



Examining Instagram uses & gratification on followers @pandemictalks

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Article Info

Article history:

Received December 15th 2025

Revised January 14th 2026

Accepted January 27th 2026

ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic has driven an increase in public demand for health information that is fast, accurate, and easily accessible. Social media, particularly Instagram, has become one of the main sources for meeting this demand. This study aims to analyze the motives for using Instagram as a medium for searching for health information related to COVID-19 among followers of the @pandemictalks account using the Uses and Gratifications theory approach. The research method used was a quantitative approach with a survey technique of followers of the @pandemictalks account. The results showed that the main motives for using Instagram in this context included fulfilling information needs, increasing health knowledge, reducing uncertainty, and active engagement through user interaction and participation. These findings indicate that the @pandemictalks account plays a significant role as an alternative source of science-based health information amid the pandemic crisis. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on analyzing independent Instagram accounts with information visualization strategies and their relationship with active audience engagement in the context of health risk communication during the Covid-19 pandemic.



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INTRODUCTION

Since the announcement of the Covid-19 case in March 2020 in Indonesia, the trend of seeking health information in Indonesia has continued to increase. Health information seeking behavior is an activity to seek certain health information that aims to meet information needs both to prevent or treat disease (Limilia & Pratamawaty, 2020; Neely et al., 2021; X. Zhao et al., 2020). This activity is carried out as an effort to reduce uncertainty about the current situation. As expressed by (Limilia & Pratamawaty, 2020) that to reduce uncertain conditions, people try to find as much information as possible from various media, both conventional media and new media such as social media. Social media has a contributing role in meeting health information needs during a pandemic. Social media is an alternative space to obtain information, (J. Chen & Wang, 2021; Neely et al., 2021) share, and discuss about health (Carlyle et al., 2019; Y. Zhao & Zhang, 2017a).

Previous research on the use of social media to meet the need for information about health has been widely carried out. J. Chen & Wang (2021) who conducted a literature review found that social media was used by three different groups, namely health institutions, health researchers and professionals and the general public. The purpose of individuals using social media is not only to fill the need for health information, but also to obtain social and emotional support obtained from peer-to-peer interactions (Huo et al., 2019; Y. Zhao & Zhang, 2017a). A similar study surveying social media users found two other main reasons for using social media related to health, namely to gain knowledge about the disease they are diagnosed with and to communicate with doctors (Y. Zhao & Zhang, 2017a). Meanwhile, during the Covid-19 pandemic, social media was accessed to understand local medicines used to reduce Covid-19 infections.

This study discusses the use of Instagram media to obtain information about Covid-19 on @pandemictalks followers by using the Uses & Gratification theory. The basic assumption of this theory is that audiences actively choose media to meet their information needs. In the context of this research, the audience chooses to use Instagram media in order to meet the needs of health information regarding Covid-19 during the pandemic. Instagram is a popular social media platform in Indonesia and is widely used by Indonesians. Reporting from We are Social, as many as 86.6% of the existing population or more than 202 million people are Instagram users with time spent about 3 hours per day.

Instagram is a social media platform that provides space for users to be able to convey their feelings, thoughts and opinions both in visual form and in short text. The image that forms the basis of social media has become an advantage and attraction in the diffusion of information, especially during the pandemic. The reason is that images can attract the attention of users so that they are interested in reading the information provided. This is what makes Instagram an effective, efficient, fast, interactive and adaptive medium in crisis situations, such as Covid-19 (Li & Xie, 2019; Lorenzo & Eliane, 2020; Malik et al., 2018).

