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DIGITAL HEALTH COMMUNICATION: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF INSTAGRAM REELS ON PATIENT EXPERIENCE AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF MANDAYA ROYAL HOSPITAL PURI

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ABSTRACT

Background: *In the digital era, social media has become a key channel for delivering health information, especially with the increasing public interest in visual and narrative content. Instagram Reels as a short video feature has been utilized by various healthcare institutions, including Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri (MRHP), to deliver health messages and build institutional image.*
Purpose: *The purpose of this study is to analyze the representation of patient experience in MRHP's Instagram Reels through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach that includes three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth.*
Methods: *This study used a qualitative-descriptive method with semiotic analysis techniques on three MRHP Reels featuring patient experiences related to preeclampsia and SC ERACS surgery, Arthrospine surgery, and prostate enlargement therapy. Data were analyzed based on visual representation, audio narration, emotional expression, and symbolic elements in the videos.*
Conclusion: *Reels not only serve as a communication tool for medical information but also build narratives of trust, professionalism, and empathy. The patient experience is presented in a visually and emotionally rich format, creating a personal connection between the institution and the public. Visual symbols such as facial expressions, warm colors, and personal narratives are key in building connotative and mythological meanings that strengthen MRHP's image as a modern and humane hospital.*
Implications: *This study shows that Instagram Reels can shape public perception of health services, enrich health communication theory, and help hospitals build image and public trust.*
KEYWORDS: *Digital Health Communication, Semiotics, Reels*

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has fundamentally changed the face of social interaction, including in the health care sector. Health communication now takes place not only through direct interaction between patients and medical personnel, but also through digital platforms that reach the wider community in seconds (Zhao, 2020) . This transformation is in line with the birth of the digital era which is characterized by media convergence, data digitization, and massive connectivity between individuals and institutions through social media (Rossolatos, 2021) . The digital era has opened up new spaces for health institutions to promote, educate, and interact with the public in a more open and dynamic manner.

Indonesia as a country with high internet penetration is witnessing significant growth in the use of social media by healthcare institutions. Hospitals, clinics, and healthcare providers are starting to adopt digital strategies to reach patients, build brands, and provide health education. In the midst of competition among service providers, the use of social media has become an important tool in creating differentiation and positioning in the minds of the public (Kim, 2021) . Based on a survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) in 2024, it shows that 221,563,479 people out of a total population of 278,696,200 Indonesians in 2023 have been connected to the internet. Figure 1 shows the internet penetration rate in Indonesia from 2020 to 2024. In 2020, the internet penetration rate was around 70%. This figure increases in 2021 to around 75%. The peak penetration occurs in 2022 with a slight increase over the previous year, reaching more than 75%. However, there is a slight decline in 2023, although it is still above 70%. In 2024, the internet penetration rate increased again, approaching the 2022 figure (APJII, 2024) .

