Social Media Text Meaning:
Cultural Information Consumption

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Abstract: - As a doorway to information, social media allows a diverse range of media consumers to read a text message and comprehend the meaning of a social media text. Media users might bring up cultural consumption due to the 24-hour flow of information through social media. The fundamental issue in this situation is how media consumers interpret social media content. This research investigates the significance of social media texts, which give rise to cultural information consumption. The issue is the type of cultural consumption and how readers consume it. The data was collected through a questionnaire disseminated online to social media users, and the technique employed was media semiotics. According to the findings of this study, media users who have roles as readers, publishers, and creators of social media texts have a greater propensity to consume information and the means to actualize themselves as active media users. The increased reading interest in varied details leads to the usage of various social media texts and has created possible issues with the meaning of text messages between users. This study speaks to the necessity of a more incredible culture in digital media literacy.

Key-Words: Meaning, social media texts, cultural information consumption, media literacy, semiotics, media consumers

1 Introduction

Social media has evolved into a source of information. According to research, about 100% of internet users utilize social media to access data, [1]. Current issues are used to provide access to information. Internet users can immediately learn about upcoming events thanks to social media. The need to seek knowledge via social media corresponds to the rapid expansion of internet users over the years. By 2020, internet penetration in Indonesia will have surpassed 196.7 million, accounting for more than half of the entire population. Surprisingly, social media was the most popular platform, with 160 million users, [1]. In addition, the modern world is surrounded by a cacophony of many delicate problems on social media and TV shows, [2].

On the other hand, as science and technology advanced, social media became inseparable from modern people, no longer confined to reporting their everyday activities, [3]. It means issues might arise due to easy and rapid access to information. News items on social media undoubtedly include complex indications, including verbal signs (language) and nonverbal signs such as emojis and photographs and

videos of breaking news, [4]. Emojis, for example, are concrete examples of nonverbal cues and visual language that color social media interactions. It has produced characters and facial expressions that may represent users' emotional states and ideas, in addition to the expanding use of emojis. It is one of the cyberculture concerns that has crept into community culture, [5]. Using emojis coupled with spoken language in social media communication is separate from cyberculture, forming a new online culture (social media).

Social media reading and commenting is a process of symbolic interaction, [6]. The sender (user) sends a message (chat) using complex indicators (verbal and nonverbal), which is received by another user acting as a communicant. The message is understood as a medium of communication by the internalization process and then sent back with a specific message. The text interaction between the sender and receiver has specific meanings to convey what they intend to say via language, [7]. Meanwhile, the two parties' symbolic interchange in a text message might result in numerous meanings or readings of the content. The many interpretations might demonstrate that

what the receiver receives differs from the values the sender wants. The text's values might define how a person lives or communicates in everyday life, [8]. Furthermore, if both the sender and the recipient understand the context, the meaning of communication will provide complete information, [9]. As a result, social disputes that might emerge when utilizing social media are caused by the interpretation of various indicators being sent. The language used to communicate their views in civilization may be utilized to identify the social conflict that occurred in that society, [10], [11]

Language, as a communication medium, can be used for various objectives, including apologizing, praising, complaining, and so on, [12]. Complaining is one of the most popular things to see on social media nowadays, with individuals failing to meet their expectations and resorting to social media criticism. Another issue that might arise is spreading fake news (hoaxes), misleading information intended to mislead and hurt consumers. Social media hoaxes can sway users' beliefs and emotions. Fake news spreaders provide communications to influence readers to believe the information or actions they will take. This type of situation can never end well if everyone continues to trust in the fake news. It will be repeated if it does not quit until it becomes a harmful habit, [13].

People's habits are influenced by their surroundings, whether excellent or negative. The environmental feature is mirrored in the language used because individuals are formed by how they act, behave, and grow up in their surroundings, [14]. The objective of language in social life is to represent the context spoken in which the speakers pay attention to the current situation since the environment plays a role in the language process of interaction, [15], [16]. Although the environment influences the nature of a language, modernization can result in changes in the language itself, such as a shift in the lexicon that alters how individuals in one culture comprehend the meaning of a language, [15]. With the young generation already utilizing social media, the role of parents and teachers is critical. Teaching pupils in today's environment is difficult since each student has a unique cultural consciousness, [17]. Furthermore, putting out effort and positive energy to get a good result will result in a strong incentive to improve, [18].