One of the Instagram accounts that uses the Instagram feature to provide health information and education about Covid-19 is @pandemictalks. This account with 372,000 followers is not an official account from the government or health authorities in the Republic of Indonesia. This account was initiated voluntarily by people who care about the development of Covid-19 cases in Indonesia. The purpose of this account is to provide information and education to the public about Covid-19 from the perspective of science, health, and socio-politics. This is motivated by the existence of an information gap in the community during the pandemic, so that Covid-19 in Indonesia is disturbing and difficult to control. With reference to this situation, @pandemictalks collected information about Covid-19 obtained from official data. The data is then presented in simple and attractive content through visualizations in the form of images or infographics so that it can be more easily accepted by the intended audience. In a crisis situation, conveying a simple and visually appealing message is an effective and efficient way to communicate risk and reduce public uncertainty. In addition, visual information can increase high engagement from users (Kamel Boulos et al., 2016; Malik et al., 2021). Thus, this study complements research on the motives for using Instagram and active engagement for health purposes during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Some research topics with Uses and Gratifications theory in social media are the use of social media such as Facebook, Blog, Twitter, Snapchat & Myspace which are used to fulfill socio-psychological needs such as building new friendships and re-establishing old friendships, showing affection, venting negative feelings, gain recognition, get entertainment, fulfill cognitive needs where the pattern between generations is different (Bartsch & Viehoff, 2010; Chen, 2011; Grieve, 2017; Leung, 2013; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). Other studies have found that activities using social media are motivated by information exchange, conversation and socialization, information seeking, entertainment, escape and diversion (Leung, 2013; Whiting & Williams, 2013), as style and status, education (Leung, 2013), communication needs, spending time, expressing opinions, and sharing information (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Meanwhile, the results of other studies found that there are three main motives in the use of social media, namely to obtain information, make friends, and build networks (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008).

Kim et al. (2021) in his research states that social media is one platform that provides opportunities for users to obtain content according to their needs. The results of his research found that the motive for using social media was related to the fulfillment of information needs in the form of information, entertainment, rewards, and relationships. On social media, individuals can also gain experience which becomes a collection of knowledge so that the more frequent access is made to social media, the more knowledge they have so that they can meet their information needs (AlMuammar et al., 2021; Zhao & Zhang, 2017b). There have been many studies regarding the search for health information through social media. The results of the study found that individuals seek health information through social media because of the low cost, easy and fast access (Antheunis et al., 2013; Chou et al., 2009; Park & Goering, 2016; Vance et al., 2009). The study of the use of social media in the context of health using the uses and gratification theory was carried out by (Antheunis et al., 2013) to investigate motives, burdens, and expectations regarding health information. Whereas Park & Goering (2016) looking for the relationship of motives, cognitive engagement, online activities, and aspects of empowerment in the use of YouTube as a communication medium.

Antheunis et al. (2013) explain that social media users' motives for fulfilling their health information needs include efforts to increase knowledge about health, establish communication between doctors and patients, obtain social support, exchange advice or experiences related to health, and support self-care practices. Whereas Park & Goering (2016) identified four motives for using YouTube for health purposes, in the form of social usefulness motives, convenient information seeking motives,

spending time motives, and entertainment motives. As for research Lianshan Zhang & Jung (2019) which examines the relationship between WeChat and the involvement of its users in terms of health using four motive variables, namely information seeking motives, building self-agency, social interaction, technology convenience, and self-expression. The active involvement of users is defined as someone in using social media for health purposes as well as using it as a vehicle to redistribute health information to family, friends and those closest to them who have the same information needs. Other activities are in the form of liking, and commenting on what you think (Li & Xie, 2019; Lorenzo & Eliane, 2020; Zhang & Jung, 2019) is the dimension of active involvement, which in the context of health information can be effective when linked to health information during a crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic (Malik et al., 2018, 2021).

This study expands on previous research by applying the uses & gratification theory to @pandemictalks followers in the context of health during a crisis, namely the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 is a unique opportunity to understand social media messages in the field of health communication. The motive variables used in this study were adapted from research Lianshan Zhang & Jung (2019) by adjusting the Instagram feature that is linked to the active engagement of @pandemictalks followers. Based on this description, this study formulates five hypotheses to test the influence of Instagram usage motives on the active involvement of followers of the @pandemictalks account. Hypothesis 1 (H1) states that the information seeking motive influences active involvement. Hypothesis 2 (H2) states that the self-agency building motive influences active engagement. Hypothesis 3 (H3) states that the social interaction motive influences active engagement. Hypothesis 4 (H4) states that the technological convenience motive influences active engagement. Hypothesis 5 (H5) states that the self-expression motive influences active involvement.

