ADS USING NVIVO

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DATE	ABSTRACT
Accepted: Revised: Published:	<p><i>The digital transformation era has revolutionized how public institutions, including the police, interact with society. Amid rising demands for transparency and two-way communication, social media platforms like Instagram have become strategic channels for delivering educational messages and reinforcing institutional legitimacy. However, systematic studies on how police narratives are constructed and disseminated in digital spaces remain limited. This research aims to analyze the digital communication strategies of the police on Instagram, identify dominant keywords, and map thematic clusters using a netnographic approach supported by NVivo 15 software. Primary data included Instagram Ads content, captions, and reels from official police accounts, while secondary data comprised academic literature and institutional reports. Methods involved digital documentation, word frequency analysis, and cluster visualization. Findings revealed that police narratives emphasize operational duties (e.g., patrol, coordination), public service, and professional image-building, with keywords like protection and violation appearing frequently. Cluster analysis highlighted the alignment between institutional functions and communication strategies. The study concludes that NVivo enhances the validity of netnographic research, offering insights into the dynamics of institutional digital communication. Practical implications include recommendations for data-driven communication strategies for public institutions, while theoretical contributions expand the literature on digital netnography and police-public engagement.</i></p> <p>KEYWORDS Digital narrative, Digital transformation, Netnography, NVivo, Institutional communication, Police, Social media, Instagram Ads</p> <p> This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International</p>

INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation era has fundamentally altered how public institutions engage with society, demanding greater transparency, accessibility, and interactivity (A. Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020b, 2020a; A. M. Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; McCarthy, 2015).

Governments and law enforcement agencies worldwide are increasingly adopting social media to communicate policies, build trust, and manage public perception (Alamäki et al., 2021; Al-Ghamdi, 2021; Chen & Huang, 2020; Farajnezhad et al., 2021; Pervin & Sarker, 2021). However, this shift also raises challenges, such as misinformation and the need for strategic narrative control (Harb & Almeida, 2014; Silveyra-León et al., 2023; Souheyla, 2022). For police institutions, digital platforms like Instagram have become critical tools for disseminating operational updates, safety campaigns, and institutional branding (Arief, 2021).

A 2023 report by Statista revealed that Instagram has over 1.4 billion monthly active users, making it a dominant platform for public communication (Statista, 2023). Meanwhile, a study by Ghani and Hamid (2020) found that 78% of government agencies in Southeast Asia use Instagram for public outreach, yet only 32% employ data-driven strategies to optimize engagement. In Indonesia, the National Police's Instagram account (@polri_indo) has amassed 2.5 million followers, but the effectiveness of its content remains understudied (Arief, 2021).

Despite the widespread adoption of Instagram Ads by police institutions, there is limited empirical research on how these narratives are constructed, disseminated, and perceived by the public. Existing studies often focus on general social media use rather than the strategic deployment of paid advertisements. This gap is particularly evident in the Global South, where digital policing strategies are still evolving (Arief, 2021).

Prior studies have explored social media's role in policing, such as community engagement (Lieberman et al., 2013) and crisis communication (Bruns et al., 2016). For instance, Schneider (2016) analyzed Twitter use by U.S. police departments, highlighting its role in real-time updates. However, few studies examine Instagram Ads' role in institutional branding, especially using qualitative tools like NVivo for narrative analysis (Miles et al., 2014). While *netnography* has been applied to commercial branding (Kozinets, 2015), its use in analyzing police digital narratives remains scarce.

The development of information technology has changed the way public institutions, including the police, communicate with the public. Digital transformation is now a necessity that drives reform of the public service system, including institutional communication. The public demands fast, transparent, and interactive access to information from government institutions.

Social media such as Instagram, with its visual nature and popularity among young people, offers a great opportunity to build an institution's image and convey strategic information effectively. The police, as an institution that maintains order and security, need to adapt their communication strategy to suit the public's digital preferences.

One of the strategies used is Instagram Ads to deliver educational content and strengthen the image of the police as *protectors*, *guardians*, and *servants* of the community. However, studies that systematically discuss how this narrative is formed and disseminated are still limited. In this context, the *netnography* approach was chosen to trace and analyze the digital narrative of the police. This method allows for an in-depth

understanding of digital communication culture through content analysis and data visualization using NVivo software.

Most research relies on manual content analysis, lacking the systematic rigor offered by software like NVivo (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Additionally, no studies have mapped thematic clusters in police Instagram Ads to identify dominant messaging patterns. As public trust in law enforcement fluctuates globally (Pew Research Center, 2022), understanding how police narratives shape perceptions is critical. The rise of digital activism (e.g., #BlackLivesMatter) underscores the need for police to adopt evidence-based communication strategies (Freelon et al., 2016). This study addresses this urgency by providing actionable insights for digital policing.

This study innovates by combining *netnography* with NVivo-assisted cluster analysis to decode police Instagram Ads—a methodological approach rarely applied in institutional communication research (Krippendorff, 2018). It also focuses on the underexplored context of Southeast Asia, where digital policing strategies are nascent but rapidly expanding (Arief, 2021).