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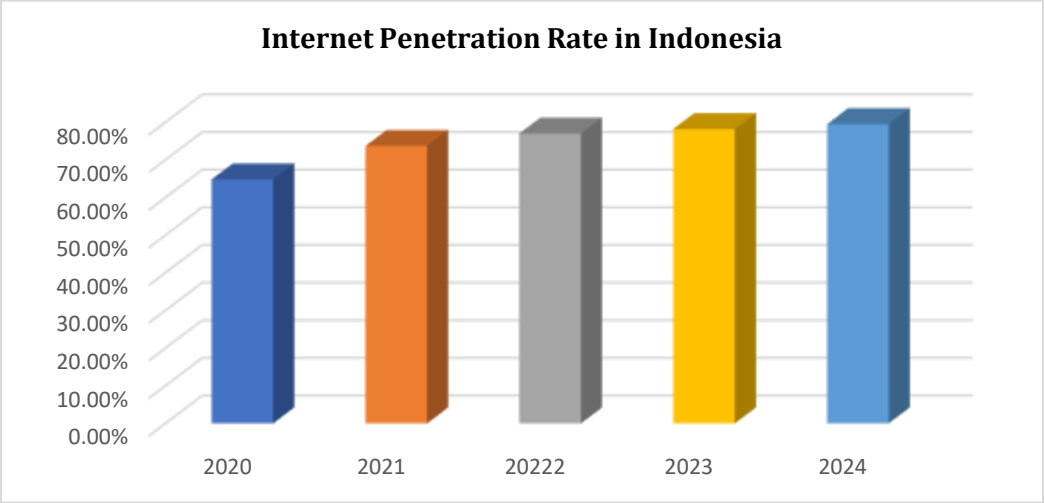
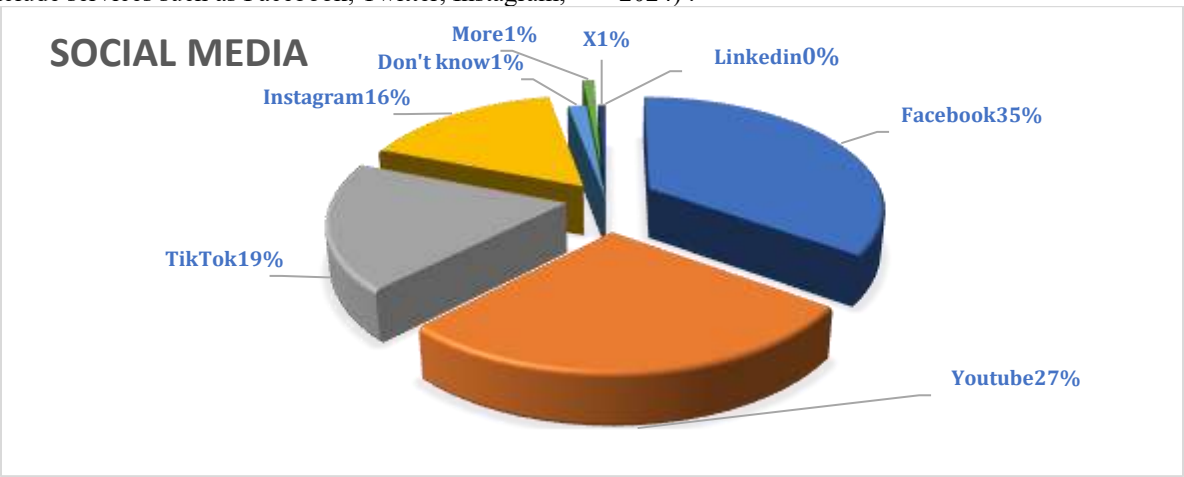


Source: (APJII, 2024)

Figure 1 Internet Penetration Rate in Indonesia

Social media is a digital platform that allows users to share information, communicate, and interact with each other virtually (Sugiono, 2020) . With features such as posting text, images, and videos and the ability to comment and react, social media has become an important tool in building social networks, sharing ideas and information, and creating online communities. These platforms include services such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, each of which offers a unique way to interact and engage with content and other users around the world. In the figure 2 shown, Facebook dominates social media usage with a percentage of 35%, followed by YouTube with 27%. Other platforms such as TikTok (19%) and Instagram (16%) also have significant users, while LinkedIn is not used at all (0%) (APJII, 2024) .



Source: (APJII, 2024)

Figure 2 Frequently Accessed social media in 2024

In this context, health communication is no longer just a process of delivering medical information but a strategic tool to shape public perception, build institutional image, and strengthen the relationship between hospitals and communities (Ye et al., 2024). Relating to the type of message, the informant evaluates that rational-emotional, fear appeals, and/or reward appeal can be suitable in health communication (Girsang, L.R.M, et al, 2022).

One interesting phenomenon in this realm is the use of visual social media such as Instagram, especially the Reels feature, which relies on the power of visualization, short narratives, and audiovisual appeal to convey health messages (Hariyanti, 2024) . Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri is one example of a hospital that actively uses social media to shape a strong visual narrative. Through Instagram Reels, the hospital not only showcases its services and facilities but also highlights the human side of the patient experience. This narrative is important to build emotional closeness, trust, and loyalty from the community. Thus, digital communication in the form of visual narratives is an important instrument in building social relations between health institutions and the public (Blanco-Moreno et al., 2024)

Instagram Reels, as one of the popular features in social media, allows users, including health institutions, to create short videos that are informative, entertaining, and easy to consume (Dewi,

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2021) . In the healthcare world, this feature has been utilized for various purposes, ranging from health education, patient testimonials, service promotion to social campaigns. The main advantage of Reels lies in its visually appealing format and viral potential, making it an effective medium in reaching various groups of people, including the tech-savvy younger generation (Sánchez-Cobarro et al., 2021) . Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri as a modern healthcare institution, has utilized this feature to build closer communication with the community. Through curated Reels content with visual narratives, the hospital not only conveys medical information but also builds its identity as an institution that is humane, professional, and adaptive to technological developments.