RESEARCH METHODS

The data for this study were collected through an online survey using a convenience sampling technique. Followers of the @pandemictalks account were sent a link to fill out a survey. Before respondents were allowed to access the questionnaire, they were asked to read about the purpose of the study, the estimated time to complete the questionnaire as well as an “informed consent” statement and check their agreement with the confidentiality requirements. Respondents who agree and are willing to become respondents can continue to fill out survey questions. While participants who are not willing, then stop at that stage.

The number of respondents in the study was 97 people with the majority of respondents being women (89.7%), and the average age was 32.3 years (between 22 – 45 years). The majority of respondents' education has graduated from S1 (62.9%), with the background of work being dominated by the private sector (52.6%) and the average income is > 3.5 million per month (79.4%).

The questionnaire designed in this study was adapted from Lianshan Zhang & Jung (2019) which includes the motives for using social media in the context of health communication by adjusting the Instagram feature. The research questionnaire is divided into four parts. The first part contains information on the intensity and frequency of using social media and the @pandemictalks account. The second part of the questionnaire that was examined was the motive for following @pandemictalks as many as 22 motives were changed to questionnaire items that asked respondents to rate on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree).

As for active engagement, which is the third part of the questionnaire, the questionnaire questions consist of 4 points with a 5-point scale (1 = Never, 5 = Very Often). The fourth part of the questionnaire is to identify the socio-demographic background of the respondents such as gender, age, education, income, and occupation. Before distributing the questionnaire, a pre-test was conducted to 20 participants to check the reliability, flow, and completeness of each question and instrument. The confusing sentences are rearranged for clarity. The following are measurement items used in research by adapting from research (Lianshan Zhang & Jung, 2019).

Table 1. Measurement Items

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Motive of Media Use		
Seeking Information	I follow IG @pandemictalks to get information about Covid-19	
	I follow IG @pandemictalks to get the latest information about Covid-19	
	The information about Covid-19 that I read and learn from IG @pandemictalks I save on IG if needed at any time	0.74
	I'm looking for tips related to Covid-19 on IG @pandemictalks	
	I use IG @pandemictalks to store information about Covid-19	
	I'm looking for information from IG @pandemictalks to be a gatekeeper for my environment	
Building Self-Agency	Information on IG @pandemictalks helps me filter and eliminate rumours related to the Covid-19 hoax	
	I am psychologically able to spread reliable Covid-19 information to people around me	0.807
	I am satisfied with sharing or receiving information about Covid-19 from IG @pandemictalks	
	IG @pandemictalks provides an opportunity to stay in touch with people I rarely see by sharing topics and information related to Covid-19	
	IG @pandemictalks serves to build and maintain relationships with others through sharing interesting Covid-19 information	
Social Interaction	IG @pandemictalks provides a space to be closer to my family and friends through sharing Covid-19 information	0.868
	I use IG @pandemictalks to get social support from other users	
	I use IG @pandemictalks to interact with people with similar health conditions	
	I follow IG @pandemictalks because people also use it as a place to find and share Covid-19 information	
Technological Convenience	Compared to other media, IG @pandemictalks is an easier medium to get Covid-19 information	
	I'm using IG @pandemictalks as a source of Covid-19 information because people are using it too	0.799
	IG @pandemictalks is the latest media technology in Covid-19 education	
	I can express my personal values freely regarding the Covid-19 controversy on IG @pandemictalks	
	I'm talking about Covid-19 on IG @pandemictalks because I can't discuss freely face to face	
Self-Expression	I dare to express my experience and opinion about Covid-19 on IG @pandemictalks	0.804
	I comment and reply to Covid-19 information on IG @pandemictalks to support or criticize the information	
Active Engagement		
Active Engagement	How often do you use the story and post features on IG to update Covid-19 information from @pandemictalks	0.743

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
	How often do you share Covid-19 information from IG @pandemictalks with your friends on social media?	
	How often do you like or like Covid-19 information on IG @pandemictalks	
	How often do you comment or reply uploads about Covid-19 on IG @pandemictalks	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The research data shows that respondents have followed the @pandemictalks account for more than 12 months (47.4%) and have made it a source of information about Covid-19. Respondents read information about Covid-19 in these accounts almost every day (52.5%) while others did it at least once a week. To test the proposed hypothesis, regression analysis was used. Hypothesis testing is carried out to determine whether the proposed hypothesis based on a review of the literature that has been presented is accepted or rejected. Table 2 projects the results of hypothesis testing.

