

# **Educational Communication Transformation through Instagram in the Student Admission System (SPMB): A Comparative Analysis of School Social Media Engagement**

**Rokhmad<sup>1</sup>**

STAI Bustanul Ulum Lumajang, Jawa Timur, Indonesia.

Email: [rokhmadsmdi3@gmail.com](mailto:rokhmadsmdi3@gmail.com)

**Harry Purwanto<sup>2</sup>**

Universitas Islam Syarifuddin Lumajang, Jawa Timur, Indonesia.

Email: [purwa4@gmail.com](mailto:purwa4@gmail.com)

**Saiful Ridho<sup>3</sup>**

PT Kelumajang Siber Media, Lumajang, Jawa Timur, Indonesia.

Email: [saifulridho680@gmail.com](mailto:saifulridho680@gmail.com)

## **Abstract**

*This study analyzes the transformation of educational communication through Instagram in the Student Admission System (SPMB) in Lumajang Regency. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed using a literature review combined with digital observation of three school Instagram accounts: @smkn1lumajang, @smadalmj.id, and @smanegerizlumajang. The findings reveal that Instagram has become the primary communication medium for disseminating SPMB information, replacing traditional communication channels. Differences in communication strategies were identified across the accounts, ranging from administrative-informational content to emotionally driven narrative storytelling. The account @smadalmj.id demonstrates the highest engagement level due to its combination of appealing visual design and persuasive messaging, while the other accounts mainly focus on technical information delivery. The study indicates that the effectiveness of digital communication is not solely determined by message content but also by visual strategy and audience engagement. This research contributes to the development of digital educational communication studies in the context of student admission systems.*

**Keyword:** digital communication, Instagram, SPMB, engagement, education

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, the rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed communication practices across various sectors, including education. This transformation extends beyond teaching and learning activities, encompassing institutional communication processes that connect educational institutions, students, parents, and the broader community. According to Castells (2010), contemporary society has evolved into a network society in which information is no longer distributed through centralized and hierarchical channels but circulates dynamically through interconnected digital networks. Within this environment, social media has emerged as a key communication infrastructure that facilitates more open, immediate, and participatory interactions.

The growing prominence of social media has redefined public communication spaces, enabling users not only to engage in social interactions but also to access, create, and disseminate information for educational and institutional purposes. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) argue that social media platforms provide opportunities for users to generate and exchange interactive digital content, thereby fostering collaborative communication environments. In the educational sector, this development offers institutions new opportunities to optimize public communication strategies, particularly in disseminating essential information related to student admissions and educational services.

Among various social media platforms, Instagram has become one of the most widely adopted communication channels by educational institutions. Its emphasis on visual storytelling, accessibility, and user engagement makes it particularly effective for reaching contemporary audiences. Tuten and Solomon (2017) highlight that Instagram's integration of visual content, concise narratives, and interactive features contributes significantly to audience engagement. Consequently, the platform has become a strategic medium for educational communication, especially in attracting and interacting with younger generations who constitute the dominant user demographic.

In Indonesia, the digital transformation of educational communication is increasingly evident in the implementation of the Sistem Penerimaan Murid Baru (SPMB) or New Student Admission System. As a crucial component of educational management, SPMB involves multiple stakeholders, including schools, prospective students, and parents. Traditionally, admission-related information was disseminated through bulletin boards, brochures, and printed media. However, technological advancements have encouraged educational institutions to adopt digital platforms as primary communication channels. Nasrullah (2017) emphasizes that social media has shifted institutional communication from a predominantly one-way information delivery model toward a more interactive and dynamic communication process.

This transition is reflected in the growing use of Instagram by schools to communicate admission schedules, requirements, procedures, and related announcements. Beyond serving as an information dissemination tool, Instagram is increasingly utilized to strengthen institutional branding and enhance public trust. From an organizational communication perspective, social media functions not only as a medium for information sharing but also as a mechanism for constructing and reinforcing institutional identity (Kelleher, 2009). As a result, Instagram has become an integral component of contemporary educational

communication strategies. Furthermore, the integration of Instagram into educational communication reflects a broader shift from informational communication toward participatory communication. This evolution can be observed through increasing levels of public interaction, including likes, comments, shares, and other forms of engagement associated with SPMB-related content. DeVito (2016) argues that effective communication in the digital era should be evaluated not only by message delivery but also by the extent of audience response and involvement. Therefore, engagement has emerged as a critical indicator for assessing the effectiveness of digital communication practices within educational institutions.

