

Recontextualizing Public Policy Discourse in English: A Case Study of Instagram Alternative Media “What Is Up, Indonesia?”

Lintang Ayomi Prasetyo^{1*}, Harni Kartika Ningsih², Untung Yuwono³

Department of Linguistics, Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia^{1,2,3}



Corresponding Author's Email: lintang.ayomi41@ui.ac.id

INFO ARTIKEL

History Article:

Submitted 08 29, 2026

Received 09 06, 2026

Published 09 12, 2026

ABSTRACT

Social media has changed how public policy issues are communicated to young, English-proficient audiences, yet few studies explain how alternative English-language media reconstruct domestic policy discourse. This study focuses on What Is Up, Indonesia? (WIUI), an Instagram alternative media account that discusses Indonesian public policy issues in English for diaspora audiences, international school students, and English-proficient Generation Z/millennial readers specifically, it analyzes the account's verbal and visual strategies in framing the Free Nutritious Meal program. Using a qualitative-descriptive design, this case study examines the verbal and visual strategies by using Discursive News Values Analysis and visual grammar respectively. The data were drawn on a purposively collected carousel corpus (September 2025) focusing on the news about the Free Nutritious Meal Program. The results in verbal strategies indicate negativity as the most dominant news value constructed through pejorative lexicons, evaluative language, and emotional references. This negativity is legitimized through actor fame and source authority. The visual strategies indicate that representational meaning shifts between conceptual symbolism and vectorial narrative, while compositionally maximum salience through green highlights consistently directs attention to data and authority failures. The study suggests that there is a typical model of public policy recontextualization as a cross-lingual multimodal practice in citizen journalism which integrates meme aesthetics and data-driven reporting for English speaking generation Z and Millennials audiences.

Keywords: News value; Visual grammar; Multimodality; Public policy; Generation Z; Citizen journalism

How to Cite:

Prasetyo, L. A., Ningsih, H. K., & Yuwono, U. (2026). Recontextualizing Public Policy Discourse in English: A Case Study of Instagram Alternative Media “What Is Up, Indonesia?”. LANCAH: Jurnal Inovasi Dan Tren, 4(2), 435-453. doi.org/10.35870/ljit.v4i2.8599

INTRODUCTION

The social media landscape has undergone a significant shift in function over the past decade. Instagram, originally a channel for sharing personal photos, has now transformed into a versatile communication infrastructure that accommodates activities ranging from product promotion to political mobilization. Video and carousel features support the production of more informative content, so that politically themed discourse can be broadcast to a wide audience. In Indonesia, the use of social media for political campaigns has been ongoing for a long time; political parties and candidates have used Instagram as a campaign tool, including in the 2024 presidential election (Hayat et al., 2024). Instagram, a social media platform owned by Meta, is perceived to enhance the effectiveness of presidential and gubernatorial election campaigns.

Furthermore, political parties are not the sole producers of political content on the platform. The proliferation of political content is also driven by public dissatisfaction and increasing civic awareness. The massive spread of internet access has also shaped the practice of citizen journalism, namely citizen participation in the political process through the production and dissemination of information (Bowman & Willis, 2003). Citizen journalism has emerged as an alternative to mainstream media, primarily because of its user-centric characteristics (Goode, 2009; Lewis, Kaufhold, & Lasorsa, 2010). In his study of the relationship between citizen journalism and new media, Lasica (2003) identified several key dimensions of citizen journalism. The most fundamental form is audience participation, characterized by public contributions in the form of comments, blogs, and amateur visual documentation, including photographs and video footage of local events. Another category of citizen journalism is represented by independent news websites that operate independently of major media corporations. A third type involves integrated participation through news websites, where readers are able to engage with journalistic content. Lasica (2003) also highlighted the role of "thin media," such as mailing lists and newsletters, as channels for information dissemination, as well as the emergence of personal broadcasting websites that enable individuals to function as broadcasters.

Several Instagram accounts have emerged as platforms through which citizens express their concerns about the current political situation. One of the prominent actors on this platform is *What Is Up, Indonesia?* (hereinafter WUI). This account discusses Indonesia's sociopolitical and public policy issues in English. Founded by Abigail Limuria and Faye Simanjuntak in 2020, WUI explicitly states its goal of helping students, graduates of international schools, and the diaspora understand Indonesia's sociopolitical conditions. The appeal of WUI lies not only in its choice of language but also in its use of humor and satire through memes, a practice closely related to Generation Z (Bowo et al., 2024), combined with data and sources from mainstream media and academic journals. This combination of humor-driven virality with data-driven information consistently achieves high engagement, an important indicator of community acceptance on Instagram (Tricomi et al., 2023). This seems to suggest that WUI frames hard news or "heavy" issues such as public policy in a way that is able to reach audiences with specific segmentation: proficient English speakers, the diaspora, and international school students.

In addition to using memes, WUI presents data and sources from mainstream media and academic journals in its content. The combination of humorous, shareable memes with data-based information helps attract more than 1,000 likes for each piece of content. Likes and comments remain vital metrics for measuring how well content resonates with audiences, with the threshold of 1,000 likes reflecting strong engagement (Basic Thinking, 2025). Engagement, which comprises likes, comments, and shares, is a key

indicator for determining whether an account gains public acceptance (Tricomi et al., 2023).