This research is expected to contribute to the study of institutional communication in the digital era, as well as offer practical implications in developing data-based public communication strategies. The aim of this research is to analyze the use of Instagram Ads in conveying police institutional content, identify dominant keywords through word frequency analysis, and map the pattern of digital narrative clusters that reflect police values. This study contributes theoretically by enriching the field of institutional communication science and advancing the application of digital *netnography* within the public sector context. Practically, it provides a valuable reference for the development of data-driven digital communication strategies for the police and other government agencies, supporting more effective and evidence-based public engagement.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach utilizing the *netnography* method to examine digital interactions within the social media environment, particularly on Instagram. This method is well-suited for understanding the construction and meaning of narratives naturally formed by police institutions through digital content. The research is exploratory-descriptive in nature, aiming to uncover the structure and patterns of public communication by employing visualizations such as word clouds and cluster analysis.

The study was conducted online, focusing on the official Instagram accounts of police units that are active in disseminating educational content and institutional campaigns. Data collection took place from February to April 2025.

Primary data consists of Instagram content posted by various Indonesian police accounts, highlighting their community engagement strategies. Notable examples include @poldabengkulu's *reel* showcasing rapid emergency response, @kabhumas_poldajabar's post on cross-unit coordination, and @polsek.kemayoran's documentation of routine "Three Pillars Patrols" to maintain public order. Additionally, @polsek_mampang's uploads depict dialogue-based patrols and social aid distribution, while @poldametrotv

emphasizes urban security through night patrols in Jakarta. These posts reinforce the police's narrative of commitment to public service, protection, and inter-agency collaboration. Secondary data includes academic literature, institutional documents, and social media trend reports, which support the analytical framework.

Data collection involves digital documentation and *netnographic* observation, systematically categorizing Instagram content—captions, images, hashtags, and *reels*—for further analysis. This structured approach enables a comprehensive review of how police institutions construct their public narratives on social media. For data analysis, techniques such as data reduction, NVivo-assisted coding, word frequency analysis, and cluster analysis are employed. Visual tools like word clouds and thematic dendrograms are used to identify dominant narratives and relationships between key terms. This methodological framework provides a deeper understanding of how the police utilize Instagram to communicate their roles in community safety, coordination, and proactive public engagement.

Data validity is ensured through triangulation of sources and analytical techniques, combining digital and theoretical data, as well as cross-researcher validation to minimize bias. Ethical principles are maintained by not disclosing the personal identities of social media users, and the analysis is strictly limited to public content officially published by police institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Word Frequency Analysis

Word frequency analysis was carried out to identify the keywords that appear most often in the digital narrative formed by police institutions through social media, especially Instagram. These words reflect the focus of the message, the value of the institution, and the priorities of public communication that are to be emphasized to the wider community. Based on the results of data processing using NVivo software, the most dominant words include: 'protection', 'protection', 'violation', 'coordination', 'patrol', and 'reskrim'. The emergence of these words reinforces the assumption that the institutional narrative of the police is still very much focused on aspects of security, trust, and operational involvement in the field. Thus, these words are not only a representation of statistics, but also a reflection of the strategic values that shape institutional identity in the digital realm.

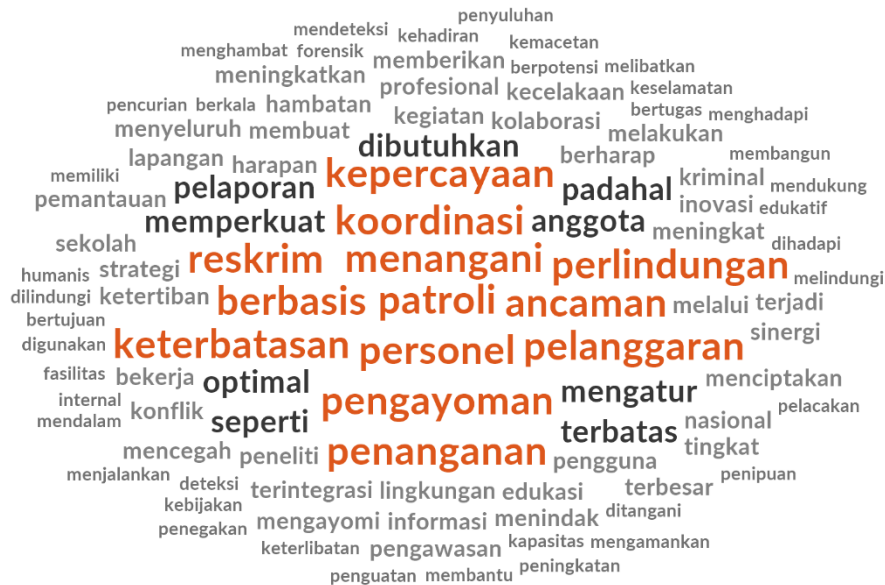


Figure 1. Word Cloud – Results of Word Frequency Visualization in Digital Police Narrative

Word Frequency Table

The following is a table of the top 15 words that appear most often based on the results of Word Frequency Query analysis conducted using NVivo software. This table provides a quantitative overview of the distribution of words used in the institutional narrative of policing in the social media space. Words that appear with high frequency indicate the dominant themes that are the focus of institutional communication, such as security, public services, and institutional responses to social issues.