Despite the increasing adoption of Instagram in educational communication, several challenges remain. First, many educational institutions lack a structured and strategic approach to digital communication. Instagram is often utilized merely as a one-way information channel without fully leveraging its interactive capabilities. Second, substantial variations exist in content quality, both in terms of visual presentation and message construction, resulting in differing levels of audience engagement across institutional accounts. Third, not all schools recognize the importance of engagement-oriented content strategies in establishing effective communication and fostering meaningful relationships with stakeholders.

Within the context of Lumajang Regency, several schools, including SMKN 1 Lumajang, SMAN 2 Lumajang, and SMAN 3 Lumajang, have actively employed Instagram as a communication platform during the implementation of SPMB. Nevertheless, noticeable differences can be observed in the communication strategies adopted by these institutions. While some schools primarily focus on delivering administrative information, others combine informational content with more compelling visual and narrative approaches. These variations indicate differing levels of digital communication transformation among educational institutions within the region.

Existing studies have extensively examined the role of social media in educational settings, particularly in relation to learning processes and teacher–student communication. However, limited scholarly attention has been directed toward understanding how educational communication is transformed through Instagram within the specific context of student admission systems. Moreover, comparative analyses focusing on engagement performance across multiple official school accounts within the same geographical area remain scarce. Consequently, a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of digital communication strategies among educational institutions has yet to be fully established.

Addressing this gap, the present study offers a comparative analysis of educational communication transformation through Instagram in the implementation of SPMB across selected schools in Lumajang Regency. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasize information dissemination, this research evaluates digital communication practices through audience engagement indicators and content communication strategies. By doing so, the study seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on digital educational communication, particularly regarding the role of social media in fostering effective public communication within educational institutions.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine how educational communication is transformed through Instagram in the implementation of the New Student Admission System (SPMB) across several schools in Lumajang Regency. Particular attention is given to digital communication strategies, content presentation patterns, and audience engagement levels as key indicators of communication effectiveness in the contemporary digital environment.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach combined with a literature review and digital observation of Instagram-based communication practices. A qualitative design was selected because the study sought to explore and interpret the dynamics of digital educational communication rather than to test statistical relationships or causal hypotheses. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative research enables researchers to investigate and understand the meanings that individuals or groups assign to social phenomena. In the present study, the phenomenon under investigation concerns the transformation of educational communication through social media in the implementation of the New Student Admission System (Sistem Penerimaan Murid Baru/SPMB).

The descriptive qualitative approach was considered appropriate for providing a systematic representation of communication practices observed within digital environments. As noted by Sugiyono (2019), descriptive research aims to portray existing conditions objectively based on empirical data without manipulating research variables. Accordingly, this study focused on identifying and describing patterns of educational communication manifested through Instagram content related to student admissions.

To strengthen the theoretical and analytical foundation of the study, a literature review was conducted. Snyder (2019) defines literature review research as a systematic process of identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing previous studies relevant to a particular topic. The literature examined in this study included scholarly journal articles, academic books, and previous research concerning digital communication, social media engagement, educational communication, and institutional communication strategies. The integration of literature review findings provided a conceptual framework for interpreting the communication patterns observed in the selected Instagram accounts.

Empirical data were collected through digital observation, adopting a simplified netnographic perspective. This method involved observing publicly available Instagram content related to the 2026/2027 SPMB implementation without direct interaction with account administrators or followers. Digital observation allows researchers to examine communication behaviors and interaction patterns within online environments while preserving the natural context of user activities (Hine, 2015). The observation focused on content published during the student admission period, including announcements, promotional materials, registration guidelines, and other admission-related information.