One important aspect of health communication is patient experience. In the digital context, patient experience is no longer limited to personal impressions that are private but can become content that is widely shared through social media (Prastika & Kurniadi, 2023) . Testimonials, stories of recovery, and patients' medical journeys become visual narratives that can build empathy, trust, and credibility of health institutions. This is where the role of semiotics becomes important in parsing the meaning behind the visual signs presented in Instagram Reels. The visual narrative formed through Reels reflects how the hospital's identity is symbolically constructed. Visual elements such as colors, facial expressions, room atmosphere, interaction between medical personnel and patients, and background music become signs that contain certain meanings and influence the interpretation of the audience (Menon, 2022). Semiotic analysis of Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri's Instagram Reels is crucial to understanding how these visual communications shape public perceptions of service quality and institutional identity.

Institutional identity is a collective representation that reflects the values, organizational culture, and social position of an institution. In the context of hospitals, identity is not only shaped by the performance of medical services but also through symbolic representations conveyed to the public (Thomas et al., 2020) . In the digital era, a hospital's identity is also constructed through social media featuring strategically designed visual narratives, symbols, and persuasive messages (Poole & Patterson, 2021) . Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri has presented its identity as a premium hospital with humanity-based services, cutting-edge technology, and a holistic approach to patients. This identity is built through various forms of digital communication, including Instagram Reels content that features the faces of patients, medical personnel, and a hospital atmosphere that is designed to be comfortable and modern. The content is not only informative but also emotional, inspirational, and communicative in conveying the meanings that want to be formed and conveyed to the public (Reimer, 2023) .

Semiotics as the study of signs and meaning offers a critical approach in understanding how messages are composed, conveyed, and received. In the context of social media, particularly Instagram Reels, semiotics provides a theoretical framework to unravel the visual and symbolic representations that shape meaning in a given context. Semiotic studies are important in understanding not only the content of messages but also how they shape perceptions, attitudes, and social identities. In this study, semiotics is used to analyze how the patient experience and institutional identity of Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri are represented in Instagram Reels. This approach combines denotative (literal meaning), connotative (implicit meaning), and mythological (ideological meaning) analysis of visual, audio, and narrative elements in the Reels content. Thus, this analysis is able to reveal the construction of meanings that are invisible but influential in shaping public opinion.

This study aims to analyze the semiotic representation in Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri's Instagram Reels as a form of digital health communication. The main focus of this study is to understand how the patient's experience is visually constructed and how the hospital's identity is shaped through the symbolic narratives displayed in the Reels. By using a semiotic approach, this study is expected to make theoretical and practical contributions to understanding the dynamics of health communication in the digital era. Theoretically, this research expands the scope of health communication studies by integrating social media analysis and semiotic approaches. While practically, the results of this study can be used by health institutions in designing digital communication strategies that are more effective, humanist, and based on patient experience. This study is also important for communication practitioners, content designers, and hospital social media managers in creating narratives that are authentic, inspiring, and have a positive impact on the institution's image.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method to reveal the meaning of visual and symbolic signs in Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri's Instagram Reels content. Data were collected through documentation of Reels content uploaded in the period March to April 2025, then analyzed based on Barthes' three levels of meaning, namely denotation (literal meaning), connotation (cultural/emotional meaning), and myth (ideological meaning or constructed values). A purposive sampling technique was used to select ten video reels that were considered the most representative based on the number of views, interactions (likes and comments), and the presence of patient narratives or service visualizations. The analysis process was conducted systematically with the following steps: identification of sign elements (images, text, sound), classification of meaning based on semiotic levels, and interpretation of meaning in the context of digital health communication and hospital identity construction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri (MRHP) is one of the leading private hospitals in Indonesia located in Metland Cyber City, Jl. Jakarta-Tangerang. Established with the vision of an international standard hospital, MRHP is designed to provide premium healthcare services based on cutting-edge technology and patient-centered care. Its facilities include more than 250 inpatient beds,

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six modern operating theaters, more than 100 outpatient examination rooms, and advanced diagnostic equipment such as Spectral CT Scan, High Gradient MRI, and a cardiac catheterization laboratory with intravascular ultrasound technology. Through these capabilities, MRHP serves thousands of patients every day, making it one of the referral healthcare centers in the Greater Jakarta area.