WUI is an English-language alternative media outlet that aims to inform readers about social and political issues in Indonesia through data-driven reporting and analysis. WUI's Instagram account addresses critical issues related to public policy and sociopolitical affairs. One such issue concerns the challenges arising from the Free Nutritious Meals (*Makan Bergizi Gratis* or MBG) program, one of the flagship programs under President Prabowo's administration. According to Sugiarto (2024), MBG is a strategic initiative aimed at developing high-quality human capital for the future. President Prabowo has described the program as an initiative designed to address stunting and malnutrition while stimulating local economic development by incorporating local farmers, livestock producers, and fishers into the program's supply chain (Sugiarto, 2024). The Free Nutritious Meals program has become a prominent issue receiving extensive coverage across various media platforms. Some news organizations, such as Tempo (Sevtiany & Kurnia, 2023), have examined the issue through investigative reporting, while outlets such as Pandemic Talks have adopted marketing communication strategies inspired by the consumer retail industry (Fisipol UGM, 2020). In addition, another media outlet, *The Jakarta Post*, uses standard, professional English with a serious and authoritative tone (Syahira et al., 2021). Due to its aim of engaging Millennial and Generation Z international students and diaspora audiences in discussions of public policy issues, WUI tends to utilize a more conversational communication strategy. Unlike the two previously mentioned outlets, WUI uses English as its primary language of communication, since the platform was initially intended for diaspora audiences and international school students. WUI's content reflects its focus on sociopolitical issues and public policy matters, including the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program.

As part of digital practices, WUI integrates images and text. Thus, to examine these practices, two complementary analytical frameworks are necessary. On the verbal layer, Discursive News Values Analysis (Bednarek & Caple, 2017) views the value of news not as an inherent property of an event but rather as a discursive construct built through lexical choices, evaluative language, source citations, and time-place markers. On the visual layer, visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021), rooted in metafunctions that divide the meaning of imagery into representational, interactive, and compositional dimensions, has become one of the most influential foundations in the analysis of multimodal discourse. The fusion of these two frameworks allows for a complete reading of carousel content that is verbal-visual at the same time. On this basis, the novelty of this research lies in the fusion of two multimodal frameworks to dissect a phenomenon that has not previously been examined in this way. Prior scholarship has largely treated the two frameworks as separate traditions: Discursive News Values Analysis has mainly examined conventional journalistic texts (e.g., Zhang & Cheung, 2022), while visual grammar has mainly been applied to advertising, cartoons, or single-image political communication (e.g., Jaradat et al., 2026; Juško-Štekele, 2019). Few studies have examined how the two frameworks jointly operate within English-language citizen media that recontextualizes domestic public policy for a diaspora and international-school readership; this gap is the specific contribution addressed here. Theoretically, this study extends the application of discursive news values analysis to the realm of hybrid social media content (journalistic-satirical) and proposes a model of policy recontextualization as a semiotic practice; practically, its findings provide guidance for policy communicators, public institutions, and civil society organizations in packaging technical issues to be effectively relevant and credible to young audiences.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretive design. The qualitative method relies on text and image data (Creswell, 2019), in accordance with the research objective of showing how WUI's language and visual choices are relevant to its targeted audience. The descriptive design keeps researchers close to the data, uses established frameworks, and applies limited interpretation to categorize information into themes. Analytically, this study applies a two-layer multimodal design that combines Discursive News Values Analysis (Bednarek & Caple, 2017) for the verbal layer with visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021) for the visual layer, so that the construction of meaning in the carousel content can be read in its entirety.

Research Context and Data Collection

This research focuses on public uploads from the Instagram account *What Is Up, Indonesia?* (WUI). The research context is Indonesia's digital political communication ecosystem following the 2024 elections. Data were collected through documentary observation of public content on WUI's official Instagram account using a purposive sampling technique, namely selecting the content that most helps answer the phenomenon under study. Inclusion criteria included: (a) carousel format; (b) discussion of non-electoral public policy issues; and (c) a combination of verbal and visual elements. The final corpus consists of one post about the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program posted in September 2025, as detailed in Table 1. The post was selected as the case study due to the completeness of its multimodal elements (ten slides). Each slide was downloaded, coded (S1–S10), and archived with its caption for ease of searching.

