Social Media Affordances: Instagram Content as a Means to Perpetuate Gender Stereotification

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Abstract

This article aims to find out more about the consequences of social media content on gender stereotyping of women. The existence of the internet, which cannot be separated from everyday life, allows humans to access information on digital media or social media more quickly and intensely, to fulfill various needs, such as the need for entertainment. Through the literature review data collection method and qualitative analysis on a number of Instagram accounts such as @Dagelan and @Alfysaga accounts, this study finds that social media has affordances to offer various types of content—including entertainment content, that users can enjoy as well. The focus of the problem in this research is uploads that sound gender stereotyping towards women, which in fact is still widespread in various types of entertainment content offered on social media platforms. By using the theory of media affordances and hegemony, in this study it is concluded that content creators can take advantage of Instagram’s ability to reach many audiences—which allows the consequences for gender-stereotyped entertainment content, for lasting and hegemonic because the audience continues to exist.

Keywords: social media; Instagram; affordances; hegemony; gender stereotypes.

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INTRODUCTION

The existence of women as a subordinate gender is an essential discourse since the discussion of feminism emerged and highlighted women's freedom, independence, and emancipation that are still constrained in all aspects of political, social, and economic. In patriarchal culture, this subordination is the universal impact of the traditions inherent in society (Sakina, 2017). The media and messages contained in it then help shape the culture; when there is a struggle between ideologies and interpretations of messages ultimately forms a particular culture (Clarke, 2014). Or in other words, media have a specific role in building a patriarchal culture—which views women as an inferior gender. Concerning this issue, language and various symbolic forms in the media produce a framework of thought and social relations (Lovell, 2003) including the formation of gender stereotypes, which is a consequence of the subordination of women’s gender.

In Indonesia, women are stereotyped as the only party who has to move in the domestic sphere, such as the obligation to cook, wash and tidy the house, or take care of children. On the other hand, men are placed as gender superior, dashing, mighty, and only responsible in the public sphere—not domestic (Rosa et al., 2016). Nowadays, such stereotypes are easy to find, not only in products of conventional media such as television, print media, or radio but also in social media content (Eriyanto, 2003). Its nature is not limited to discussion or scientific level but has started to enter the realm of entertainment until it is commodified. Based on APJII’s studies, entertainment content on social media has the most audience compared to others such as educational content or news. Besides, one of the most widely used types of social media platforms is Instagram (Damar, 2020). Instagram is in demand because of its simple appearance but has many features that can be explored easily or are commonly called user-friendly.

Instagram become a favorite social media as users can upload their various activities in visual form, both images and videos, accompanied by text, and can also be done anytime, anywhere. Like social media in general, Instagram is also used as media for the production of mediated reality, or in other words, the visuals produced are to define the social meaning contained in the image. Social media such as Instagram are a reflection of the culture that has hegemony, social logic, and audience (Juditha, 2018). Through the use of Instagram, a person can build relationships in cyberspace by using his/her personal account autonomously. With the identity displayed, it can have the power to influence the audience or its followers in cyberspace.

The use of Instagram is a real pattern of social media affordance which is mediated and supported by the internet network. In short, affordances are facts of action and interaction (Norman, 1999). In the field of technology, Gaver (1996) states that technology and an artifact can offer different actions, which emphasizes the need for evidence in the form of actions that can be seen as affordances or actions that can be judged as the ability of the technology. Furthermore, affordances in technology and artifacts lead to social interactions and social structures (Gaver, 1996). In this context, humans see the internet and social media as offering some capabilities that have a direct impact on their interactions with others. As a reaction to the technological capabilities of social media, humans then build interactions by producing content that can increase their interactions with others. The consequence is the emergence of various visual content on social media such as Instagram, with interactions between fellow users as reflected in the number of followers, the number of likes and comments on each upload. On the other hand, Instagram is
currently dominated by entertainment content. It is in line with Shoemaker & Reese (1996) that media also can select, display, and broadcast any content which is considered relevant to its audience. Entertainment content will continue to increase along with the high interest of the audience for this type of content.

The worst consequence of the affordances or the ability of social media is it allows humans to produce any content, whose impacts on interactions between humans tend to benefit themselves, without thinking about the impact on other humans. In social media, it is not difficult to find any content that is full of objectification towards women. Coupled with the packaging as entertainment content to increasingly attract public interest. In this context, indirectly, various types of entertainment content on social media such as Instagram, have the potential to help perpetuate gender stereotypes in society’s culture. In other words, stereotypes against women are a culture brought up by the media industry which tends to be gender-insensitive (Burke & Mazzarella, 2008).