The study examined three official school Instagram accounts in Lumajang Regency:

1. @smkn1lumajang
2. @smadalmj.id
3. @smanegeri3lumajang

These accounts were selected based on three criteria: (1) active dissemination of SPMB-related information, (2) a substantial follower base indicating public reach, and (3) consistent utilization of Instagram as an educational communication platform. Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive qualitative framework focusing on five key dimensions. First, message content was analyzed to identify the types of information communicated, including admission schedules, registration requirements, and application procedures. Second, communication strategies were examined through the analysis of language use, narrative structure, persuasive techniques, and audience targeting. Third, content visualization was evaluated by assessing graphic design elements, visual composition, color utilization, and overall content presentation. Fourth, audience engagement was assessed through observable interaction indicators such as likes and comments. Finally, communication effectiveness was interpreted based on the extent to which content successfully conveyed information while attracting audience attention and encouraging interaction.

The analytical procedures followed the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, Instagram posts were categorized according to communication themes and content characteristics. The organized data were subsequently presented in narrative form to facilitate interpretation and comparison across accounts. The final stage involved identifying recurring patterns and drawing conclusions regarding the transformation of educational communication practices in the context of SPMB implementation.

Through the integration of literature review and digital observation, this methodological approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how Instagram functions as an educational communication medium during the student admission process. Furthermore, the analysis of audience engagement offers insights into the effectiveness of digital communication strategies adopted by schools in communicating admission-related information and fostering public interaction within contemporary digital environments.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Educational Communication Transformation through Instagram**

The findings indicate that Instagram has become a central medium in the transformation of educational communication during the implementation of the New Student Admission System (SPMB) in Lumajang Regency. The three schools examined in this study—@smkn1lumajang, @smadalmj.id, and @smanegeri3lumajang—actively utilized Instagram as their official communication channel for disseminating information regarding admission schedules, registration requirements, and application procedures. This finding reinforces the growing significance of social media as an integral component of contemporary public communication systems characterized by speed, accessibility, and interactivity.

The adoption of Instagram reflects a broader shift from conventional communication practices toward digitally mediated communication. Traditionally, SPMB information was distributed through notice boards, brochures, and printed materials. However, technological developments have facilitated the migration of institutional communication into digital environments that provide greater accessibility and real-time information exchange. This transformation is consistent with Castells' (2010) concept of the network society, which

emphasizes connectivity and information flow as defining characteristics of contemporary communication structures. Likewise, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) argue that social media platforms enhance communication effectiveness by enabling immediate and interactive information exchange among users.

Beyond its informational function, Instagram also serves as a strategic instrument for institutional branding and reputation management. Visual presentation, narrative construction, and audience interaction collectively contribute to shaping public perceptions of educational institutions. Consequently, the transformation of educational communication through Instagram extends beyond technological adaptation and reflects a strategic effort to strengthen relationships between schools and their stakeholders.

### **Communication Strategy of @smkn1lumajang**

The Instagram account @smkn1lumajang recorded 854 posts, 9,323 followers, and 171 following accounts during the observation period. The account consistently disseminated SPMB-related information through a structured and information-oriented communication approach. Content primarily focused on presenting admission schedules, registration procedures, and administrative requirements in a clear and systematic manner.

Engagement metrics revealed moderate audience attention, with selected posts receiving 746 likes and no comments, 635 likes and one comment, and 400 likes accompanied by two comments. Although these figures demonstrate substantial visibility, audience participation through comments remained relatively limited. This pattern suggests that communication on the account predominantly follows a one-way information dissemination model rather than fostering interactive dialogue.

From a communication perspective, the account employed a predominantly informative tone complemented by occasional persuasive expressions aimed at attracting prospective students. Such communication practices illustrate an effort to balance administrative clarity with audience appeal. Nevertheless, the primary emphasis remained on delivering accurate information rather than encouraging audience interaction.

Overall, the communication strategy implemented by @smkn1lumajang prioritizes informational effectiveness and procedural clarity. While successful in ensuring information accessibility, the account demonstrates limited utilization of Instagram's interactive features to enhance public engagement.