Table 1. Research corpus: WUI carousel uploads

Slide Image	Image Counts	Word Counts
Slide 1	1	16
Slide 2	1	153
Slide 3	1	161
Slide 4	Verbal only	153
Slide 5	Verbal only	145
Slide 6	1	140
Slide 7	Verbal only	144
Slide 8	2	148
Slide 9	Verbal only	139
Slide 10	Verbal only	162

Note. Source: Compiled by the researchers from the WUI Instagram carousel post on the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program, retrieved September 2025

Data Analysis

The analysis was carried out in two integrated and iterative stages alongside data collection. The first stage analyzed the verbal layer (text on the slide and caption) using the nine dimensions of news values in Table 2 to identify the dominant news value and its linguistic devices, such as evaluative language, negative lexicon, metaphor, role labeling, and source citation. The second stage analyzed the visual layer using three metafunctions of visual grammar: representational (narrative vs. conceptual, marked by the presence or

absence of vectors), interactive (supply/demand contact, social distance, point of view, modality), and compositional (information value, salience, framing). The operational mapping of the two layers is summarized in Table 3. To increase trustworthiness, the researchers conducted coding and repeated discussions until interpretive agreement was reached, while maintaining an audit trail by archiving the code assigned to each slide.

Table 2. Nine dimensions of news value

No.	News Value	Explanation
1	Negativity	Highlights negative aspects or conflicts in an event.
2	Timeliness	Relevance and actuality of events based on reporting time.
3	Proximity	Geographical and/or cultural proximity between the audience and the event.
4	Prominence	High status of the actors (individuals/organizations) involved or quoted.
5	Consonance	Fit between the story and the stereotypes or beliefs of the community.
6	Impact	Effects, significance, or consequences caused by the event.
7	Novelty	Unique or unexpected aspects of an event.
8	Superlativeness	Level of intensity or maximality in an event.
9	Personalization	Emphasis on the human side or personal interests of individuals.

Source: Adapted from Bednarek, M., & Caple, H. (2017). *The discourse of news values: How news organizations create newsworthiness*. Oxford University Press.

Table 3. Two-layer analytical coding scheme

Layer	Analytical Categories	Indicators/Realization
Verbal (news values)	Negativity, impact, prominence, personalization, superlativeness	Pejorative lexicon, evaluative language, emotion reference, labeling of elite actors, citation of sources
Visual: representational	Narrative vs. conceptual	Presence/absence of vectors; symbolic process; color manipulation
Visual: interactive	Contact, social distance, attitude, modality	Supply/demand; medium/eye-level shot; high/low angle
Visual: compositional	Information value, salience, framing	Centred/centre-margin; maximum salience; connection/disconnection

Source: Compiled by the researchers based on Bednarek and Caple (2017) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2021).

Ethical Considerations

This study analyzed publicly available content and did not involve human participants, so it did not require formal ethical approval from a research ethics committee. Nevertheless, the researchers upheld the principles of internet research ethics based on the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) 3.0 guidelines (Franzke et al., 2020). The WUI account is analyzed as public media genuinely intended for widespread consumption, and its name is mentioned openly because it is a media entity, not a private individual. Is thus a legitimate object of academic study. The names of public figures (state officials, institutions, and public figures) that appear in the uploads are quoted as they are, because their involvement lies within the realm of public discourse. The researchers did not, however, cite the identity of private users from the comment section or include anyone’s personal data. All data were analyzed in a non-interventional manner, and interpretation was undertaken as fairly and proportionately as possible to avoid distorting the meaning of the original content. This research has no affiliation with or funding from WIUI or any parties related to

the policies discussed, and is therefore free from conflicts of interest.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Language Strategy Construction: News Value



Figure 1. Cover slide of the WIUI post on the MBG program

Source: Screenshot from the What Is Up, Indonesia? (@whatisup.indonesia) Instagram carousel, reproduced for non-commercial academic analysis (September 2025).

The corpus analysis shows that negativity is the most prominent news value in the linguistic construction of WUI's coverage of the MBG policy (see Figure 2). Nevertheless, several words and phrases contain more than one news value. As illustrated in Figure 1, negativity is reflected in the choice of the lexicon *poisonous* and the phrase *messy reality*. The word *poisonous* carries a negative connotation because, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, it refers to something "very harmful and able to cause illness or death." The use of this term therefore implies a harmful condition associated with the MBG program. The title of the first slide, "Free Poisonous Meal," can be translated as "Makan Beracun Gratis," functioning as a form of satire directed at the Free Nutritious Meals program, since both expressions share the abbreviation MBG. Meanwhile, the phrase *messy reality* represents a condition characterized by disorder and various problems; the choice of *messy* as an adjective further reinforces the negative representation of the issue.

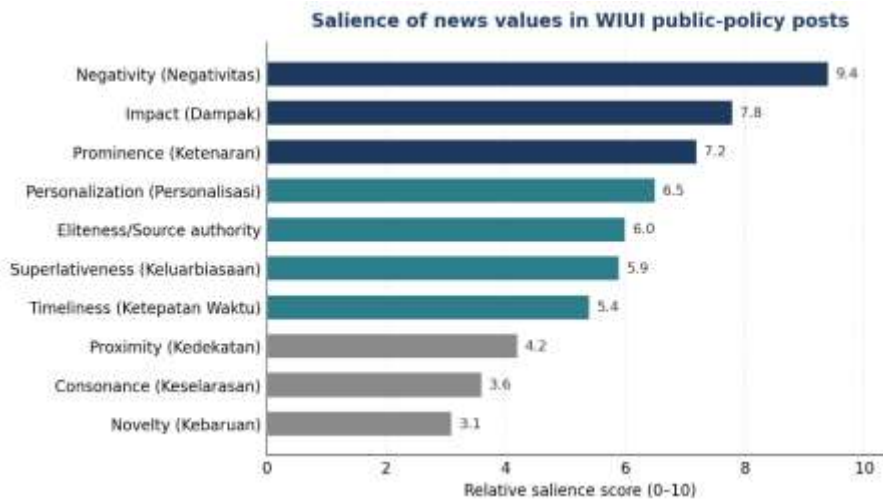


Figure 2. Salience of news values in WIUI’s public policy uploads
Source: Researchers’ own analysis of the WIUI corpus (2026).