This study examines the meaning of social media messages perceived by users, focusing on the cultural consumption of social media texts through semiotic analysis (text that is seen as a sign). Data was collected through an online questionnaire to social media users and news stories shared on social media.

2 Denotation and Connotation

A semiotic method is commonly used to examine language in digital media. Exploring meaning through signals in social media writings is undoubtedly connected to semiotics, which focuses on system signs. In semiotic views, digital media creation is referred to as a denotative level (informative). Text circulation (publishing) exchanges symbolic signs between the text and the reader. Text consumption (reading) is comprehending a text and forming denotations, connotations, and myths, [19]. The semiotic analysis of digital media texts focuses on how humans (internet users) create, circulate (spread), and consume (understand) digital media texts. The meaning of texts, according to [20], is carried out by the dialectical interchange between text and readers (internet users), particularly the dialectical exchange between language level (denotation) and semiotic level (connotation).

[19], expanded on de Saussure's semiotics, which separates meanings into two categories. The first order is denotation, and the meaning derived from the aspect of meaning is referred to as connotation. Metalanguage refers to the evolution of a language form. In the second tier, Barthes created a semiotic model known as myth.

Furthermore, connotation, as the secondary system's second degree of signification, is the primary system's specific meaning (extra meaning). Connotations are new interpretations assigned to signs by sign users related to ideology and socio-culture and are founded on pre-existing social conventions. Connotation is a term used to explain sociocultural facts that can become social societal labels.

The denotation is a sign organically employed by sign users and gives genuine advantages. Clothing, for example, is intended to protect the wearer's body; a car is a mode of transportation. A sign's literal meaning (real meaning) is referred to as denotation (item). The first layer is the signifier, the quality of the thing itself, and it explains the meaning and value of the object's advantages or uses. In the cultural context, distinctive garments are worn for traditional cultures, such as the 'Bodo' attire worn by Bugis women at wedding rituals. The function of 'bodo' garments is known as denotation. Similarly, in traditional culture, dances with specific functions (benefits) are performed at certain rituals.

Connotation is a signification order that relates to supplementary or symbolic meanings associated with signals (objects).

The reality of connotation no longer relates to functional or non-functional qualities but to symbolic values or cultural sign labels. Connotation is a signifying order that interprets anything other than itself (denotative meaning). Connotation marking is a cultural commodification process. Cultural traditions such as dances and traditional clothing are no longer understood as a country's cultural treasure but as symbolic meanings, namely the value of exchange; traditional culture is similar to the worth of money as commodity products. Connotation is a symbol used for supplementary meaning.

3 Methods of Research

To characterize the features of phenomena in social media messages, a descriptive method was used, [21], [22], [23]. This study applied the semiotic method to explain the layers of meaning in social media texts, [24]. Data was collected by distributing a questionnaire to respondents online, witnessing conversations amongst social media users (WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook), and doing library investigations.

There were 300 respondents, and Table 1 shows the characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1. Shows the characteristics of respondents

	Male		Female			
Sex	60.6%		39.4%			
	12-20		21-59		> 60	
Age (Years)	30.2%		69.2%		0.6%	
	Junior High School	Senior High School	Bachelor Degree	Master Degree	Doctorate Degree	
Level of Education	1.4%	58.3%	18.8%	15.6%	5.9%	
	Student	Civil Servant	Employee	Entrepreneur	Lecturer	Etc.
Occupation	68.7%	12%	5.6%	4.6%	4.6%	4.5%

The most recent news stories from social media were included in the literature review. News articles can take the form of people contributing news material or users creating news content (information) and then sharing it on social media.

4 Outcomes and Discussion

4.1 Linguistic Communication and Social Media

The prevalence of social media in society has altered how people connect and communicate. Humans' roles as internet users are likewise growing more complex. They use social media to acquire

information, make comments, produce news, and share it with others or social media groups. According to We Are Social and Hootsuite, it was estimated that more than half (170 million) of Indonesia's population (274 million people) would be active media users in 2021. As a source of knowledge, social media has provided the most recent topics. According to the responses (500 persons), 98% of respondents sought information on social media. Respondents access information on social media for 3.14 hours every day. With 38% of all users, Instagram is the most popular platform, followed by WhatsApp (20%), YouTube (18%), Twitter (8%), TikTok (6%), and Facebook (2%).

