

Infographic Storytelling In Promoting Telkom University Internationally

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Abstract

This project aims to address communication challenges within Telkom University's International Office Instagram account. Currently, content is largely posted in a fragmented and unstructured manner, presenting international student experiences as isolated moments rather than a coherent narrative. To respond to this issue, an infographic storytelling campaign was developed to visually communicate authentic international student experiences in an institutional context. Data were collected through 15–20-minute interviews with 27 international students representing 15 different countries. The interview transcripts were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis to identify dominant narrative themes. The campaign was developed under the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) framework, with public relations selected as the primary strategic component. Narrative coherence was guided by Fisher's Narrative Paradigm, while Visual Social Semiotics informed meaning-making through color, typography, and layout. The final output consisted of ten Instagram carousel posts published through the International Office account. Evaluation based on reach, engagement, and audience sentiment indicates that visually structured, narrative-based content resonates more strongly with audiences and enhances institutional credibility through authentic representation. This project demonstrates that infographic storytelling is an effective approach for supporting Telkom University's international communication objectives and fostering sustained audience engagement.

Keywords: Infographic storytelling; international student communication; integrated marketing communication; narrative paradigm; visual social semiotics

Abstrak

Proyek ini bertujuan untuk mengatasi tantangan komunikasi yang terdapat pada akun Instagram International Office Universitas Telkom. Saat ini, konten yang dipublikasikan cenderung bersifat terfragmentasi dan tidak terstruktur, sehingga pengalaman mahasiswa internasional ditampilkan sebagai momen-momen terpisah, bukan sebagai narasi yang utuh. Untuk menjawab permasalahan tersebut, dikembangkan sebuah kampanye infographic storytelling yang menyajikan pengalaman autentik mahasiswa internasional secara visual dan institusional. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara berdurasi 15–20 menit dengan 27 mahasiswa internasional yang berasal dari 15 negara. Transkrip wawancara dianalisis menggunakan reflexive thematic analysis untuk mengidentifikasi tema-tema naratif utama. Kampanye ini dikembangkan dalam kerangka Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) dengan public relations sebagai komponen strategis utama. Koherensi naratif mengacu pada Narrative Paradigm dari Fisher, sementara Visual Social Semiotics digunakan untuk memandu pemaknaan melalui warna, tipografi, dan tata letak. Hasil akhir proyek ini berupa sepuluh konten carousel Instagram yang dipublikasikan melalui akun International Office. Evaluasi berdasarkan jangkauan, keterlibatan, dan sentimen audiens menunjukkan bahwa konten visual berbasis narasi memiliki daya resonansi yang lebih kuat serta mampu meningkatkan kredibilitas institusi melalui representasi yang autentik. Proyek ini membuktikan bahwa infographic storytelling merupakan pendekatan yang efektif dalam mendukung tujuan komunikasi internasional Universitas Telkom dan membangun keterlibatan audiens secara berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Infographic storytelling; komunikasi mahasiswa internasional; integrated marketing communication; narrative paradigm; visual social semiotics

I. INTRODUCTION

Internationalization has become a strategic priority for higher education institutions, requiring universities to communicate not only academic offerings but also the lived experiences of their international student communities. Digital platforms, particularly social media, are widely used by international offices to disseminate information related to programs, campus life, and institutional activities. However, such communication often remains fragmented, meaning that content is presented as isolated, event-based posts without a coherent narrative that connects experiences over time. This limits emotional engagement and reduces the ability of prospective international students to envision their potential academic and social journey within the institution.

At Telkom University, the International Office utilizes Instagram as its primary channel for international communication.

While the platform provides visibility and timely updates, existing content largely emphasizes announcements and events rather than structured storytelling grounded in authentic student experiences. As a result, international communication functions mainly as information delivery instead of narrative-based engagement, creating a gap between institutional representation and the realities experienced by international students.