In addition to negativity, prominence and impact also appear frequently in WUI's posts. The mention of the Indonesian government as the main actor responsible for the events surrounding the MBG program demonstrates how the text constructs the news value of prominence. The involvement of a governmental institution reflects the role of elite actors who influence the formulation and implementation of the MBG policy, with the value of proximity re-emerging through the presentation of comparative data.



Figure 3. Verbal construction of negativity, impact, and superlativeness in WIUI’s MBG post
Source: Screenshot from the What Is Up, Indonesia? (@whatisup.indonesia) Instagram carousel, reproduced for non-commercial academic analysis (September 2025)

In Figure 3, phrases such as *fallen ill*, *food poisoning*, *gone bad*, *ambulances rushing children to hospitals*, and *children screeching in pain*, along with the word *worms*, demonstrate the presence of negativity as a news value. The word *disappointment* in Figure 3 also reflects an emotional dimension while simultaneously referring to individuals, describing the disappointment experienced by students' parents. Several of the phrases above also construct the news value of impact by illustrating the consequences of consuming meals provided through the MBG program. Another news value identified in Figure 3 is superlativeness, realized through quantification (7,368 children, more than 1,300 children, 25 recipients, and budget figures of Rp71 trillion and Rp335 trillion) and intensification (*a whopping budget*, *in the past week alone*). Figure 3 also presents a chronological dimension through temporal markers such as *since January 2025* and *in the past week*.

The element of prominence is once again emphasized in WUI's posts on the MBG issue. The connection with the Indonesian government constructs the news value of prominence through the representation of actors directly associated with the program, including not only the President but also individuals responsible for managing the Free Nutritious Meals initiative. Figure 4 presents the names of institutions and key figures involved in implementing the MBG program: Nanik S. Deyang, Deputy Chairperson of the National Nutrition Agency (*Badan Gizi Nasional/BGN*), the institution overseeing the MBG program at the time the WUI content was published; President Prabowo Subianto, who introduced the program; Dadan Hidayana, Chairperson of BGN at the time of publication; and Zulkifli Hasan. This prominence value, accompanied by role labels in Figure 4, is connected with the construction of negativity through several statements and representations, including *apologized for the incidents while weeping* (referring to Nanik S. Deyang); *President Prabowo Subianto boasted the achievements of BGN and gaslighting the victims* (referring to government officials); and *these cases might have been caused by students not used to eating with spoons and not washing their hands* (referring to Prabowo Subianto's statement). Zulkifli Hasan's statement attributing the outbreaks to allergy and unfamiliarity with certain food likewise contributes to the construction of negativity. Figures 3 and 4 also demonstrate the presence of proximity as a news value, constructed through terms such as APBN (Indonesia's national budget) and *air tajin* or rice water (a traditional beverage commonly consumed by Indonesians, particularly during infancy).



Figure 4. Institutions and key figures associated with the MBG program

Source: Screenshot from the What Is Up, Indonesia? (@whatisupindonesia) Instagram carousel, reproduced for non-commercial academic analysis (September 2025).

To strengthen the credibility of its claims, this post again constructs the news value of prominence, as illustrated in Figure 5, through the involvement of an institution—the Indonesian Journal of Educational Research (JPPI), which reported an agreement between parents and schools to prevent the disclosure of the issue to the media.



Figure 5. Institutional source cited to strengthen credibility

Source: Screenshot from the What Is Up, Indonesia? (@whatisup.indonesia) Instagram carousel, reproduced for non-commercial academic analysis (September 2025).

Figure 6 demonstrates the construction of superlativeness through a comparative presentation of free school meal programs in Brazil and Indonesia, emphasized through the statement "It is mandated by law to spend a minimum of 30% of the budget on smallholder farmers," which highlights the difference in policy regulations between the two countries.



Figure 6. Comparative superlativeness: Brazil and Indonesia's school meal programs

Source: Screenshot from the What Is Up, Indonesia? (@whatisup.indonesia) Instagram carousel, reproduced for non-commercial academic analysis (September 2025).

The WUI post discussing the MBG issue demonstrates the news value of personalization through emotional references as linguistic devices. As illustrated earlier, the word *disappointment* in the sentence "Many parents and students have taken to social media venting their disappointment on the meals received" represents the emotional response of individuals affected by the issue.

Visual Grammar Strategy Construction



Figure 7. Distribution of visual grammar metafunctions across WIUI's MBG slides

Source: Researchers' own analysis of the WIUI corpus (2026).