### **Communication Strategy of @smadalmj.id**

Among the three accounts examined, @smadalmj.id demonstrated the highest level of audience engagement. The account contained 747 posts, 9,862 followers, and followed 98 accounts. SPMB-related posts generated substantial interaction, with one post receiving 1,419 likes and 10 comments, while another recorded 1,329 likes and 5 comments.

The higher engagement levels suggest the implementation of a more effective digital communication strategy. Unlike accounts that primarily emphasize administrative information, @smadalmj.id combined informational content with emotional and motivational messaging. Narratives emphasizing aspirations, opportunities, and future achievements contributed to a more engaging communication experience for prospective students and their

families. This finding supports DeVito's (2016) argument that effective digital communication extends beyond information transmission and includes the ability to establish emotional connections with audiences. The incorporation of storytelling elements enabled the account to create a more relatable and meaningful communication environment, thereby encouraging stronger audience involvement.

Furthermore, the account successfully integrated visually appealing designs with persuasive communication techniques. The combination of aesthetic content, inspirational narratives, and strategic messaging transformed Instagram from a simple information-sharing platform into a space for institutional identity construction and reputation enhancement. Consequently, @smadalmj.id can be considered the most effective example of digital communication practice among the schools analyzed in this study.

### **Communication Strategy of @smanegeri3lumajang**

The account @smanegeri3lumajang recorded 467 posts, 4,160 followers, and followed 111 accounts. Its content primarily focused on delivering detailed technical information regarding the SPMB process, including PIN collection schedules, document verification procedures, administrative requirements, and service hours.

Despite providing comprehensive information, the account generated relatively low engagement levels. One observed post, for example, received approximately 83 likes within several hours after publication. This suggests that the informational value of content alone may not be sufficient to attract significant audience attention within highly visual social media environments. The findings indicate that content emphasizing procedural information without strong visual support tends to be less effective in stimulating audience interaction. Instagram's communication ecosystem places considerable importance on visual appeal, and posts that fail to capitalize on visual storytelling may struggle to compete for audience attention.

Additionally, the account demonstrated limited utilization of consistent visual identity elements related to the SPMB campaign. As a result, important messages appeared less prominent compared to content published by accounts employing more sophisticated visual communication strategies. These findings highlight the importance of integrating visual design principles with informational content to improve communication effectiveness on social media platforms.

### **Engagement as an Indicator of Digital Communication Effectiveness**

The findings demonstrate that engagement indicators, particularly likes and comments, provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of digital communication on social media platforms. Engagement reflects the extent to which communication messages successfully capture audience attention and stimulate public responses.

Among the three accounts examined, @smadalmj.id consistently achieved the highest engagement levels. This success can be attributed to its ability to combine visually appealing content, emotionally resonant narratives, and storytelling-oriented communication strategies. In contrast, @smkn1lumajang and @smanegeri3lumajang primarily emphasized administrative information, resulting in lower levels of audience interaction. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of digital communication is influenced not only by the

completeness and accuracy of information but also by the manner in which information is presented. This observation aligns with Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986), which posits that communication effectiveness is enhanced when media provide rich, interactive, and engaging channels for message delivery.

Furthermore, the results reinforce the notion that social media has transformed educational communication from a predominantly informational process into a participatory communication environment. Instagram enables educational institutions to move beyond merely transmitting information and instead cultivate relationships, interactions, and community engagement with prospective students and the broader public. Consequently, the transformation of educational communication through Instagram in the context of SPMB represents not only a technological adaptation but also a shift toward more audience-centered and engagement-oriented communication practices.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that a substantial transformation has occurred in educational communication through the adoption of Instagram during the implementation of the New Student Admission System (SPMB) in Lumajang Regency. Social media, particularly Instagram, has evolved into a primary communication channel for disseminating educational information, replacing many functions traditionally performed by conventional media. The findings reveal that educational institutions increasingly rely on digital platforms to communicate admission schedules, registration requirements, and procedural information in a manner that is both accessible and timely for prospective students and their families.