Managed by Mandaya Hospital Group, the healthcare arm of Selaras Holding-a fast-growing multi-industry company in property, hospitality, and medical services-MRHP demonstrates a strong commitment to innovation and service quality. Mandaya Hospital Group also manages Mandaya Karawang Hospital, which is MRHP's strategic partner hospital with a capacity of 218 beds, three operating theaters, and excellent facilities such as a trauma center and a cardiac center. This network of hospitals strengthens MRHP's position as a healthcare institution that not only excels in facilities and technology but also in building sustainable service networks at the national level. This identity is reinforced through various digital platforms, including Instagram, which is actively used to share service information, patient testimonials, and visual images of the institution, making it a relevant object to analyze in social media-based health communication studies.

Source: Instagram

Figure 3 Instagram of Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri

Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri's official Instagram account, with 79.6k followers and a total of 2,354 posts, shows very active and well-planned digital activities. The high number of followers for a hospital category in Indonesia indicates that MRHP has successfully built trust and engagement with the public through social media platforms. The consistency in the number of posts also shows the hospital's commitment to providing education and service information and building a strong professional image. The short but informative account bio emphasizes MRHP's positioning as a center for brain, cancer, and heart specialists while providing emergency contacts and direct links to specialists' schedules. The symbolic use of emojis reinforces the impression that the hospital is not only focused on technical medical services but also cares about the emotional and human aspects of patients.

The existence of highlight stories such as "MATERNITY, LACATION CLASS, CANCER CENTER" in Her ERA reinforces the theme-based communication approach and patient experience. Each highlight implies a narrative of care that goes beyond treatment, involving education, community, and patient empowerment. This is an important part of building semiotic brand engagement-where the hospital positions itself as a humane, communicative, and inclusive space for various patient groups. Through these highlights, account visitors can directly access information relevant to their needs, which shows that Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri understands the digital behavior of today's audience, who prioritize quick access, attractive visuals, and personal narratives.

In a digital era where visualization of narratives and personal experiences are increasingly important, social media has become an important medium to shape institutional image and deliver health messages. One popular form of content on Instagram is Reels-short videos that can dynamically combine audio, text, and visuals. Through Reels, hospitals like MRHP not only convey medical information but also showcase the emotional experiences of patients who have undergone various medical procedures at the institution. This study analyzes three Instagram Reels from MRHP's official account that showcase patient experiences, namely: (1) the story of Mrs. Melisa, who experienced preeclampsia and underwent SC ERACS surgery; (2) the experience of Mrs. Sisminingsih, who underwent robotic total

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knee replacement (TKR) surgery; and (3) Mrs. Sisminingsih's continued narration of her postoperative recovery process.

Source: Instagram

Figure 4 Reels 1 Melisa's Experience - Preeclampsia and ERACS SC Surgery

In this Reel, a visual narrative is shown about the struggle of Mrs. Melisa, who experienced pregnancy complications in the form of preeclampsia in the third trimester. The video begins with a brief explanation of her medical condition, followed by footage of the moments leading up to and after the SC ERACS (Enhanced Recovery after Cesarean Surgery) surgery. Mrs. Melisa also shared her experience of hesitation to do the surgery, her worries, the doctor's advice, and the experience after the surgery.

Source: Instagram

Figure 5 Reels 2 Mr. Jacobus' Experience - Arthrospine Surgery

The second reel features testimonials from Mr. Jacobus, who has had a pinched nerve for 19 years of his life. The beginning of the pinched nerve in 2006 did not want to seek treatment because he felt he could still do his activities, and finally, in 2023, he had a mild stroke and ventured to do surgery on the recommendation of his son at this hospital. In this video, Mr. Jacobus recounts the experience of the pre-operative process, the implementation of the action, and the post-operative results in the form of better mobility.

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Source: Instagram

Figure 6 Reels 3 Neil Bentley Experience - Prostate Therapy

The third reel tells the story of Neil Bentley, an Australian patient with an enlarged prostate disorder. Neil shares his experience with the symptoms of the disorder, learning about the procedure, and finding technology that can help his disorder through therapy. Mandaya came up in the search, and Neil decided to fly to Indonesia for the therapy.