Based on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2021) visual grammar framework, this study analyzes WUI's posts through three metafunctions: representational, interactive, and compositional meaning. Of the ten

slides related to the MBG issue, only five contain images, as shown in Figure 7, while the rest are text-based. All slides maintain a consistent color scheme of purple, green, and white, with some variation using black backgrounds (Figure 7). Compositional meaning constitutes the most prominent metafunction across the dataset. The photographs also realize interactive meaning, with offer images representing the dominant form of visual contact. Regarding social distance, four of the five photographs are constructed using medium shots, while eye-level angles are predominantly used, positioning viewers in a relatively equal relationship with the represented participants. These visual configurations enable audiences to engage with the participants while still accessing contextual information about the MBG-related issue. The following sections provide a detailed analysis of each metafunction.

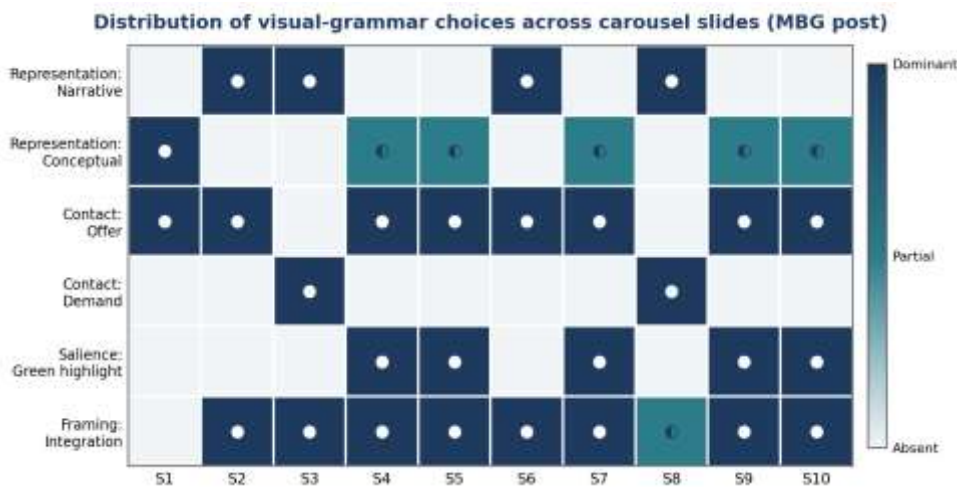


Figure 8. Distribution of visual grammar choices across slides in the MBG upload
Source: Researchers' own analysis of the WIUI corpus (2026).

a Representational Meaning

Figure 1, the cover slide of WUI's post, realizes a conceptual representation because it contains no visible vector. The image presents an analytical structure depicting a whole-part relationship between the food tray and its constituent elements. The possessive attributes in the image include the compartments of the metal tray containing food, the plastic wrapping covering the tray, and the text "FREE POISONOUS MEAL." The symbolic process is further constructed through color manipulation: rather than being presented in its natural colors, the plastic-wrapped meal tray is dominated by purple and green tones, a combination commonly associated in popular culture with poison, corruption, or evil. Green in particular has historical associations with toxicity, partly because certain green pigments developed in the eighteenth century contained arsenic (St. Clair, 2017, p. 193). The image also employs a grunge effect that creates visual distortion and evokes the impression of spoiled or decaying food, reinforced by the accompanying text "FREE POISONOUS MEAL," which anchors the image's negative meaning and frames the meal as potentially harmful.

Unlike Figure 1, Figure 3 contains a photograph with a visible vector, as illustrated in Figure 9, and therefore realizes a narrative representation.



Figure 9. Narrative representation: transactional process in the ambulance scene

Source: Screenshot from the What Is Up, Indonesia? (@whatisup.indonesia) Instagram carousel, reproduced for non-commercial academic analysis (September 2025).

The vector in Figure 9 is formed by the action of a man wearing a yellow jacket who holds an intravenous fluid bottle for a child lying on a stretcher. The man functions as the Actor, while the child receiving medical assistance may be interpreted as the Goal toward which the action is directed; the process is therefore transactional. Besides the man in the yellow jacket and the child on the stretcher, the image also depicts a middle-aged woman dressed in black seated on the left-hand side. Within the reactional process, the woman functions as the Reactor, while the sick child serves as the Phenomenon toward which her gaze is directed. The locative circumstance indicates that the event takes place inside an ambulance, represented through visual elements such as a small oxygen cylinder on the right-hand side of the image and a medical stretcher. Other slides in WUI's post on the MBG issue are predominantly characterized by non-transactional narrative representations, as illustrated in Figures 10, 11, and 13; Figure 12 depicts Nanik S. Deyang attending a press conference.



Figure 10. Nanik S. Deyang at a press conference (non-transactional process)

Source: Screenshot from the What Is Up, Indonesia? (@whatisup.indonesia) Instagram carousel, reproduced for non-commercial academic analysis (September 2025).

Similarly, Figure 11, which depicts Dr. Tan Shot Yen at the DPR building, also presents a non-transactional process, in which Dr. Tan Shot Yen functions as the Actor within a non-transactional narrative representation.



