DIGITAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION

MEDIA RICHNESS THEORY IN THE USE OF @Youngontop INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT AS AN INFORMATION MEDIUM FOR YOUNGER GENERATION

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Abstract

This research aims to determine @youngontop's communication strategy in informing activities that are beneficial for the self-development and creativity of the younger generation. The theory used in this research is the Media Richness Theory. The method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection through observation, in-depth interviews, literature study, and documentation. The paradigm in this research is constructivism. The research shows that the Instagram account @youngontop maximizes the features on Instagram in conveying information to the younger generation. Information about the activities is conveyed creatively with photo illustrations, videos, and language relevant to the younger generation. The choice of language is also very adapted to the trends of the younger generation in the hope that it will be interesting in conveying information about activities. The Instagram account @youngontop also has a message personalization strategy in the form of research to find out the preferences and needs of followers.

Keywords: Instagram; Young On Top; Media Richness Theory; Information Media

Introduction

The current development of social media makes it easier for people to get information. Nasrullah (2015) defines social media as a communication tool used to interact with fellow social media users, work together, share information, and represent oneself. Social media is an option because of its ease of access and low cost, even free access. One of the social media that is widely used is Instagram social media (Putra et al., 2022). Based on a survey, Instagram users in Indonesia are 85.3% of users and are ranked 2nd most widely used social media by Indonesian people after WhatsApp (Annur, 2024). Meanwhile, the time spent playing social media in Indonesia reaches 3 hours 18 minutes every day. This duration is the tenth highest in the world (wearesocial, 2024).
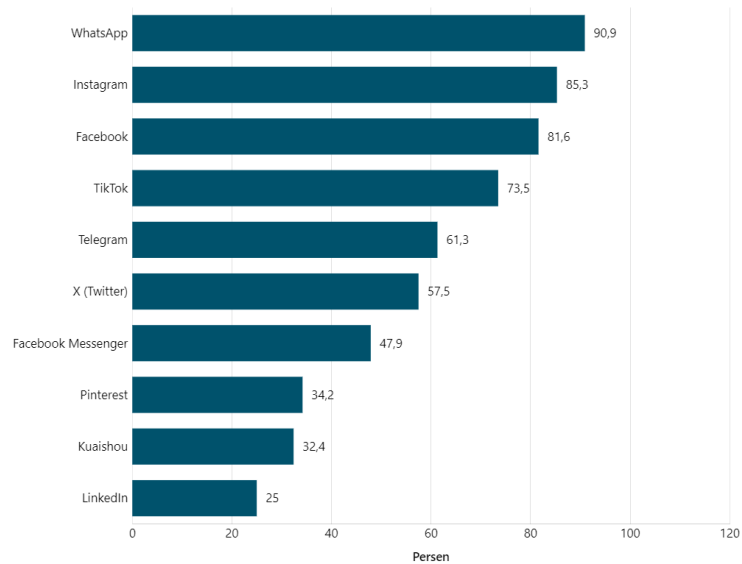
Figure 1. Survey of the most used social media in Indonesia 2024
Source: Annur (2024)

The younger generation is a group of young people who have aspirations and are burdened with rights and obligations as well as community and social activities. So, in circumstances like this, the young generation of a nation are young citizens aged 0 – 30 (Kristiono & Wiratomo, 2017). A survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (*Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia*, APJII) found that the total number of internet users in Indonesia reached around 221 million people or around 79.5% of the population in Indonesia. The data above also explains the division of internet users based on age. The younger generation has the highest user rate of 87.02%. This shows that the younger generation is the main internet user in Indonesia. The younger generation will be the largest group of Instagram users worldwide in 2023. Total Instagram users are dominated by teenagers and young adults with details aged 18-24 years at 30.8% and the age group 25-34 years at 30.3%.
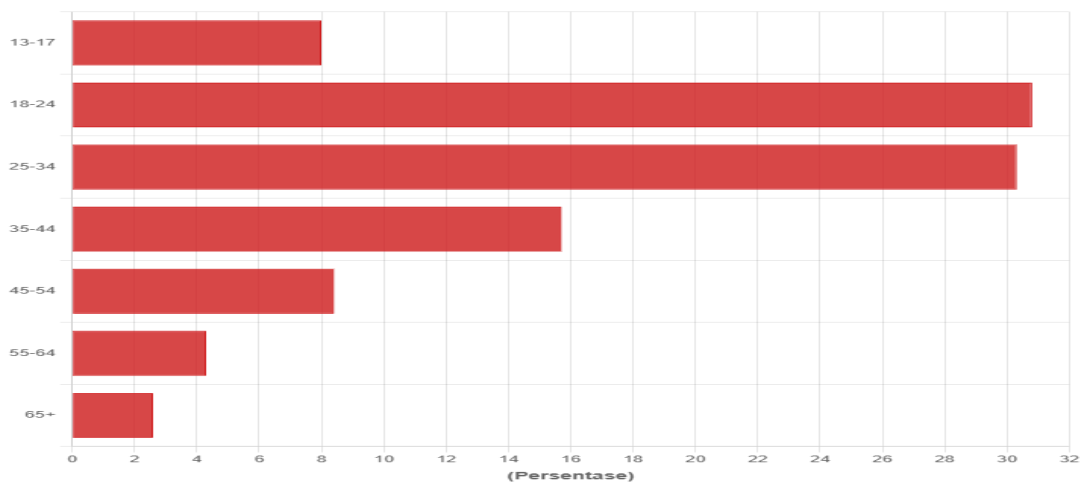

