



VISUAL COMMUNICATION EXPLORATION INFLUENCER FOOD VLOGGERIN SHAPENING GENERATION Z'S RESPONSES AND BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore how visual communication from food vloggers shapes the responses and behaviors of Generation Z in Denpasar, Bali. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study integrates Smith's (2005) Visual Communication Theory to analyze elements such as color, framing, and presentation, alongside Hovland's (1953) SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) Theory to understand how visual stimuli trigger emotional and cognitive responses. The informants group consists of 11 individuals: 3 influential Bali-based food vloggers and 8 Generation Z respondents (two from each of Denpasar's four districts). Data were gathered through interviews and observations, then analyzed using the interactive model consisting of data collection, reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that visually appealing and creatively presented food vlogger content significantly increases the interest, attention, and decision-making of Generation Z in choosing food. This study emphasizes the importance of visual communication strategies in shaping consumer behavior in the digital era. Future research is suggested to explore different social media platforms or utilize quantitative methods to measure the impact of specific visual variables on a larger scale. This paper includes 1 table of informant data, 10 visual content images, and 5 appendixes.

Keywords: Visual Communication, Food Vlogger, Generation Z, SOR Theory, Consumer Behavior, Denpasar.

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought fundamental changes in the way humans communicate and share information, where the internet has changed people's patterns of information consumption. Social media, especially Instagram, which is the main choice of Generation Z (81%), offers instant and engaging short video features. Practical problems arise when food vlogger influencers use these visual elements as implicit messages to influence their followers' decisions. Theoretically, this phenomenon can be analyzed using Smith's Visual Communication Theory (2005) and Hovland's SOR (Stimulus-Organism-

Response) Theory (1953) to see how visual stimuli trigger internal responses and actual behavior in Generation Z.



Gambar 1. Media Sosial yang sering digunakan Generasi Z.

Sumber. (Jakpat) (Goodstats, 2025, h. 1)

Several recent studies serve as references in this study. First, Donneli's study (Donneli, 2023, p. 219) used quantitative methods to measure the influence of food vlogger credibility on purchase intentions on YouTube and Instagram. Second, Mangkaraputra and Sugandi (2023, p. 134) examined the communication behavior of TikTok creators in Samarinda using descriptive qualitative methods. Third, (Nurhasanah & Sutabri, 2024, p. 316) focused on the impact of visual content on beauty standards and ideal lifestyles in general. However, these studies are limited in terms of location and the specific visual elements that shape consumption behavior in specific demographic segments.

While previous research has addressed influencer credibility and communication behavior in general, there remains a gap in our understanding of how visual communication specifically shapes internal responses (organisms) and external behaviors (responses) among Generation Z in a local area like Denpasar City. This study seeks to address this gap by delving deeper into how culinary content influences Generation Z's responses, including the challenges of maintaining ideal body standards amidst exposure to food content.

Based on this gap, this study aims to address how Generation Z interprets food vlogger visual communication content and the resulting responses and behaviors. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of Smith and Hovland's theories into the local context of Denpasar City, as well as a qualitative exploration of specific visual interactions on Instagram, a platform not widely explored in previous research in Bali.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to describe the phenomenon of visual communication in depth through words and narratives. This design was chosen because it is very suitable to answer research questions regarding complex meanings and behaviors. The subjects or informants in this study were determined through a purposive sampling technique to ensure targeted sampling, involving 11 informants: 3 food vlogger influencers in Bali (@Hey_Chandraa, @Joyeats.id, and @traveat_id) and 8 representatives of Generation Z from four sub-

districts in Denpasar City. The data collection procedure was carried out systematically through direct observation of social media content, semi-structured interviews to obtain primary data, and documentation as supporting data. The research instrument used has been developed to record data in the form of interview results and screenshots of visual elements precisely.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research results, data validity techniques were implemented through source triangulation and technical triangulation. Source triangulation was implemented by checking and comparing data obtained from several different sources, namely the perspectives of food vlogger influencers and Generation Z audiences, to understand the subject's meaning in depth (Sugiyono, 2022). Meanwhile, technical triangulation was carried out by testing the credibility of data from the same source using different data collection techniques, namely cross-referenced results from participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation simultaneously (Sugiyono, 2022). Furthermore, the data analysis technique followed the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, which includes orderly steps starting from data collection, data reduction to focus information, data presentation (data display) in meaningful categories, to drawing conclusions and verification.

RESEARCH RESULT

Based on this descriptive qualitative research, visual communication presented by food vlogger influencers on the Instagram platform shapes the responses and behavior of Generation Z in Denpasar City. The visual elements, expressions, and content presentation styles of three influencers, namely @Hey_Chandraa, @Joyeats.id, and @Traveat_id, act as stimuli that trigger cognitive and affective processes in Generation Z as organisms. In line with Smith's (2005) visual communication theory and Hovland's (1953) Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) theory, visual stimuli through food photos, videos, colors, and shooting techniques generate responses in the form of digital interactions (likes, comments, shares) or real behaviors such as visiting or trying recommended culinary delights. The results of the study indicate that Generation Z provides different responses based on how they process the visual communication presented, which ultimately influences audience perception and results in actual consumption behavior.