Figure 11. Dr. Tan Shot Yen at the DPR building (non-transactional process)

Source: Screenshot from the What Is Up, Indonesia? (@whatisup.indonesia) Instagram carousel, reproduced for non-commercial academic analysis (September 2025)

Furthermore, the post comprises two photographs (Figures 12 and 13) that demonstrate distinct action processes. Figure 12 is characterized by a non-transactional action process, whereas Figure 13 is characterized by a transactional action process involving a clear vector between participants.



Figure 12. Non-transactional process: Brazilian school lunch program

Source: Screenshot from the What Is Up, Indonesia? (@whatisup.indonesia) Instagram carousel, reproduced for non-commercial academic analysis (September 2025)

The transactional action process in Figure 13 is indicated by the vector extending from the Actor the child holding a school lunch plate, to the lunch staff member who receives or provides the meal in the Brazilian school lunch program.



Figure 13. Transactional process: Brazilian school lunch program

Source: Screenshot from the What Is Up, Indonesia? (@whatisup.indonesia) Instagram carousel, reproduced for non-commercial academic analysis (September 2025)

b Interactive Meaning

Most of the photographs in WUI's posts employ the offer contact type, including the meal tray in Figure 1 (the cover slide), the child lying in the ambulance (Figure 9), Dr. Tan Shot Yen at the DPR building (Figure 11), and the image of schoolchildren receiving meals from staff in the Brazilian school lunch program (Figure 13). In these images, the represented participants do not look directly at the camera, positioning the audience as objective observers. In Figure 4 (Nanik S. Deyang) and Figure 12 (Brazilian schoolchildren eating lunch in class), however, the contact shifts to demand: the direct gaze toward the camera appears to "demand" the audience's attention, especially in Figure 4, where Nanik S. Deyang expresses remorse over the incidents affecting the students who experienced food poisoning. Social distance is consistently maintained through medium shots and eye-level angles, enabling the audience to observe the full context of the events without losing a sense of closeness. Figure 1 is an exception, using a high-angle shot from above that places the audience in the position of an observer of the "poisonous meal."

c Compositional Meaning

The arrangement of visual elements determines the hierarchy of information received by the audience. In terms of information value, Figure 7 shows that almost all slides in the WUI post adopt a top-to-bottom structure; the exception is the image of the MBG stainless steel food tray (see Figure 14), where the information is positioned at the center. The phrase "FREE POISONOUS MEAL" is made salient through the use of contrasting, bright colors—green and white—which stand out sharply against the black background.



Figure 14. Food tray positioned at the center

Source: Screenshot from the What Is Up, Indonesia? (@whatisup.indonesia) Instagram carousel, reproduced for non-commercial academic analysis (September 2025).

In Figure 1, the framing strategy used is disconnection, as the strong visual contrast clearly separates the text from the dark background. In the other slides, salience is realized through color and typography; important elements, such as data or quotations from prominent figures, are highlighted through bold typeface and bright green color, creating maximum salience. In contrast to Figure 1, the other slides (see Figure 15) employ a framing strategy of connection or integration, in which the image and text are not separated by a rigid line but are instead blended together through overlap.



Figure 15. Other slides with embedded images

Source: Screenshot from the What Is Up, Indonesia? (@whatisup.indonesia) Instagram carousel, reproduced for non-commercial academic analysis (September 2025).

Although the placement of text is generally consistent in terms of information value, the position of images varies. In Figures 3, 4, and 6, the images are placed on the left side, while in Figure 8 the image is positioned at the center of the text, following a centered triptych vertical layout. The placement of the

images in Figures 3, 4, and 6 is not identical, even though all are located on the left side.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that WUI constructs newsworthiness discursively, framing public policy as a communicative construction rather than as a neutral report of events. The dominance of negativity legitimized by source authorities is consistent with the findings that news value is built through the interaction of verbal and visual resources. This expands Discursive News Values Analysis, originally developed for conventional journalistic news, into the realm of carousel-based hybrid social media content. WUI's Instagram account is renegotiating timeliness and platform affordance; this study adds that nonjournalistic actors such as WUI also adopt the grammar of news values to borrow journalistic credibility while maintaining a satirical voice. This finding both extends and complicates comparable work on meme-mediated political communication: whereas Peters and Allan (2022) show that weaponized memes construct newsworthiness primarily through irony and shareability, WUI's uploads combine this affective register with explicit data citation and source attribution, suggesting that satire and evidentiary rigor are not mutually exclusive in citizen-media newsworthiness construction. This qualifies Zhang and Cheung's (2022) account of co-constructed news values, which was developed for professional newsmagazine covers rather than citizen-run social media accounts.