Figure 2. Instagram user age survey
Source: wearesocial (2024)

Research conducted by Purnomo (2018) shows that Instagram can be used as a communication medium to spread tourism in Karanganyar Regency by using the Instagram account @explorekabkaranganya. Furthermore, similar research was carried out by Zamzami (2022) who

examined the Instagram account @beritamagetan as an information medium. There are two motives in using @beritamagetan as an information medium: the information motive and the entertainment motive.

Young on Top (YOT) is a community of young people throughout Indonesia that started from a book written by Billy Boen and published in April 2009. The YOT community has 700,000 members. The YOT community is a place for the younger generation to contribute, connect, and be creative. YOT's Instagram social media account, namely @youngontop, has 246 thousand followers with 10,200 posts as of March 4, 2024.

The content presented via Instagram @youngontop provides space for its followers to contribute and be creative through the many activities. Not only via Instagram @youngontop but direct activities are also held to interact with followers. Varied content ranging from education, entrepreneurship, and technology is aimed at the younger generation to get information on positive activities for self-development efforts. For this reason, researchers are interested in examining the Instagram account @youngontop in its communication strategy as a medium for information on the activities of the younger generation.

Theoretical Framework
New Media

New media allows the dissemination of computer technology and digital data controlled by application models (Hakim & Jayanti, 2022). In his book New Media: A Critical Introduction, Lister et al. (2009) states that new media is a term used to mention something about large-scale changes in the production of media, meaning that it includes media distribution and the use of technological and conventional media. In new media terminology, several concepts led to the birth of media. In the book written by Gane & Beer (2008) entitled New Media: The Key Concepts, it is said that there are at least six concepts in new media among others:

1. Network / Network
    Networks in computer science take many forms. A computer network (local area network (LAN) or Ethernet), covers a small geographic area and connects devices within a single building or group of buildings or can cover a larger area such as a city, state, country, or world (network-wide area or WAN). Then we can see that the role of the network in the new media concept is the infrastructure that connects computers and various external devices, thus allowing users to communicate and exchange information.

2. Information
    The definition of information has various images and descriptions, simply according to Manuel Castell, the information society is centered on the production, distribution, and consumption of information, which in turn becomes a valuable commodity of the new form of capitalism, but then the term information society enters a more general language, the concept of "information" has received little attention from the discipline of sociology. Machlup defines information as the communication of knowledge. Apart from that, according to Lash, information is defined as a form that must be able to flow and be produced by digital communication media.

3. Interfaces
    Beer said interfaces are conceptual tools within networks for understanding how new media operate and their effects. New media interfaces intersect several important social and cultural dynamics, enabling and mediating information power structures, restructuring everyday practices in various ways, and changing the relationship between bodies and their environments.

4. Archives
    Media Technology provides a change in the way archives are processed, previously archives were in the form of paper and took up a lot of storage space, now archives can be managed digitally by technological media. Individualism in the sense here is that someone can store and retrieve their archives without interfering with other people's activities. Changes to digital archives are inevitable, technological media allows for changes in management systems for archival storage and allows for the shallowing of public and political spaces (Derrida & Prenowitz, 1995).