Table 1. Word Frequency

Word	Number of Letters	Frequency	Percentage Weight (%)
Patrol	7	12	0.51
Handle	9	10	0.42
Personnel	8	9	0.38
Coordination	10	8	0.34
Protection	10	8	0.34
Threat	7	7	0.30
Based	8	7	0.30
Belief	11	7	0.30
Limitations	12	7	0.30
Violation	11	7	0.30
Handling	10	7	0.30
Protection	12	7	0.30
Criminal Investigation	7	7	0.30
Member	7	6	0.25
Needed	10	6	0.25

Cluster Analysis (Dendrogram)

To understand the relationship between words and narrative themes in more depth, cluster analysis was carried out using the Hierarchical Cluster Analysis feature in NVivo.

The resulting dendrogram describes the relationship between words based on the similarity of the context in which they appear in the text. These clusters show the thematic structure of the digital narrative, such as groups that focus on operational aspects ('patrol', 'handling', 'personnel'), institutional function groups ('coordination', 'trust', 'limitations'), and educational narratives ('education', 'counseling', 'professional').

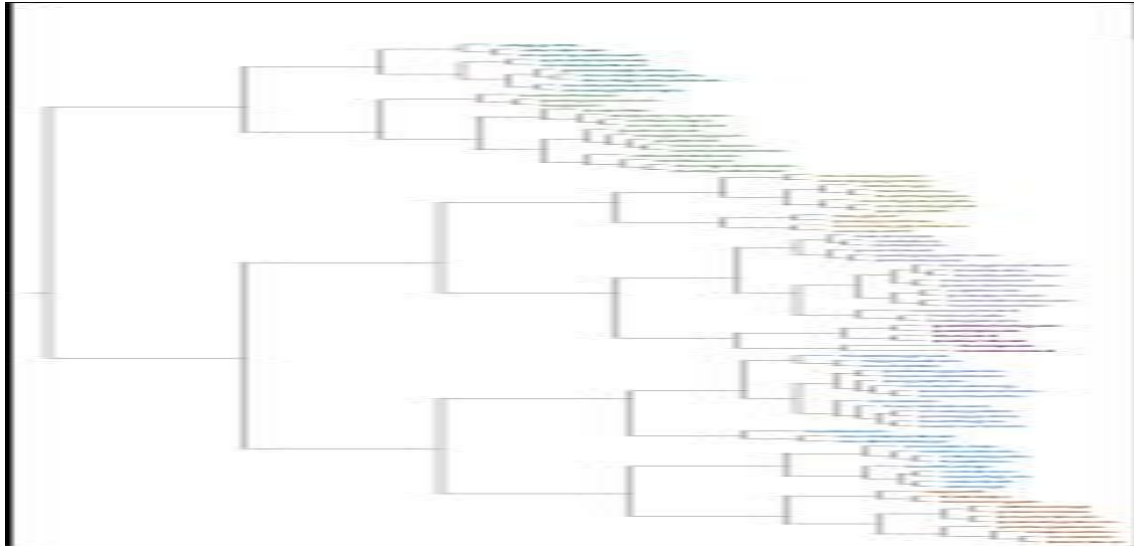


Figure 2. Dendrogram – Cluster Hierarchy of Police Narrative Words

Digital Narrative Interpretation

The results of Word Cloud visualization and cluster analysis show that the digital narrative built by police institutions is centered on three main elements: public safety, operational discipline, and public trust. Terms such as 'protection', 'protection', and 'transgression' indicate that the focus of the narrative is to maintain social order and provide a sense of security. Meanwhile, words like 'coordination', 'personnel' and 'limitations' hint at internal challenges and organizational capacity building efforts. Thus, this digital narrative is not only informative but also reflective of operational conditions and public expectations of the role of the modern police.

CONCLUSION

This research has revealed that analyzing digital narratives involves not only interpreting the explicit content but also understanding the context, structure, and intent behind institutional messages. The use of NVivo significantly facilitated the organization and visualization of complex textual data, highlighting the deliberate and consistent messaging strategies employed by police institutions on platforms like Instagram. These findings underscore the role of social media as a strategic tool for shaping and reinforcing institutional identity, extending beyond mere information dissemination. The application of qualitative approaches such as *netnography*, especially when supported by advanced analytical software, provides deep insights into the dynamics of organizational communication in the digital era. For future research, it is recommended to expand the

scope by including audience perception analysis or comparative studies across different public institutions to further enrich our understanding of digital narrative construction and its impact.

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