At the visual layer, the shift between symbolic conceptual representations (purple-green as a poisonous connotation) and vector narrative representations indicates careful management of modalities: symbolism evokes affection, while documentary narratives construct factuality. These findings are in line with a visual grammar study on Instagram advocacy content that blends urgency and empathy through contact choices and prominence. The use of maximum salience through green highlighting on the data, rather than on the actor's face, indicates a strategy that prioritizes quantitative evidence as the center of the characteristic visual rhetoric that distinguishes WUI from populist political content that generally highlights leading figures. This visual strategy contrasts with Kissas's (2022) account of populist Instagram celebrity advocacy, where salience is typically concentrated on the leader's face and persona; WUI instead redirects visual salience toward quantitative evidence, indicating that citizen-media policy critique can construct credibility through data-centered rather than personality-centered visual rhetoric.

This study thus shows the productivity of combining news value analysis and visual grammar to examine image-based alternative media, as well as introducing the concept of cross-language policy recontextualization as a semiotic practice. In practical terms, the model offers a communication approach that enables English-speaking audiences, including international school students and the Indonesian diaspora, to engage with public and sociopolitical issues in Indonesia through relevant data and audience-oriented language.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that in discussing the Free Nutritious Meals program, the account constructs a discourse dominated by negativity, built through evaluative language and emotional involvement and accompanied by superlativeness, impact, and personalization values. Statistical numbers and scientific reports are presented to validate the data while being coupled with negative elements. At the visual layer, not all slides contain images; slides with images generally carry narrative representational meaning, except

for the first slide, which carries symbolic representational meaning through the manipulation of the MBG tray's color. Compositionally, maximum salience is achieved through green highlights in the data text, and a connection/integration framing strategy is used consistently. It can be considered that through this case study, WUI, as an example of alternative media on Instagram, has strategized a model for recontextualizing public policy. That is through a cross-lingual multimodal practice that combines citizen journalism, meme aesthetics, and data-driven reporting to reach Indonesian, English-speaking, and diaspora audiences in an affective and credible manner.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors declare that no specific funding was received for this research and thank the editorial team for the opportunity to submit this manuscript.

REFERENCE

- Anderau, G., & Barbarrusa, J. (2024). The political power of internet memes. *Synthese*, 203(5), 152. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-024-04568-1>
- Basic Thinking. (2021). This is how many likes and comments you need to be part of the Instagram elite. *BASIC thinking*. <https://www.basichinking.com/likes-comments-instagram-elite/>
- Bauidh, A. K. (2025). Meme-ing resistance: Digital satire as a tool for socio-political critique. In *Doing Sociology*. <https://doingsociology.org/>
- Bednarek, M., & Caple, H. (2017). *The discourse of news values: How news organizations create newsworthiness*. Oxford University Press.
- Bowo, F. A., Anisah, A., & Marthalia, L. (2024). Meme marketing: Generation Z consumer behavior on social media. *Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Sains*, 5(2), 188–201. <https://doi.org/10.59141/jiss.v5i2.1025>
- Chovanec, J., & Babič, S. (2025). Cartoons in memes: Recycling popular art forms as a humorous response to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Word and Image*, 41(2), 171–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02666286.2025.2463037>
- Creswell, J. W. (2019). *Pendekatan metode kualitatif, kuantitatif, dan campuran* (4th ed.). Pustaka Pelajar.
- Fisipol UGM. (2020, November 29). *Upaya dan evaluasi strategi komunikasi publik pemerintah terkait COVID-19*. Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik, Universitas Gadjah Mada. <https://fisipol.ugm.ac.id/upaya-dan-evaluasi-strategi-komunikasi-publik-pemerintah-terkait-covid-19/>
- Franzke, A. S., Bechmann, A., Zimmer, M., Ess, C., & Association of Internet Researchers. (2020). *Internet research: Ethical guidelines 3.0*. Association of Internet Researchers. <https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf>
- Gómez-Muñoz, X., & Muñoz-Pico, H. P. (2023). How is the war between Russia and Ukraine depicted on Twitter? Rhetorical analysis of the most popular memes. *Palabra Clave*, 26(2). <https://doi.org/10.5294/pacla.2023.26.2.8>
- Goode, L. (2009). Social news, citizen journalism and democracy. *New Media & Society*, 11(8), 1287–1305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809341393>
- Hayat, M. A., Hidayat, H. A., Pebtianti, E., Maulana, E. J., & Syahbana, T. A. (2024). Penggunaan media