Table 2. Uses and Gratifications Measurement Results

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	β Coefficients	P-value	Supported/Not Supported
H1	Seeking Information → Active Engagement	.232	.016	Supported
H2	Building Self-Agency → Active Engagement	-.105	.184	Not Supported
H3	Social Interaction → Active Engagement	.171	.228	Not Supported
H4	Technological Convenience → Active Engagement	.195	.089	Supported
H5	Self Expression → Active Engagement	.284	.004	Supported

Hypothesis 1 stated that the seeking information of followers @pandemictalks has an effect on active engagement. In Table 2, seeking information has an effect on active engagement (β coefficient = 0.232, $p = 0.016 < 0.05$), so H1 is accepted. Therefore, the variable seeking information followers @pandemictalks is a significant predictor of active engagement.

Hypothesis 2 stated that the motive for building self-agency followers @pandemictalks has an effect on active engagement. In Table 2, building self-agency has no effect on active engagement (β coefficient = -0.105, $p = 0.184 > 0.05$), so H2 is rejected. Therefore, the variable of building self-agency followers @pandemictalks is not a significant predictor of active engagement.

Hypothesis 3 stated that the social interaction motive of @pandemictalks followers has an effect on active engagement. In Table 2, social interaction has no effect on active engagement (β coefficient = 0.171, $p = 0.228 > 0.05$), so H3 is accepted. Therefore, the social interaction variable of followers @pandemictalks is not a significant predictor of active engagement.

Hypothesis 4 stated that the technological convenience motive of @pandemictalks followers has an effect on active engagement. In Table 2, technological convenience has an effect on active engagement (β coefficient = 0.195, $p = 0.089 < 0.05$), so H4 is accepted. Therefore, the technological convenience of followers @pandemictalks is a significant predictor of active engagement.

Hypothesis 5 stated that the self-expression motive of @pandemictalks followers has an effect on active engagement. In Table 2, self-expression has an effect on active engagement (β coefficient = 0.284, $p = 0.004 < 0.05$), so H5 is accepted. Therefore, the self-expression of followers @pandemictalks is a significant predictor of active engagement.

Based on the results of the regression analysis, the five hypotheses proposed based on the literature review are H1, H4, and H5 accepted, and H2 and H3 rejected. Furthermore, based on Table

3, it is known that there is a simultaneous effect (Sig. 0.000 <0.05), so that seeking information, building self-agency, social interaction, technological convenience, and self-expression of followers of @pandemictalks have a significant effect on active engagement.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis Results

ANOVAa					
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
1	Regression	379,892	5	75,978	15,967
	Residual	433.009	91	4.758	
	Total	812,901	96		

a. Dependent Variable: Active Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Seeking Information, Building Self-Agency, Social Interaction, Technological Convenience, Self Expression

Table 4 shows the magnitude of the effect of media use motives consisting of seeking information, building self-agency, social interaction, technological convenience, and self-expression of followers of @pandemictalks on active engagement. The value of R Square in this study is 0.467 which illustrates that the magnitude of the influence of the motives of seeking information, building self-agency, social interaction, technological convenience, and self-expression of followers of @pandemictalks on active engagement simultaneously is 46.7%.

Table 4. Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.684a	.467	.438	2.18136

a. Predictors: (Constant), Seeking Information, Building Self-Agency, Social Interaction, Technological Convenience, Self Expression

b. Dependent Variable: Active Engagement

Discussion

The results of the study add some empirical context to a general understanding of the uses and gratifications of social media. There is an important new data contribution to increase understanding of trends in the use of social media as a source of health information and how social media users find and use health information during a crisis, namely the Covid-19 pandemic.