5. Interactivity
    Interactivity is one of the advantages of new media. In the past, people could not exchange information or participate directly because old media was passive. Now with new media, people can interact with each other and exchange information. However, Manovich said that the

interactivity of the digital era is a myth because new media technologies are often not fully interactive. Social theory regarding interactivity in new media states that interactivity is the dominant model because objects can be used to produce subjects.

6. Simulation

Simulation is imaginative, representative, and is a necessity. In a book written by Nicholas Gane, it is stated that according to Baudrillard, simulacra allow technology as a medium that not only produces goods but also signs and objects that you want to see, in this case, software and hardware, technology as a medium that allows interaction for its users.

Instagram

Instagram was first developed by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in 2010. Instagram was first launched on October 6, 2010, and immediately got 25,000 users. Initially, Instagram could only be accessed via iPhone. However, in April 2012, Instagram facilities began to be designed for Android smartphones. There have been over 100 million registered users in three years, with 90 million active users.

Atmoko (2012) explains that Instagram has five main features with several other complementary features. These features consist of:

1. Home Page,

When opening the Instagram application. Then the user will be directed to the main page or home page. On this page, users will see a timeline containing the latest photos from all the users they follow.

2. Comments

The comments feature allows users to interact with uploaded photos, by providing praise, questions, or opinions.

3. Explore

Instagram Explore displays interesting and popular photos that many users like, with a special algorithm to determine the content created.

4. Profile

The profile page provides detailed information about the user, both themselves and other users.

5. News Feed

This feature provides information about various activities on a user's Instagram account, such as interactions with other users, new posts, and account updates.

6. Captions

This feature helps Instagram users to explain the photos or videos they upload, thereby clarifying the meaning and message they want to convey.

7. Hashtags

The hashtag (#) feature on Instagram allows users to tag their photos with certain keywords, making it easier for other users to find these photos.

8. Location

The location feature on Instagram allows users to include location information in their photos so that other users can know where the photo was taken.

9. Share

Instagram users can easily share their photos to other social media accounts they have, such as Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms.

Until now, Instagram's popularity is still growing in society. According to the We Are Social report, Instagram is ranked fourth as the world's most widely used social media, with 2 billion active users. In Indonesia alone, Instagram users have reached 106 million people. This figure makes Indonesia ranked 4th as the country with Instagram users in the world (wearesocial, 2024).

Media Richness Theory

This theory was first put forward by Daft & Lengel (1984). They state that the usefulness of a medium is determined by its "richness". This theory emphasizes the importance of choosing the right communication media to ensure the message can be understood clearly. Based on this experience, Daft and Lengel then researched to prove that the various existing communication media have different

abilities in conveying messages. More specifically, they stated that communication media have different capacities for resolving ambiguity (communication media have varying capacities for resolving ambiguity), negotiating varying interpretations, and facilitating understanding. They further concluded that not all media are suitable for conveying messages or tasks. Messages that are simple, routine, definite, have no potential for misinterpretation, or are not strategic are sufficient to use poor or lean media. Meanwhile, messages or tasks that give rise to potential misunderstandings, are susceptible to distortion, are strategic, and complex require rich media. So, what is meant by rich and poor media? Daft and Lengel link the concept of wealth to the information potential that a medium can transport. That's why they define the concept of wealth as the ability to transport data or information that will be exchanged within a certain period (Venus & Munggaran, 2017). Choosing the right media is aimed at overcoming the two main problems of communication below:

1. Vagueness (equivocality)
   Equivocality is also defined as ambiguity. According to Daft & Lengel (1984), ambiguity is information that has more than one meaning, or differences in the meaning of a message.
2. Uncertainty
   According to Daft & Lengel (1984), it is a condition of the absence of information. Further explains that this lack of information is the gap between the data needed and the data available to resolve a problem or issue.

This theory classifies media based on the level of richness or perfection. This theory also considers communication media rich in information to be better at dealing with uncertainty and unclear messages. In media richness theory there are four media criteria proposed by Daft, including:

1. Speed of Feedback (Immediacy in Delivering Feedback). Refers to the ability of the media to allow feedback quickly and precisely
2. Availability of Multiple Cues (Diversity of Cues). Refers to the ability to convey messages through different approaches, both verbal and non-verbal.
3. Language Variety (Language Diversity). Refers to the use of diverse language to enhance understanding through language.
4. Ability to Personalize the Message. The ability of media to show the feelings and emotions of the individuals communicating.