- sosial Instagram Ganjar Pranowo dalam kampanye politik pemilihan presiden tahun 2024. *Syntax Literate: Jurnal Ilmiah Indonesia*, 9(1), 411–424. <https://doi.org/10.36418/syntax-literate.v9i1.14789>
- Isti'anah, A., Rahmasari, S., & Lauwren, S. (2021). Post-pandemic Indonesian tourism promotion on Instagram: Multimodal discourse analysis. *Journal of Modern Languages*, 31(2), 46–76. <https://doi.org/10.22452/jml.vol31no2.3>
- Jalli, N. (2020). Exploring the influence of citizen journalism content on the Malaysian political landscape. *Kajian Malaysia*, 38(1), 67–88. <https://doi.org/10.21315/km2020.38.1.4>
- Jaradat, A., Haider, A. S., Al-Qudah, I., & Dagamseh, M. (2026). A semiotic analysis of Arab political cartoons on U.S. President Trump. *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11196-025-10413-6>
- Juško-Štekele, A. (2019). Folklore "language" in Latvian political cartoon (the stage of parliamentary democracy). *Letonica*, 2019(39), 92–108.
- Kissas, A. (2022). Populist everyday politics in the (mediatized) age of social media: The case of Instagram celebrity advocacy. *New Media & Society*, 26(5), 2880–2900. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221111866>
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2021). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Lasica, J. D. (2003, August 7). What is participatory journalism? *Online Journalism Review*. <https://www.ojr.org/ojr/workplace/1060217106.php>
- Lavender, J. (2020). English in Ecuador: A look into the linguistic landscape of Azogues. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 41(5). <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2019.1667362>
- Lee, S. (2026). Remix, labour, and visibility: Fashion memes as participatory visual culture on platform media. *Convergence*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565261435086>
- Lewis, S. C., Kaufhold, K., & Lasorsa, D. L. (2010). Thinking about citizen journalism: The philosophical and practical challenges of user-generated content for community newspapers. *Journalism Practice*, 4(2), 163–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700903156919>
- Liu, H., Liu, L., & Li, H. (2024). Multimodal discourse studies in the international academic community (1997–2023): A bibliometric analysis. *SAGE Open*, 14(4), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241298945>
- Luginbuhl, M. (2025). TV news on Instagram: Affordances, genres, journalistic cultures. *Journalism*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849251323789>
- Muya, P., & Onyinge, T. (2026). New media, meme culture and political satire: The role of performative art in political activism in Kenya. *Social Science Computer Review*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08944393261419776>
- Nicolaou, C., & Kalliris, G. (2020). Audiovisual media communications in adult education: The case of Cyprus and Greece of adults as adult learners. *European Journal of Investigation in Health, Psychology and Education*, 10(4), 967–994. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ejihpe10040069>
- Peters, C., & Allan, S. (2022). Weaponizing memes: The journalistic mediation of visual politicization. *Digital Journalism*, 10(2), 217–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1903958>
- Putra, A. S., Aditriyana, M. R., Widya, N. S., & Nurhadi, Z. F. (2023). Meme politik sebagai representasi komunikasi kritis di media sosial. *Jurnal Syntax Fusion: Jurnal Nasional Indonesia*, 3(9), 980–993. <https://doi.org/10.54543/fusion.v3i09.363>
- Ruhanya, P., Matsilele, T., & Gumbo, B. (2024). Data accessibility and digital democracy: Unpacking the

- political transformation problem in Zimbabwe. In *Political communication in Sub-Saharan Africa, Volume I: Media and democracy* (Vol. 1, pp. 171–196). Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-48431-5_10
- Sevtiany, V., & Kurnia, S. S. (2023). The meaning of Tempo magazine cover in semiotics by Charles Sanders Peirce. *Mediator: Jurnal Komunikasi*, 16(1), 27–38. <https://doi.org/10.29313/mediator.v16i1.2311>
- St. Clair, K. (2017). *The secret lives of colour*. John Murray.
- Subekti, D., Putra, F., & Muhammad, H. A. (2024). A bibliometric analysis of social media as a platform for politicians. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Civic and Political Studies*, 19(1), 29–56. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-0071/CGP/v19i01/29-56>
- Sugiarto, E. C. (2024). *Makan Bergizi Gratis dan SDM unggul*. Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia. https://www.setneg.go.id/baca/index/makan_bergizi_gratis_dan_sdm_unggul
- Syahira, T. A., Sinar, T. S., & Lubis, M. (2021). Types of modality in news item is used in the texts news in The Jakarta Post newspaper. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal): Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(1), 66–71. <https://doi.org/10.33258/birci.v4i1.1537>
- Tormakhova, A., Tovmash, D., & Grechkosii, R. (2024). The influence of artistic kitsch on the formation of political memes. *ESPEs*, 13(2), 117–145. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14772442>
- Tricomi, P. P., Chilese, M., Conti, M., & Sadeghi, A.-R. (2023). Follow us and become famous! Insights and guidelines from Instagram engagement mechanisms. In *Proceedings of the 15th ACM Web Science Conference 2023* (pp. 1–10). ACM. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3578503.3583620>
- Utami, P. (2023). *"I'm here for the memes": The civic potential of internet memes in Indonesia* [Doctoral thesis, Monash University]. Monash University Repository.
- Widyaningsih, W., Ramadhani, R. W., & Prihantoro, E. (2025). Political polarization through political memes for new voters in the 2024 presidential election. *Bricolage: Jurnal Magister Ilmu Komunikasi*, 11(1).
- Wu-Ouyang, B. (2024). Are social media replacing traditional media in shaping political participation? *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 101(2), 350–372. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10776990231187654>
- Zhang, W., & Cheung, Y. L. (2022). The co-construction of news values on news magazine covers: A corpus-assisted multimodal discourse analysis (CAMDA). *Journalism Studies*, 23(15), 1917–1941. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2022.2123845>
- Zhao, Y., & Wang, J. (2025). The newsworthiness of Gu Ailing: A comparative critical discourse analysis of Chinese and American media reports. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 18(2), 223–244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2024.2422399>