The researcher has reviewed relevant theories and concepts to understand this study. The first is related to the concept of gender stereotyping and hegemony. In the text media, the description of 'feminity and 'masculinity' ideologically emphasizes how men and women are expected to behave (Luviana, 2010). It provides boundaries for gender regarding how that gender should be presented and what work they should do (West & Turner, 2007). Then, it results in stereotypes about gender. Stereotypes are expressions of exaggerated beliefs about a group, as an attempt to justify the behavior of groups that choose to express those beliefs (Long & Wall, 2012). Stereotypes tend to have negative connotations, by compartmentalizing community groups and not seeing any complexity in the individual or community group (Benjamin, 1969). Functionally, stereotypes are used by the majority group to suppress minority groups who have been oppressed structurally, historically, and systematically (Bauer, 2013). Moreover, the construction of stereotypes is manifested in text media, so that people have a tendency to judge that it is something natural until it is finally believed by most people (Croteau & Hoynes, 2012). In the text media, stereotypes are formed by iconography and structure. In iconography, stereotypes are built from the special characteristics of individuals in a society, while, in terms of structure, stereotypes are built from the characteristics of the society structure (Dyer, 2010).

Gender stereotyping does not only refer to one particular gender. Even though there are stereotypes about masculinity, society is still dominated by stereotypes about the female gender. It is formed as a consequence of the thick patriarchal structure rooted in the culture adopted by the community. In Indonesia, patriarchal culture has been established for a long time which leads to social pressure in society. The notion of patriarchy originates from the word patriarche (Apriliandra & Krisnani, 2021), which is a placement structure between the roles of men as the central, single-gender, and everything. The gender ideology is considered a hegemonic thing; where for generations, Indonesian women have explicitly status as 'belonging' to men, servants, or simply as fulfilling the need to produce offspring.

In Indonesia, the dominant patriarchal system in the culture of the society produces injustice and inequality which highly affects the subordination to women and the limitations of the activities of women. Men play important and dominant roles as the most important control in social life, while women have little or no influence on general areas of society including politics, economy, social, and even marriage which is, related to themselves as human beings. This situation is worsened by the lack of knowledge and
access to reliable information about gender for both women and men (Shamilishvili, 2019). This causes women to be in the second number or inferior position, with male domination. Domination is seen through social structures and productive and reproductive activities on the basis of sexual division that gives the best part for men (Novarisa, 2019). The limitation of women's roles as a result of patriarchal culture causes women to be discriminated against. The role gap between men and women becomes the main structural obstacle causing limited access so that they are attached to a certain perception or stereotype.

One of the emerging stereotypes of women in the media is that women are considered as the only parties who are obliged to do household chores and a figure who is very dependent on men (Luviana, 2014). In this context, the male is shown as a subject with all its strengths, while women are weak and cornered objects (Diarsi, 2001). Besides looking at physical abilities, stereotypes against women are also identified with materialistic nature, doubt in making decisions, convoluted, even emotional and sensitivity. The objectification of women is not only limited to social issues as in reality it is also intended for commercial purposes. The existence of women has always been threatened and is often presented as a commodity (Aziz, 2008). On the other hand, the media defend themselves by stating that they own the market. Readers want to read, and it is women who receive news about others (Abrar, 1998). In other words, the content in the media also perpetuates the gender stereotype of women as there is an acceptance process. There are some groups of women who are exploited and stereotyped in the media but are not bothered or even think of it as something very ordinary or natural. It happens because, in the women’s mind, there is a process of naturalization or cultural cultivation so that there is no longer any thought about the need and importance of straightening the exploitation and stereotyping (Watie, 2016).

The acceptance of women’s gender stereotypes looks real and hegemonic to the present. According to Gramsci, hegemony in society emphasizes acceptance by a group of parties, which is dominated by the presence of a dominant group of other parties; in which hegemony has the power to influence society (Siswati, 2018). This power or ability covers creating ways and patterns of thinking in society, creating certain discourses which are then judged to be true, acknowledged, and dominating so that the community then believes that the discourse is the truest. On the other hand, hegemony can make people believe other discourses wrong, misleading, and even distorted (Fuchs, 2014). In this context, media can also be a means to spread discourse, including if the discourse concerns the stereotyping of women’s gender. Then, the discourse is widespread and embedded in the minds of the people, so that it emerged as a mutually agreed consensus. The practice of hegemony also applies in social media which is currently inseparable from people’s lives. Hegemony in social media is the ability, influence, and dominance of internet-based technology, which is used as an interactional means to achieve certain interests.