Material and Methodology

This research is qualitative. According to Kriyantono (2012), qualitative research explains an event in depth and detail through data collection that prioritizes quality. The paradigm used is the constructivism paradigm. The basic assumption in the constructivist approach is that reality is not formed scientifically but does not arise due to divine intervention instead, it is shaped and constructed. Thus, everyone can respond to, interpret, and construct the same fact. Because, each person has certain experiences, preferences, education, and a certain social or social environment, all of which will one day be used to interpret the social reality around them with their constructions. The research object used is the communication strategy by the @youngontop account as a medium for information for the younger generation and the research subjects chosen are the Instagram social media admin @youngontop as the main informant and the @youngontop Instagram followers as source triangulation.

Result and Discussion

Young on Top is a community of young people throughout Indonesia formed on April 6, 2009. The beginning of this community was from a book written by Billy Boen titled "Young on Top" and published in April 2009. Now Young on Top has developed into a community-based company organization that creates the young generation in Indonesia. The Young on Top community is now spread across 24 cities with over 700,000 members. Young on Top itself now has its own office located in the Kemang area, South Jakarta.

Young on Top is a forum for the young generation to get inspiration and insight to succeed. With Young on Top's motto "Learn and Share" and the vision "to create a stronger next generation of Indonesia", Young on Top consistently dedicates its work to developing the potential of Indonesia's young generation regarding Skill, Knowledge, and Attitude. Young on Top also invites the younger generation to learn as much as possible and share as much as possible.

Figure 3. Instagram account @youngontop
Source: Instagram account @youngontop

The Instagram account above is owned by Young on Top. As of March 4, 2024, this account has more than 10 thousand posts and has 246 thousand followers. Through this account, Young on Top conveys various information through interesting content about the younger generation. Through this account, Young on Top invites its followers to be creative and channel their creativity through works. Through its content, Young on Top becomes a forum for the young generation to contribute, connect, and be creative.

The content on Young on Top's Instagram can include information about what is experienced by the younger generation, such as the benefits of being able to speak English, the benefits of exercise for mental health, the Gen Z dictionary, how to be productive and there is still a lot of informative content posted by Young on Top. Apart from that, Young on Top also sometimes invites its followers from various regions to gather and make creations and channel their creativity.

This research aims to understand how the Young on Top community uses the community's communication strategies to provide information to the younger generation. Primary data was obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. Secondary data was obtained through online data searches, literature reviews, books, and relevant previous research.

Organizations or communities choose media to convey information. Selection is based on the media's ability to effectively communicate information— a consideration to disseminate information as soon as possible and within a wide reach. Young on Top chose Instagram, a social media platform with many users in Indonesia.

Information media has now become a necessity to provide knowledge and make it easier for people to interact with each other. Media is a communication component that transfers messages from the communicator to the communicant. Information in general is data that has been processed into a more useful form, namely knowledge intended for recipients in making decisions, both now and in the future. It can be concluded that information media is a tool for reconstructing information to become useful material for the recipient.

Online-based information media is no longer foreign, along with the increasingly sophisticated development of the internet, information media has also developed so that information can be obtained quickly and up to date. Online information media can be used for various things such as distributing photos, posting portfolios, expressing opinions, distributing one's production or work, for entertainment, and even earning income from the internet.

Young on Top via Instagram media was felt to be quite effective by the interviewees. This effectiveness is assessed from the insight results and performance of Instagram in content which is considered quite good and the dissemination of information is going very well. Apart from that, the

Instagram algorithm also supports the effective dissemination of information or content. The information or content posted can be conveyed to followers very well.

Content created by @youngontop must meet the reference criteria for the six pillars of Young on Top: health, education, technology, social, environmental, and entrepreneurship. The content created must be as creative as possible using the features available on Instagram so that information delivery to followers can run well. These six pillars are the main criteria regarding all content that will be published via Instagram. When creating content, there is a target audience to adjust what kind of content will be made. The target audience generally has similar demographics, but this cannot be used as the main benchmark, because they may come from different backgrounds.