Internet users' actions include not just accessing information but also commenting on varied news content (information), creating the news, and sharing news that is seen as essential and intriguing. Social media communication creates linguistic communication, i.e. symbolic interchange (verbal and non-verbal signs). Saussure, [25] depicts linguistic communication as a social event, which may be seen in social media speech actions (parole). Linguistic communication may occur in two ways:

communication between people and communication between members of social media groups. Chat and text-based communication between internet users, individually and in social media groups, are examples of speech actions frequently occurring on social media. Chat communicates senders' ideas and feelings, while chat transmits receivers' thoughts. Chat communication provides verbal and nonverbal messages (emoticons, voice messages, pictures, and videos). The intricacy of communication on social media will give rise to meaning (interpretation) issues among social media users.

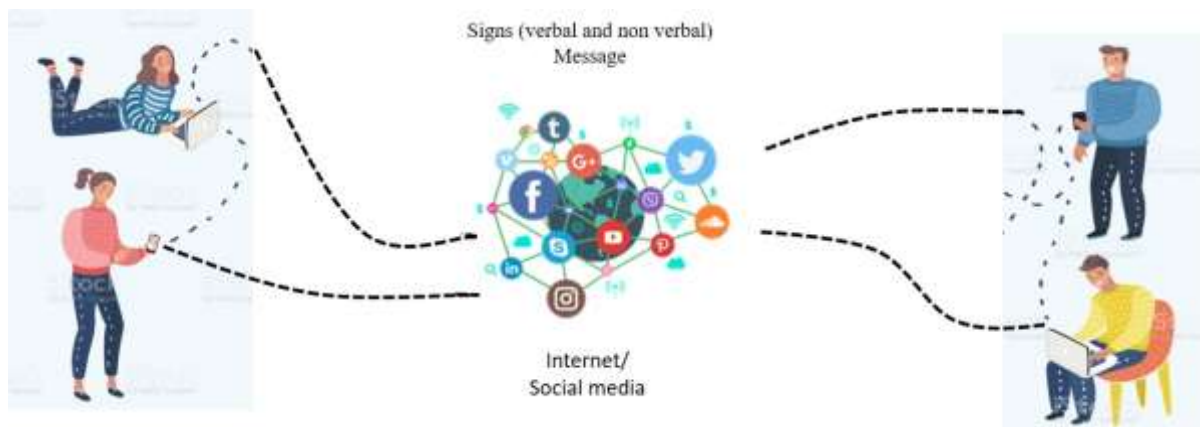Fig. 1: Depicts social media speech activities (between persons)

Fig. 2: Social media speech activities (between members)

Linguistic communication via chat can occur between people and groups. Person A and Person B are two social media members (Fig. 1.) who communicate via chat. Linguistic communication can originate in the brain (mind). Concepts (consciousness facts that can be ideas, feelings, and emotions) in brain A are related to representations of language signals (writing) used to communicate these concepts. A has a strong desire to compose a message (chat). The textual word is conveyed via social media programs such as Instagram, where it is visually received and enters B's brain. The second speaking act occurs when B responds to a written communication from B. The transmission process, which begins in B's brain, begins. What is in B's head is represented in written language indicators and sent to A? A examines textual communications (chat), which he then sends to B's brain. Suppose the dialogue between A and B continues. In that case, the language communication process begins again at A and then moves to B. Linguistic communication between A and B can continue throughout the discourse.

In the same way, language communication in social media groups (Fig. 2). A uses signs to communicate messages, which are subsequently sent to group members via an application. B, C, D, and other online members read the written message and then send it to the brain. Then, in the interpersonal contact cycle with A, one member, for example, C, performs the same. Speech acts in social media groups can occur concurrently (in real-time) by B, C, and D, and so on, to continue the conversation with A in a group.