Moreover, the capabilities of the internet and social media are viewed based on the theory of affordances. The concept of affordances was first raised in the field of communication science by Ian Hutchby by looking at how the conceptualization of affordances as a question related to how technological capabilities and interactions in society are interrelated. Further, Hutchby mentions the idea of communicative affordances, which refers to the possibility of action as the result of various forms of technology. Hutchby’s understanding emphasizes how affordances can be seen in terms of
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functions and relationships (Hutchby, 2001). The concept of affordances in the media was further developed more specifically into the theory of Media Affordances. Media affordances theory, or media capabilities, is to examine media with mobile characteristics such as Instagram (Schrock, 2015). It is in line with Rathnayake & Winter (2018) who state that media with high interactivity such as Instagram, need to consider implementing an approach that emphasizes platform-oriented compared to user-oriented, as seen in the uses and gratifications research. This approach makes it possible to look at social media affordances that affect interactions in relationships (Rathnayake & Winter, 2018).

Furthermore, Schrock emphasizes the affordability aspect of communication resulting from electronic devices, which are widely adopted worldwide. He then formulated the concept of communicative affordances on digital and social media, which is divided into four aspects. The first is the portability aspect, which is the affordability of practicing communication anytime and anywhere and in any situation. Second is the availability aspect, which is the affordability of multiplexity, increased frequency, and directness. The third is the aspect of locatability, which covers the affordability of coordination, supervision, and locational identity. Fourth is the aspect of multimediality, which includes the affordability or ability of the media to share screens, produce images, and watch videos in sync.

In the context of the use of Instagram, the social media platform can influence interactions between humans. It is reflected in the use of Instagram and the establishment of communication between the party who uploads the content and who are exposed to the content. In a previous study entitled "Gender and Stereotypes: Reality Construction in Instagram Social Media," it was also stated that this influence was proven to lead to an increase in a person’s use of social media Instagram. Furthermore, the public’s low knowledge of gender understanding causes stereotyped views to still appear in the use of Instagram. Similar to stereotypes that occur in the real world and on social media, various positive and negative views are mostly given to women, also because the majority of Instagram users are women (Rosyidah & Nurwati, 2019). However, there are not many studies that examine this phenomenon from the point of view of Instagram's social media ability to reach audiences, to perpetuate female gender stereotypes. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out more about how Instagram social media has the capabilities or affordances, to reach a large audience, which allows the creation of perpetuation of gender stereotypes in entertainment content on social media.

RESEARCH METHODS

A research method is a scientific way of obtaining data, which are intended for certain purposes and uses (Sugiyono, 2016). This study used a qualitative method, a method to show the social world and perspectives or views of the world—in terms of perceptions, behaviors, problems, to concepts related to the human being studied (Bungin, 2019). This study used the qualitative method as it can answer human behavior, opinions, and experiences. The results of qualitative research can be obtained through in-depth interpretation of the messages and experiences of the humans being studied (Guest et al., 2007). Meanwhile, data were collected by observations and literature review of secondary data.

The literature review covers activities such as recording, identifying, understanding, interpreting, and transmitting information; the purpose of this activity is to comprehensively collect information (Mishra, 2017). The secondary data used were the results of previous studies which are relevant to this study. It
aims to find the objective values even though there are limited resources and time (Johnston, 2017). The data used were posts or uploads on some Instagram accounts with high popularity and number of followers. The accounts have produced various content with the potential for the commodification of female gender stereotypes.

This study focused on the content of posts or uploads from the Instagram accounts of @Alfysaga and @Dagelan covering the images and videos, text descriptions, and comments given by netizens. The two accounts have similarities namely popular and have a high number of followers as well as display various content with the aim of entertaining. The @Alfysaga account, entertainment content focuses more on parodies of a couple’s life, while the @Dagelan account presents parodies with a more general context. It can be assumed that the audience of the @Alfysaga account will be more specific or lead to certain groups, while the @Dagelan account has a more general and diverse audience. The selected posts of uploads contain gender stereotypes posted from January to December 2020.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Instagram posts from @Alfysaga and @Dagelan are a form of media communication that can influence people’s popular culture (Clarke, 2014). Both accounts have a high level of popularity and interaction with their audience. Various messages conveyed in their posts, both implicitly and explicitly which potentially be embedded or even imitated and reflected in the behavior of their audience. For example, the @Alfysaga account is run by a celebgram, Alfy Saga. He has followers of about 5 million 200 thousand people with one thousand to sixteen thousand comments on each upload. It means that there are at least thousands of people who are affected or reacted to messages on his uploads. To date, this account has uploaded 855 content in the form of images and videos. Most of the posts are entertainment parodies representing the lives of lovers; from the period of dating, getting married, and having a family to having children.

Of the 171 Alfy’s content uploaded in 2020, it covers 56 parody content that leads to female gender stereotypes. Indeed, such content tends to be easily found on social media (Chen & Kang, 2015). In his posts, it seems that women are shown as objects and are relevant to the stereotypes inherent in the culture of society. The content that leads to female gender stereotypes in his posts mostly associates women as an inferior group who cannot live independently always depends and is dominated by men who make life choices. As an inferior group who cannot live independently, always depends and is dominated by men, materialistic, glamorous, weak, and unable to make choices in which their competence is measured only in the domestic sphere.