Young on top targets their content on Instagram focusing on the younger generation. This means that the content created also follows the preferences and characteristics of the younger generation. Content where followers create content is also an attraction for young people. They like and want to be involved in Young on Top's Instagram content. For example, when posting content that includes stories from followers, the post gets high performance. This is because young people can have a platform to tell stories, give opinions, or share their creativity and ideas. The younger generation also likes interactive contents that relate to their lives, such as friendship, romance, or work. The interviewee gave an example when they posted content about the zodiac, the post had good insight because the post was considered relevant.
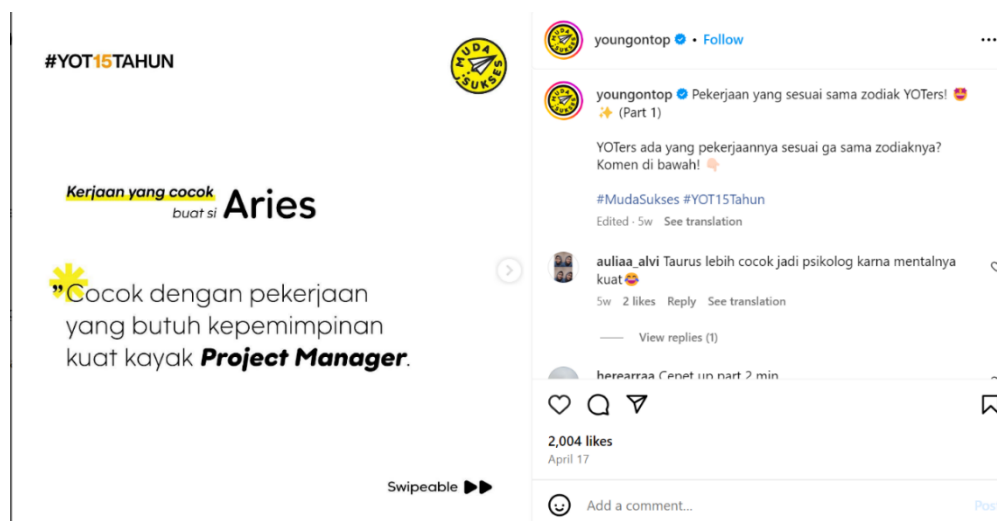

Figure 4. Zodiac posts on Instagram @youngontop
Source: Instagram account @youngontop

Young on Top has a strategy for creating content, namely always following current societal trends. Apart from that, content is developed according to momentum. This is done to ensure that the performance of the content gets good results. Young on Top strives to develop creative content consistently and continuously. Young on Top also researches what kind of content followers like and how to ensure that followers can receive content well. The goal is that Young on Top can adapt the content created to the preferences and needs of its followers so that followers can well receive the content created.

Several things become obstacles when posting information or content. First, the content created must be adapted to current trends in society. However, not all existing trends can be used as content, there must be a selection process or filtering process first to find out what type of trend it is and whether followers will like the content or not. Second, the content on Young on Top's Instagram is mostly educational content, which is considered by some people to be very boring content. However, this is a challenge where Young on Top creates educational content that most people think is boring into creative, exciting, and interesting content.

Young on Top has a strategy to motivate its followers to channel their creativity into making works or creations. The strategy used by @youngontop is to get closer to its followers, either through

regular approaches, creating a program that involves followers, or using features on Instagram. Young on Top also creates programs that involve the younger generation so that the younger generation can be more motivated to develop.

Figure 5. Plogging program on Instagram @youngontop
Source: Instagram account @youngontop

Based on the results of interviews and observations made. Researchers obtained data following Media Richness Theory (MRT) from Daft and Lengel. This theory helps researchers to analyze the communication strategy of the Instagram account @youngontop as a medium for information on the activities of the younger generation. Media Richness Theory has four criteria for assessing media. The four criteria are immediacy in delivering feedback (speed of feedback), diversity of cues (Availability of Multiple Cues), diversity of languages (Language Variety), and personalization of the message (Ability to personalize the message).

Immediacy

Immediacy refers to the media's ability to create and disseminate information quickly and enable users to send feedback quickly. Based on these criteria, Young on Top via the Instagram account @youngontop, can be concluded that @youngontop shows good responsiveness in disseminating information quickly and effectively. Their strategy is to summarize news, utilize Instagram features (Instagram Story, Reels), and answer followers' questions through content called FAQ (frequently asked questions). @youngontop is responsive to respond their followers. @youngontop actively monitors and responds to followers' messages and questions via DM and other Instagram features. Common questions are answered through FAQ content on Instagram Story, demonstrating the freshness of information and effective response speed. From the followers' point of view, they feel that @youngontop is quite interactive and responsive in responding to questions and information from followers.