Previous studies highlight that narrative-based communication enhances credibility and audience trust by presenting experiences in a coherent and meaningful manner (Fisher, 1989). In addition, visual formats such as infographics improve message clarity and audience engagement in digital environments. Responding to this gap, this study applies infographic storytelling as public relations-oriented communication strategy to support Telkom University's international promotion. The study aims to demonstrate how international student narratives can be transformed into structured visual content that strengthens institutional credibility and supports long-term international communication objectives.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) provides the macro-level strategic foundation for this study. IMC emphasizes the coordination and integration of communication tools to ensure that all messages delivered to audiences are consistent, unified, and strategically aligned (Kotler & Keller, 2021). In the context of higher education, IMC extends beyond program promotion to include reputation building, institutional credibility, and identity formation. For internationalization efforts, coherent communication is essential because prospective international students rely heavily on mediated information to imagine academic and social life in unfamiliar cultural environments. Through message integration across channels, IMC enables universities to present a unified institutional identity that reduces uncertainty and supports audience trust.

Within the IMC framework, five promotional tools are commonly identified: advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and direct marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2021). While each tool contributes to institutional promotion, not all are equally suited to narrative-based international communication. Advertising offers broad visibility but often lacks authenticity due to its commercial nature. Sales promotion focuses on short-term incentives, which are incompatible with relationship-centered higher education recruitment. Personal selling provides direct interaction but is limited in reach and continuity, while direct marketing primarily supports administrative communication rather than experiential storytelling. In contrast, public relations (PR) prioritizes credibility, reputation, and relationship-building through non-paid communication, making it the most conceptually aligned indicator for representing international student experiences.

Public relations emphasizes institutional identity, transparency, and narrative framing as central communication functions (Kotler & Keller, 2021). PR operates through identity media such as publications, visual identity systems, and owned media platforms, which allow institutions to manage how they are represented to the public. In international education, PR enables universities to communicate lived experiences rather than transactional

messages, supporting long-term trust formation. This aligns directly with the objective of this study, which seeks to translate authentic international student experiences into coherent visual narratives that reflect Telkom University's institutional identity.

In contemporary digital environments, PR is closely connected to engagement and participation within social networks. Social media platforms function as relational spaces where institutions and publics interact through shared content and visible behavioral cues (Doorley & Garcia, 2023). Instagram, as an owned media channel, allows universities to control narrative framing while facilitating interaction through comments, shares, and saves. For international students, engagement reflects perceptions of transparency, inclusiveness, and institutional responsiveness rather than simple content consumption (Motion et al., 2016). As such, Instagram is particularly suitable for PR-oriented storytelling that emphasizes authenticity and relational connection.

Visual social semiotics provides the micro-level theoretical foundation for understanding how meaning is constructed in infographic storytelling. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), visual elements such as color, typography, and layout function as semiotic resources that actively shape interpretation rather than serving decorative purposes. Visual communication involves a relationship between represented participants within the image and interactive participants who produce and interpret meaning. In institutional communication, this relational dimension is critical because visuals mediate how audiences perceive credibility and authenticity.

Meaning making in visuals is also influenced by compositional structures that organize information spatially and guide reading paths. Visual hierarchy, emphasis, and sequencing allow audiences to follow narratives intuitively without extensive textual explanation. Color contributes emotional tone and symbolic association, typography structures emphasis and readability, and layout integrates elements into a coherent narrative flow (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In social media contexts such as Instagram, these visual resources are especially important due to limited attention spans and platform-specific constraints.

By integrating IMC as the macro-level strategy and visual social semiotics as the micro-level meaning-making framework, this study establishes a coherent theoretical foundation for infographic storytelling. IMC determines the strategic objective of consistent, credible, and relationship-oriented communication through public relations, while visual social semiotics explains how these objectives are operationalized through design. Together, these frameworks support the

development of narrative-based infographic communication that is visually coherent, institutionally aligned, and grounded in authentic international student experiences.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative, project-based research approach aimed at producing a practical communication output for Telkom University's International Office. The research focused on understanding international student experiences and translating those experiences into infographic storytelling as a public relations communication strategy. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 27 international students representing 15 nationalities and diverse academic programs at Telkom University. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, with the criteria that they were active international students and had experienced campus life and International Office services. Interviews were conducted both online and offline, depending on participant availability, and each interview lasted approximately 15–20 minutes.