The comparative analysis indicates that each school employs a distinct communication strategy in managing SPMB-related content. The Instagram account @smkn1lumajang primarily emphasizes clarity, structure, and informational accuracy, while @smanegeri3lumajang focuses on delivering comprehensive administrative details. In contrast, @smadalmj.id demonstrates a more engagement-oriented communication approach by integrating emotional narratives, visually appealing content, and storytelling techniques. As reflected in higher audience interaction levels, this strategy appears to be more effective in attracting public attention and fostering audience participation. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of digital communication is influenced not only by the quality and completeness of information but also by the way messages are framed, visualized, and communicated to target audiences.

From a theoretical perspective, the study supports the view that social media has transformed educational communication from a predominantly informational model into a more participatory and engagement-driven process. The findings reinforce the relevance of Network Society Theory and Media Richness Theory in explaining how digital platforms facilitate interactive communication between educational institutions and their stakeholders. Instagram functions not merely as an information dissemination tool but also as a medium for institutional branding, relationship building, and public engagement.

Practically, the findings highlight the importance of developing strategic digital communication practices within educational institutions. Schools are encouraged to move beyond administrative information delivery by incorporating visual storytelling, audience-centered messaging, and interactive communication features that enhance public

engagement. Such approaches may contribute to greater visibility, stronger institutional reputation, and more effective communication outcomes during student admission processes.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study relied exclusively on digital observation of Instagram content and did not incorporate interviews with social media administrators, prospective students, parents, or other stakeholders. Consequently, interpretations of communication strategies were based primarily on observable content rather than insider perspectives. Second, engagement analysis was limited to likes and comments, excluding other relevant metrics such as reach, shares, saves, and impressions that could provide a more comprehensive assessment of communication performance. Third, the study focused on three schools within a single regency, limiting the broader generalizability of the findings.

Future research may benefit from adopting a mixed-methods approach that combines content analysis, social media analytics, and in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders. Expanding the scope of analysis to include multiple regions and educational levels would also provide a more comprehensive understanding of digital educational communication practices. Furthermore, future studies could investigate the relationship between engagement metrics and institutional outcomes, thereby offering deeper insights into the strategic role of social media in educational communication and student recruitment processes.

## REFERENCES

- Ainin, S., Parveen, F., Moghavvemi, S., Jaafar, N. I., & Shuib, N. L. M. (2015). Factors influencing the use of social media by SMEs and its performance outcomes. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 115(3), 570–588. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMDS-07-2014-0205>
- Alhabash, S., & Ma, M. (2017). A tale of four platforms: Motivations and uses of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat among college students? *Social Media + Society*, 3(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117691544>
- Castells, M. (2010). *The rise of the network society* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Daft, R. L., & Lengel, R. H. (1986). Organizational information requirements, media richness and structural design. *Management Science*, 32(5), 554–571. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.32.5.554>
- DeVito, J. A. (2016). *The interpersonal communication book* (14th ed.). Pearson.
- Hine, C. (2015). *Ethnography for the internet: Embedded, embodied and everyday*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>
- Kelleher, T. (2009). Conversational voice, communicated commitment, and public relations outcomes in interactive online communication. *Journal of Communication*, 59(1), 172–188. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.01410.x>

- Kircaburun, K., Griffiths, M. D., & Billieux, J. (2020). Psychosocial factors mediating the relationship between social media use and engagement. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 18(6), 1436–1450. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-019-00106-1>
- Manca, S. (2020). Snapping, pinning, liking or texting: Investigating social media in higher education beyond Facebook. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 44, 100707. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2019.100707>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Nasrullah, R. (2017). *Media sosial: Perspektif komunikasi, budaya, dan sosioteknologi* (2nd ed.). Simbiosis Rekatama Media.
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333–339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>
- Sugiyono. (2019). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Tess, P. A. (2013). The role of social media in higher education classes: A literature review. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(5), A60–A68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.12.032>
- Tuten, T. L., & Solomon, M. R. (2017). *Social media marketing* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.