Table 1 Semiotic Analysis of Reels Content

Content	Denotation	Connotation	Myths
Reels 1	This video features Ms. Melisa sharing her experience of giving birth via Caesarean section using the SC ERACS method at Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri. She experienced preeclampsia in her third trimester, which caused her blood pressure to rise and required surgery earlier than expected.	Emotionally, the video depicts the tension and worry experienced by Ms. Melisa due to pregnancy complications. However, with the right medical support, she made it through the labor process successfully. This reflects the importance of preparedness and professionalism of the medical team in dealing with emergency situations.	The video builds a narrative that modern medical technology, such as the SC ERACS method, can provide a safe and comfortable solution for pregnant women facing complications. It reinforces the public's trust in technological advancements in healthcare and the role of hospitals as reliable medical service providers
Reels 2	In this video, Mr. Jacobus from Toraja recounts his experience of undergoing Arthrospine surgery to treat a pinched nerve that he has suffered from for 19 years. The surgery was performed by Dr. Christian Ariono, MD, SpBS, FINSS, FICS, and one day after the surgery, Mr. Jacobus was able to walk again without pain.	This video highlights the relief and happiness felt by Mr. Jacobus after years of suffering from pain caused by a pinched nerve. It shows how medical technology can significantly improve one's quality of life.	The narrative is that long-term suffering from medical conditions can be overcome with appropriate medical interventions and advanced technology. This reinforces the belief that access to modern healthcare is key to recovery and improved quality of life.
Reels 3	This video features Neil who was experiencing problems with an enlarged prostate, causing urination problems, including frequent nighttime awakenings and a feeling of incompletion after urinating. After doing some research, Neil decided to undergo therapy at Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri	Emotionally, the video depicts the discomfort and impaired quality of life experienced by Neil due to his prostate condition. His decision to seek therapy shows hope and an attempt to improve his health condition....	The video builds a narrative that common health issues in men, such as prostate enlargement, can be addressed with the right therapy. It reinforces the message that men should be proactive in maintaining their health and that medical solutions are available to improve their well-being

Source: Research Results, 2025

The three Reels convey a consistent narrative about MRHP as a world-class health institution that not only focuses on technology and medical professionalism but also on a humanist approach that places the patient as the main subject of service. In the context of health communication in the digital era, the use of Reels as a medium of representation of patient experience is very strategic because it is able to convey messages quickly, emotionally, and visually. Through the use of Barthes' semiotic approach, this

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analysis shows that Reels not only conveys medical information but also builds a symbolic identity of a hospital that is empathetic, sophisticated, and trusted. All three levels of meaning-denotative, connotative, and mythological-play a role in shaping public perception of the quality of services and values upheld by MRHP. This strategy not only strengthens the hospital's presence in the digital ecosystem but also forms a closer emotional connection between the institution and the community.

Digital health communication has undergone a major transformation in the last decade, especially with the presence of social media as the main medium of information exchange between health care institutions and the public (Rahayu & Feriyanti, 2024) . According to Kaňková et al. (2024) , digital health communication includes the use of information and communication technologies to support patient care, health education, and healthcare system management. In this context, social media such as Instagram is a strategic channel because it combines visual, narrative, and interactive elements simultaneously

Instagram as a visual platform allows hospitals to build an emotional connection with their audience, not only through text but also with evocative images and short videos (Paramita et al., 2023) . The semiotic aspect is important because health messages are not only communicated verbally but also through symbols, colors, facial expressions, and other visual elements that mark certain meanings for the audience. Barthes mentions that every form of visual communication has two layers of meaning: denotative (literal meaning) and connotative (cultural or emotional meaning), which can be interpreted differently by each individual depending on the social and cultural context. In the context of Mayapada Hospital, the use of semiotics in digital communication can be seen in the representation of smiling patients post-surgery, the visualization of advanced medical devices, or the selection of music and voice narration in Instagram Reels that aim to foster empathy, trust, and perceptions of professionalism.

The Health Belief Model (HBM) is one of the most common health behavior theories used to understand how individuals make decisions about their health (Purnama & Yulistiani, 2022) . In the context of Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri (MRHP) Instagram Reels, HBM is visible when patient narratives show awareness of risks (e.g., preeclampsia), perceptions of disease severity, and benefits of medical measures such as SC ERACS or TKR (total knee replacement) surgery. Visualizing the patient journey in Reels is a form of visual persuasion that can increase perceptions of vulnerability and benefits and reduce psychological barriers to medical treatment.

Meanwhile, narrative medicine stems from the idea that patient stories are integral to healthcare (Loy & Kowalsky, 2024) . Instagram Reels featuring patients' personal narratives are a tangible practice of this approach. By listening to and conveying patient stories, hospitals not only provide medical information but also build empathetic and humanistic relationships, which ultimately strengthen public trust in the institution. Media Richness Theory explains that more "rich" media -i.e., media that can convey multiple social cues simultaneously - are more effective in conveying complex and emotional messages (Soerono et al., 2019) . Instagram Reels, with its combination of visuals, audio, text, and music, falls into the category of very rich media. In the context of health communication, it allows the delivery of messages about complicated medical procedures to be more easily understood and accepted by the public.