4.2 Layers of Meaning in Social Media Text (Denotation and Connotation)

From a semiotic standpoint, digital media texts are signs constructed on signifiers. Markers are textual information presented in writing or social media chats utilizing text (chat). Because digital media text

is seen as a sign, it has two levels of meaning: denotative and connotative. Denotation is an informative layer that includes everything transmitted that the reader may perceive. The informative layer includes text-based interactions (chat), images, videos, and music. This informational layer is concerned with communication issues. The dissection of linguistic signals is accomplished using informational layer analysis, which is a first-level semiotic analysis (denotation).

Connotation is the second layer of meaning and incorporates symbolic, sociocultural, and ideological implications. Connotation is the second level of semiotic analysis that deconstructs connotative signals conveyed by symbols. The second marking (connotation) is the meaning development from the previous marking in terms of concepts and form (metalanguage).

This research examines the dissemination of fake news on social media using semiotic analysis. However, before undertaking semiotic research on false news in digital media, the characteristics of media users in terms of attitudes and beliefs of users (respondents) towards fake news are described.

For internet consumers, digital media has become a portal to information. It signifies that the quest for information (news) has shifted from traditional to digital media. Users commonly use social media to access information from various media.
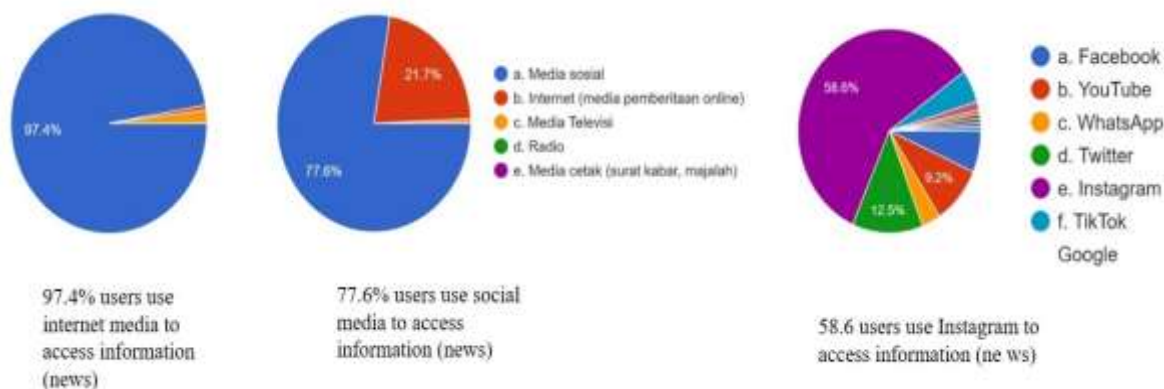

Fig. 3: Percentage of Internet users who use media platforms as an information gateway

Figure 3 shows how the internet and social media have dominated the easy transmission of information by Internet users. Because consumers have been provided with the convenience of obtaining information, the data in Figure 3 reveals that people choose online media, particularly social media, to access various forms of information. One of the reasons that support the use of social media as the primary source of information is the flexibility of time and place, which allows users to acquire information at any time and from any location.

The focus of semiotic analysis (denotation and connotation) is on false news. One of the difficulties with meaning that might influence the perception and conduct of internet users is the propagation of fake news on social media (society). According to the poll by, [26], 44% (1,146 respondents) got phoney information daily, and 17% received hoax material more than once daily. [27], concurs with this observation. 59% of social media users have used hoaxes to communicate.

The meaning of false news is determined by how internet users interpret indications (messages). Reading signals is reading a message in false news through two levels of meaning, denotation, and connotation, by internet users. The capacity to read and interpret the meaning of communications through symbolic interactions that can yield literal (informative) meanings in the form of language and non-linguistic signals utilized (pictures and videos) and connotative meanings are referred to as reading false news, [19]. Usually, the connotative meaning is inspired by the hoax makers' ideology or objectives.

A hoax is a communication composed of numerous components, including the sender's source, the transmission channel, and the recipient. An individual or group who manipulates the facts by offering an attention-grabbing headline, visuals that support the message, and comments that use persuasive language is the source of the hoax sender. Transmission channels, such as social media, are digital media used to transmit hoaxes. Furthermore, the recipients (readers) are internet users; anybody with an internet connection may access information.