This study reveals a typical motive for health-related purposes on social media Instagram. Followers @pandemictalks use Instagram media to get information about Covid-19, where this finding is in line with the research results (J. Chen & Wang, 2021; Huo et al., 2019; Park & Park, 2016; Tian & Robinson, 2008; Lianshan Zhang & Jung, 2019) that someone uses social media to meet their information needs. By staying aware of and following the developments of Covid-19, the public can minimize uncertainty in the midst of a pandemic that is not yet clear how to heal (Limilia & Pratamawaty, 2020).

Seeking information has a significant effect on active engagement. This is due to the desire to fulfil the information needs regarding Covid-19 which will encourage individuals to not only seek the information needed, but also to distribute the information obtained (Zhang & Jung, 2019). Moreover, the information on @pandemictalks is in the form of an image with a simple explanation so that it is very appropriate to the pandemic conditions. Instagram is very useful and effective for communicating risk because images on social media tend to attract higher levels of engagement in the form of shares, comments and likes thereby increasing the reach of a post (Ketonen & Malik, 2020; Malik et al., 2021).

In terms of technological convenience, followers of @pandemictalks see this account as providing easy access to Covid-19 information, thus affecting active engagement. This is because this

account focuses its discussion on information related to Covid-19 from many perspectives. So that people do not need to sort and look for information related to Covid-19 from other sources, because it has been summarized and presented in the media used in daily life.

This is in line with previous research which states that one form of technological convenience can be in the form of subscribing to a health account whose information is tailored to the needs of its users (Kamel Boulos et al., 2016; Kent, 2020; Zhang & Jung, 2019). This convenience encourages individuals to like, comment, and share what they get. As mentioned by Song et al. (2016) and Zhou et al. (2018) that the convenience offered by social media regarding the provision of specific health information, encourages individuals to recommend it to their friends or family.

Another motive for followers of @pandemictalks using Instagram and following the account is that respondents can express themselves in the form of opinions that are in line with or that are critical of Covid-19 information. These expressions are stated in the comments column and respondents can discuss freely. Self-expression is one of the motives of someone using Instagram (Lee et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2020) and other social media (Niu et al., 2021; Zhang & Jung, 2019; Zhang & Pentina, 2012) whether related to conveying ideas or feelings (Huo et al., 2019). This explanation is in line with the results of the study that self-expression has a significant influence on the active engagement of @pandemictalks followers.

Furthermore, Instagram is a social media that is closely related to social interaction. As a platform that is becoming popular for use in disseminating health information, Instagram provides space to not only communicate privately but also to communicate in groups and publicly, especially during a pandemic. Individuals tend to seek common ground in order to gain support (Carlyle et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2020). However, in this study, social interaction was not a significant factor in active engagement.

Based on the results of the study, it is known that respondents use @pandemictalks not to get emotional support for what they are experiencing. Rather, individuals need information support (Jong et al., 2021; Zhang & Jung, 2019) on the situation at hand so as to reduce the worries they have. Therefore, the activities carried out are not as an effort to get closer to people who are in the same situation, or to be in a crowd that has empathy as expected (Antheunis et al., 2013; Huo et al., 2019; X. Zhao et al., 2020).

Followers of @pandemictalks can share information about Covid-19 to their closest people through the sharing feature either on Instagram or on other social media. This is one way to sort out and ward off hoaxes about Covid-19 that are widely scattered. Song et al. (2016) mentioned that individuals seek, and share health information online not for themselves but also for their family and friends. In Indonesia, sharing health information with family and people around them is a form of concern and responsibility. This also refers to Asian culture which often prioritizes family along with the values of obedience, duty, and harmony within the group (Shea & Yeh, 2008; Tata & Leong, 1994).

The results of this study indicate that building self-agency is not a significant predictor of active engagement because not all respondents express their feelings and opinions through the like feature, and redistribute information obtained through sharing or commenting on what they have obtained. Thus, this study has different results from previous studies which state that building self-agency is a strong predictor of active engagement (Zhang & Jung, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The @pandemictalks account is one of the Instagram social media accounts that is a platform for providing information about Covid-19 in Indonesia. By using the uses and gratification theory which includes motives, Seeking Information, Building Self-Agency, Social Interaction, Technological Convenience and Self Expression, research shows that there is a significant effect of these motives on active engagement. Thus it can be concluded that Instagram is one of the reliable social media for distribution and health education during times of crisis.

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