In Indonesia, visual communication through social media has become a key strategy for many healthcare institutions, especially private hospitals, in expanding service reach and building public image (Pratiwi & Paramita, 2024) . The use of Instagram has become very dominant, as the majority of Indonesian internet users are active on this platform, especially in the productive age group and women, who are also the main targets of health services such as pregnancy, childbirth, and degenerative diseases. Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri takes a strategic position in this trend by utilizing Instagram as a key communication medium. This can be seen from the number of posts that reached more than 2,300 posts, followers of more than 79,000, and the use of thematic highlight stories such as MATERNITY, CANCER CENTER, and LACTATION CLASS. The use of highlights serves as a narrative and visual repository that captures the patient experience and conveys health education directly. This shows that visual communication at MRHP is not only informative but also curative and participatory-engaging patients and the public in the healthcare narrative collectively.

On the other hand, the semiotic approach in health communication is also part of the strategy to build the hospital's identity. Visual symbols such as smiling patients, soft colors, modern font selection, and soothing music are all designed to create an image of a modern, humane, and trustworthy hospital. This is important in the context of Indonesia, where information inequality and trust in health services remain a challenge, especially in urban areas with high levels of competition for medical services (Tang et al., 2023) . Thus, semiotic-based digital health communication is not only a promotional tool but also an important instrument in shaping people's health awareness, perception, and even behavior in the digital era. In the context of Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri, this strategy not only represents the values of professionalism and empathy but also becomes a real practice of integrating communication technology with human values in contemporary medical services.

This research has a number of important implications both theoretically and practically in the realm of digital health communication, especially in the context of using social media as a means of representing health care institutions. Theoretically, this research expands the scope of understanding of the application of visual semiotics in digital health communication. Using Roland Barthes' approach - analyzing the denotative, connotative, and mythical levels - this study shows that visual content such as Instagram Reels not only functions as a medical information tool but also as a cultural narrative that shapes people's perceptions of the experience of illness and healing. This

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approach opens up new areas of study on how visualizations of medical technology, patient stories, and hospital symbols are constructed to influence public perceptions, including perceptions of service reliability, facility modernity, and institutional empathy.

Furthermore, the findings also enrich theories such as Narrative Medicine and the Health Belief Model in a digital context. By presenting the patient's story in an audiovisual manner, the hospital indirectly activated the audience's affective response that aligned with the perceived threats and benefits of medical treatment. This provides evidence that social media can serve as a bridge between the narrative dimension of medicine and the motivation of people's healthy behaviors. From a practical perspective, this study shows that hospitals can utilize social media, especially Instagram Reels, as a powerful communication strategy to increase public trust, expand the reach of service promotion, and build a humanist and professional brand identity.

Content that highlights real patient testimonials, the use of clean and empathetic visuals, and emotional audio narratives has proven to strengthen an institution's image in the eyes of the public. This is especially important in the increasingly competitive healthcare industry, where trust and comfort are key factors in patient decision-making. For hospital communication practitioners, the results of this study emphasize the importance of synergy between the medical team, digital creative team, and communication team in producing content that is not only informative but also touches the emotional side of the audience. Hospitals need to adopt a data-driven approach and patient narratives, and conduct regular symbolic analysis to ensure that the messages communicated are in line with the values that the institution wants to build

Socially and culturally, this research also reveals that health communication cannot be separated from local values, people's perceptions of illness, and the visual culture of Indonesia's digital society. By using symbols that are close to patients' daily lives - such as family smiles, modern hospital rooms and successful surgeries - hospitals are helping to shape the meaning of health in the digital landscape. Therefore, other hospitals can also adopt a similar approach to overcome cultural barriers in public health literacy.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that in a digital era that relies heavily on visual and narrative communication, Instagram Reels become a strategic tool in shaping the image of health institutions while delivering health messages emotionally, informatively, and persuasively. Through Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis of three Mandaya Royal Hospital Puri (MRHP) Reels, it was found that the short video content not only conveys medical information but also constructs the hospital's identity as a modern, humanist, and professional institution. The use of theories such as the Health Belief Model, Narrative Medicine, and Media Richness Theory reinforces the understanding that visual representations of patient experiences can improve public perceptions of service quality and encourage health behavior change. Through symbol-based approaches, personal narratives, and visual technology, MRHP succeeded in making social media an effective medium of health communication, building trust, and strengthening emotional connections with digital audiences in Indonesia.

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