Diversity of Cues

Diversity of cues means the media's ability to convey messages through different approaches, both verbal and non-verbal. Signals in this case include writing, images, videos, graphics, body language, or other non-verbal aspects. Based on the results of the analysis, interview results, and observation results, it can be concluded that Young on Top has implemented a diversity of cues in each piece of content created very well. It can be seen from the creation of various content such as photo illustrations, videos, and animated cartoon characters to disseminate information effectively and help followers understand the content in depth. Besides, @youngontop also designs its content creatively by combining colors, text, and illustrations in photos, as well as bold writing for easy reading. Each content also contains the Young on Top logo and hashtag #YOT15TAHUN to strengthen their identity. Analyzed from the followers' point of view, they feel attracted to the content created by @youngontop because the content is diverse and the content design is attractive and not excessive.

Figure 7. Instagram content @youngontop
Source: Instagram account @youngontop

Linguistic Diversity

Linguistic diversity refers to the use of diverse languages to enhance understanding through language. In this criterion, researchers analyze @youngontop's ability to use a variety of languages in the process of creating content or disseminating information. From the results of analysis, interviews, and observations, it can be concluded that the implementation of language diversity carried out by @youngontop is seen as quite positive and effective in reaching its followers. @youngontop has a special strategy for arranging language in its Instagram content. They create concise and concise narratives, but are still able to summarize the content. This is done so that followers can easily understand the information conveyed. Apart from that, @youngontop sometimes uses emojis in its narrative to attract the attention of the younger generation. Emojis are considered an effective way to make interesting and easy to understand content. From a follower's perspective, the use of language in content on @youngontop is very easy to understand and relevant to the younger generation.
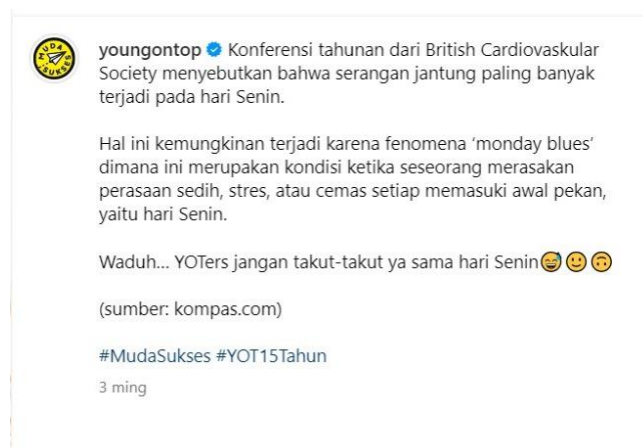

Figure 8. Caption on Instagram @youngontop
Source: Instagram account @youngontop

Personalize Messages

Message personalization refers to the media's ability to personalize the message it wants to convey by following the preferences and needs of its followers. In this criterion, the findings in the field show that the implementation of message personalization carried out by @youngontop is quite effective for followers.

Young on Top uses a research strategy first to find out the preferences and needs of their followers. The main goal is for the content created to suit the tastes of followers, ensuring that the information conveyed is relevant and interesting to them. The importance of adapting language in content is also emphasized, by ensuring that the language used is universal and can be understood by followers in various regions. This is done to ensure effectiveness in disseminating content and information to their audience. According to the results of interviews with followers, researchers concluded that @youngontop was able to personalize messages according to the needs and preferences of followers quite well according to the preferences and needs that followers wanted.

Information media is used by the sender of the message to the recipient of the message to stimulate thoughts, feelings, attention, and interest so that the process of delivering the message takes place effectively and efficiently according to what is expected. So, Instagram social media can be a type of mass media that can be used as a channel to convey, disseminate, and collect information as stated by Sadiman (2002). The existence of technology encourages people to be more creative in utilizing current internet technology. Social media, especially Instagram, is a very suitable forum for people to carry out profitable business activities. Openness on social media encourages people to compete in a healthy, fair, and open manner. In social media, people are required to be creative and innovative in conveying information about the goods they sell so that they can differentiate one from another.

Conclusions

Young on Top in its Instagram maximizes the Instagram Story and Reels features to show responsiveness in disseminating information quickly and effectively. The @youngontop account also uses a form of gesture in its content with photo illustrations, videos, and writing that are creatively designed to attract followers, this shows the diversity of gestures in the account. In a variety of languages, the writing created for content on the @youngontop account always follows youth trends, but not all trends can be created because they must remain in line with the goals of the @youngontop account which are positive, creative, and educational for the younger generation. The @youngontop account always researches what followers need, this refers to personalizing messages.

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