Figure 1 Food Vlogger Hey Chandraa's Instagram Homepage

Source: Instagram chandra_strianngsih



Figure 2 Home Instagram food vlogger traveat_id

Source: Instagram AMOY Food Travel



Figure 5.3 Homepage of Instagram food vlogger joyeats.id

Source: Instagram HI JOY – Share the Joy

DISCUSSION

This discussion describes how technically constructed visual elements can transform into psychological stimuli for the audience through the integration of Smith's Visual Communication theory (2005) and Hovland's Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory (1953). The three food vlogger influencers (@Joyeats.id, @Hey_Chandra, and @Traveat_id) apply visual strategies in line with Smith's six indicators: creating curiosity through ambiguity and meaning, locking the gaze on textural details with directional control, maintaining authenticity through ecological relationships, creating visual dynamics or food porn as a form of tension, emphasizing professionalism through unity, and prioritizing visual honesty for realism.

From the results of interviews with the three food vlogger influencers (Joyeats.id, Hey_Chandra, and Traveat_id), the three food vlogger influencers implemented visual strategies that align with Smith's six indicators to create persuasive content:

a) Ambiguity and Meaning

Informants tend to create curiosity through visuals of unique or "strange" food objects to entice the audience to find out more about the taste of the product.

b) Directional Control

The use of close-up or macro shooting techniques is done intensively to lock the audience's gaze on the details of the food's texture, such as crumbs or melted sauce.

c) Ecological Relationships

There are efforts to maintain authenticity through the use of natural lighting so that the colors and atmosphere in the content remain consistent with the original conditions at the location.

d) Tension

Visual dynamics are created through food movement actions such as pouring sauce (food porn) or the use of sharp color contrasts, such as bright red to represent spiciness.

e) Unity

Vloggers emphasize neat food layout and consistent image quality to convey a professional and trustworthy impression.

f) Realism

Visual honesty is a top priority, with the avoidance of excessive filtering to maintain credibility and ensure audience expectations align with reality.

The communication process built by the vloggers was then responded to by eight Generation Z informants through the following stages:

a) *Stimulus(S)*

The informants' initial visual stimuli focused on striking visual attributes. The main elements that consistently emerged were the physical representation of the food, including portion sizes, aesthetic presentation techniques, and contrasting color saturation. Persuasive visualizations of consumption behavior and optimal lighting were technical variables that reinforced the content's initial appeal.

b) *Organism(O)*

After receiving the stimulus, internal processes (cognitive and affective) occurred within the informant. This was characterized by the emergence of curiosity to validate the taste, a physiological increase in appetite, and the formation of the belief that a neat visual reflects guaranteed product quality. Nevertheless, the informant continued to engage in cognitive filtering by rationally considering health aspects.

c) *Response(R)*

This final phase manifests in concrete, observable actions. Response behavior begins with digital archiving through the save feature, followed by proactive location hunting. The culmination is a direct visit to the culinary outlet to make a purchase and conduct a final verification of the match between the visual content and the actual product received.

Generation Z informants responded to the communication process through three stages of SOR. In the Stimulus (S) stage, the stimulus focuses on striking visual attributes such as aesthetic presentation and contrasting color saturation. The Organism (O) stage is characterized by an internal process of curiosity to validate taste and arouse appetite, although still carrying out rational filtering mechanisms. Finally, the Response (R) stage manifests in concrete actions ranging from digital

archiving, location identification (location hunting), to direct visits for purchasing and final verification. Thus, the effectiveness of visual communication is a major determinant in driving the audience's psychological flow from the sensory attention stage to the action of visiting the location.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The visual communication strategy of food vlogger influencers that combines aesthetic aspects, such as striking colors, bright lighting, and neat presentation according to Smith's theory (2005), has proven effective as a primary stimulus in attracting attention and arousing sensory stimulation of Generation Z. Although this visual stimulus consistently triggers affective responses such as hunger and curiosity, Generation Z acts as a critical organism by carrying out cognitive filters in the form of skepticism towards the authenticity of the content and health considerations. This causes the resulting response not always to be an immediate purchase, but rather through digital response stages such as saving videos and cross-validating visual reviews with reality in the field to build trust. Finally, visual communication that is able to maintain a balance between aesthetics and realism without excessive manipulation successfully transforms perceptions into real consumption behavior, which encourages Generation Z to take concrete actions such as visiting culinary locations and interacting on social media.

For food vlogger influencers, it is hoped that they can maintain a balance between the quality of visual techniques (lighting/angle) and the honesty of content realism, because information transparency is very important in determining credibility and trust in the eyes of Generation Z. It is also recommended for culinary business actors to implement a camera-ready visual merchandising strategy, but still prioritize the consistency of actual product quality in the field to synchronize digital branding with the reality of customer consumption experiences and avoid negative perceptions due to excessive visual gimmicks. For further research, it is necessary to develop research by expanding the demographic scope (Generation Z who are already working) and comparing the effectiveness of visual stimuli on various different social media platforms to see the influence of purchasing power and medium characteristics on behavioral responses.

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