A hoax has a linguistic message (denotation) and meaning, [19]. Linguistic messages are informative messages presented in verbal text, graphic pictures, or films that provide all that can be observed from the context, code (language), characters, contacts, or connections between actors in graphic images and movies. The linguistic message addresses communication issues as well as the first phase of symbolic interaction (code)

between the message (newsmaker) and receiver (media user). Connotative communications are verbal messages that have symbolic meanings, [28]. The sender uses referential symbols in spoken words, visual pictures, and films. Referential symbols denote anything that represents something else (goal) that the sender wishes to accomplish.

The reader gains a layer of meaning by reading the message (linguistic and connotation), [28]. The first layer is the literal understanding of the informative message, and the second is that the message maker's philosophy understands the message. It is the lucky receiver. The reader understands the communication based on the sender's intention (ideology). This layer of meaning denotes something else that does not correspond to the sender's aim. This layer generates new meaning.

Reading COVID-19 information messages demonstrates that they comprehend the context of the information received and recognize the value of sharing this knowledge with others. Before sharing COVID-19 material with others, 88.3 percent of them listen to and comprehend it.

Of course, Covid-19 (60.6%), which dominates topics or conversations on social media, becomes the target of the hoax. Hoax information in Indonesia, becoming increasingly prevalent on social media, confuses individuals and makes it harder to discern the truth. The group is targeted daily by many hoaxes widely disseminated on social media, [26]. According to our survey of 505 people, the frequency of getting hoaxes on social media was 44% (often), 22.2% very often, 22% (average), 10% (rarely), and 1.6%. (seldom). According to, [29] statistics, the most common hoax problem from 23 January 2020 to 20 July 2021 was COVID-19, with a total of 1775 issues on social media.

Reading hoax posts on social media at the denotation level delivers a universal message in society. For instance:

1. Messages regarding the hazards of vaccination, e.g.:
   a. The covid-19 vaccine is dangerous and causes catastrophic adverse effects.
   b. Covid-19 vaccinations are lethal and hazardous.
   c. The AstraZeneca Vaccine has the potential to cause death.
2. The religious message, e.g., The Covid-19 vaccination is prohibited (haram).
3. Messages frighten people, e.g.:
   a. Covid-19 vaccinations are highly hazardous and create poisons.
   b. Covid-19 vaccinations are costly.

c. People are afraid of vaccines because they are concerned about their safety.
4. The technology-related message, e.g., The Covid-19 vaccination, has a microchip.

The connotation layer of meaning is how to respond to the hoax message to affect people's attitudes and actions. In a denotative message, the connotation is the meaning of the action. The COVID-19 hoax's global meaning influences modifying public opinions of the COVID-19 vaccine. Keywords represent the meaning of connotation. Vaccination language is harmful, taxing, toxic, and contains a vaccination chip. People are cautious and fearful about being vaccinated. Hoax news that delivers the notion of vaccination hazards (the harmful consequences generated) leads individuals to refuse immunization.

The story was headlined "Three Main Reasons for Indonesian Citizens Refusing COVID-19 Vaccine" by [30]. According to the most recent, [30] poll, 34% of Indonesians do not wish to be vaccinated. The primary reason is that there are concerns regarding the safety of immunizations. According to a poll by experts from the Johns Hopkins Centre for Communication Programs (JHCCP), 34% of Indonesians still refuse to be vaccinated. It was shown that the senior age groups, 55 and older, were the most hesitant to be vaccinated. Approximately 40% of this age group's respondents claimed they did not want to be vaccinated. The primary reason for this is safety concerns, [30].

5 Conclusion

As an information channel, social media messages are consumed by Internet users. The symbolic interchange produces connotative meanings in the distribution of information and discussion (chat), namely the meaning of activities in the form of changes in beliefs (knowledge), attitudes, and behavior of internet users. Fake news is a social event that occurs via the interchange of symbolic signs. The capacity of internet users to spot fake news or information depends on their knowledge and abilities in utilizing the internet and social media. Users must be able to evaluate various information obtained through the internet (social media).

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Contribution of Individual Authors to the Creation of a Scientific Article (Ghostwriting Policy)

-Muhammad Hasyim Muhammad Hasyim conducted the research design.

-Burhanuddin Arafah developed the concept of methodology.

Conflict of Interest

All authors have seen and agree with the contents of the manuscript and there is no conflict of interest.