All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim. Ethical approval was obtained through Telkom University's One-Stop Service (TOSS), and all participants signed informed consent forms prior to participation. Confidentiality was maintained by using participant initials during transcription and analysis. The interview transcripts were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, following the stages of data familiarization, coding, theme development, and theme refinement. This method enabled the identification of recurring patterns of meaning related to academic experience, cultural adaptation, institutional support, and campus life. The resulting themes served as the narrative foundation for the infographic storytelling content.

Based on the analyzed themes, the researcher developed narrative scripts and designed ten infographic storytelling carousel posts for Instagram. All infographic materials were manually designed in Canva using the 1080 × 1350-pixel Instagram vertical format. Design decisions regarding color, typography, and layout were applied consistently to support narrative clarity and institutional identity. The researcher functioned as both campaign planner and creative director throughout the process, overseeing conceptual development, narrative structure, and visual execution.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative analysis of interviews with 27 international students revealed recurring narrative patterns that reflect how students experience studying at Telkom University. Through reflexive thematic analysis, several dominant themes emerged, including academic confidence, cultural adaptation, institutional support, campus life, and personal growth. These themes represent key aspects of the international student journey, from initial decision-making to daily academic and social experiences. Students consistently emphasized the importance of institutional reputation, scholarship availability, and peer recommendations in their decision to choose Telkom University. Experiences related to cultural adjustment, particularly language and lifestyle differences, were frequently mentioned but were often accompanied by accounts of support from the International Office, student buddies, and lecturers. These narratives indicate that international students value not only academic quality but also relational support and inclusiveness within the campus environment.

The identified themes were translated into ten infographic storytelling carousel posts, each designed to communicate one coherent narrative unit. Each carousel followed a standardized structure consisting of a cover slide, three quotation-based narrative slides, and a closing message. This structure enabled fragmented interview data to be transformed into cohesive visual stories that reflect authentic student experiences. The consistent use of visual elements ensured narrative continuity across all content. Evaluation of the published content was conducted qualitatively using Instagram Insights provided by the International Office. Indicators such as reach, engagement (likes, shares, saves, and comments), and audience sentiment were examined. The results showed that posts featuring student narratives generated strong audience interaction and positive responses, suggesting that audiences resonated more with story-based content than with conventional event announcements. These findings support the argument that infographic storytelling enhances message clarity, emotional engagement, and institutional credibility within international digital communication.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study demonstrates that infographic storytelling is an effective approach for addressing fragmented international communication in higher education. By transforming authentic international student experiences into structured visual narratives, Telkom University's International Office was able to communicate institutional identity more clearly and credibly through its Instagram platform. The integration of Integrated Marketing Communication, public relations, narrative principles, and visual social semiotics ensured that the campaign delivered consistent, meaningful, and audience-centered messages.

The findings indicate that narrative-based infographic content generates stronger audience resonance than event-based or text-heavy communication. International students responded positively to content that reflected real experiences related to academics, cultural adaptation, and institutional support, reinforcing the importance of authenticity in international promotion strategies. The project also confirms that owned media platforms, particularly Instagram, are effective channels for relationship-building and trust formation when supported by coherent visual storytelling.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that Telkom University maintain periodic infographic storytelling programs as part of its international communication strategy. Future research may expand this approach by comparing narrative effectiveness across additional digital platforms such as TikTok, LinkedIn, or official university websites, or by applying mixed research methods to further evaluate audience interpretation and engagement. Integrating narrative-based communication into broader IMC activities may strengthen long-term international branding and student recruitment efforts.

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