For example, a video post on November 27, 2020, entitled “MANDATORY TO LEARN!! WHEN A GIRL WANTS TO MARRY.” Two women are depicted studying some domestic household activities such as cooking, ironing, massaging the husbands, and washing dishes. The first woman is looks excited who is in contrast to the second woman who seems less enthusiastic. The video is completed with a text description written, “TODAY’S GIRLS WANT TO MARRY” to accompany the narration. Furthermore, the storyline shows one of the women in married life. She refuses when her husband asked her to cook food, chicken opor, by saying that she can only cook instant noodles. The next scene shown is a jacket thrown at the woman accompanied by the narration “DON’T BE A WIFE WHO CAN’T DO NOTHING.”
Implicitly, the message displayed illustrates the real dichotomy between the obligations of women and men. Women are identified as actors in household affairs only who are demanded to be able to cook and serve men well. The women's movement is limited to very narrow scope and illustrated by the 'reward' to be received if they cannot carry out their obligations. The narrative also implies that there are social sanctions if they choose to leave the 'path' or stigma attached to them by society. As if there is no other choice that can be taken to define themselves according to their wishes.

Furthermore, the post on February 5, 2020, entitled "I AM SORRY BUT YOU'RE WRONG" features a video that tells of a woman who relies on men as the dominant gender. In the established relationship, the female character in the parody is described as willing to do anything even though she has been hurt by the man both verbally and non-verbally. However, she apologized for the wrong she didn't do and chose not to leave the man or end the relationship. The narrative is full of stereotypes of women as weak and oppressed subjects. She seems to have no power over herself and the courage to leave the man who had hurt her. There is much similar themed content in Alfy's other posts.

Several entertainment contents with gender stereotypes can also be found in another account of @Dagelan, which is an entertainment account with more than 51 thousand posts. As of early 2021, @Dagelan has 17 million followers which are higher than @Alfysaga's account. In a day, the account can post three to 4 content, both images and videos, and are viewed by an average of 3 million people per post. The @Dagelan account also has high interaction with its followers that can attract up to more than 3 thousand comments in a single post. Unlike @Alfysaga, @Dagelan does not have a specific theme for its entertainment content. The content is diverse, ranging from pictures or parody videos of everyday life to the most actual things. The similarity between the two accounts is that they display visuals that are full of stereotypes against women.

A post on December 29, 2020, a parody video entitled "Tutorial to be a girl" depicts the activities of a man and a woman in a car. The man is in the passenger seat, while the woman is driving. The man is told as if he positioned himself as a woman, and vice versa. In the beginning, there is a text narration of "Being driven." It shows the role of the man who is identified as the driver of the vehicle when traveling with his partner. Then, they have a conversation in which the woman asks the man a question, "What do you want to eat?" and answered by "Whatever" by the man. The woman then proposes several choices and the man always refuses the offer. Finally, the woman asks what he wants to eat, the man still answers "Whatever." These conversations are also accompanied by textual narrations such as "Rese" which means that the man

Picture 1. Video on Instagram Account @Alfysaga "MANDATORY TO LEARN!! WHEN A GIRL WANTS TO MARRY". Source: Instagram.com (2020).
behaves obnoxiously. After having this short conversation, at the end of the video, the man affirms the sentence "It's crazy to be a good girl!". This parody video depicts the separation between the roles of women and men, where men are the ones who drive or have control over the steering wheel, while women are considered not to have good driving skills. Meanwhile, some gender stereotypes also emerged, for example, the assumption that women are fickle, unable to make choices, and tend to be annoying.

The next @Dagelan post is an image with a large text narration "GIRLS VS BOYS, BROKEN HEART TIME." It was posted on June 5, 2020, showing the visuals of male and female figures. On the female figure, it is complemented by some texts such as "CRYING," "UPDATING STATUS OF ANXIOUS" and "PRETENDING TO BE HAPPY." Meanwhile, in the male visual section, the narration is "PLAYING GAME." In this post, symbols in the form of text play more in giving meaning to gender stereotypes. The female figure depicted in this narrative shows that women are identified with a fragile nature when facing grief.

In contrast to another gender-stereotypical content in social media which is usually in the form of narratives or advertisements only, the entertainment content such as uploaded by @Dagelan or @Alfysaga accounts are interesting for both men and women. It is because the discussion is light and accompanied by visuals that are considered witty. The emergence of such entertainment content which is increasingly widespread indicates that there is an alternative creativity of media in carrying out hegemonized objectification to achieve certain interests, namely profit. Many posts made by entertainment accounts have become commercial in nature as they are created to bring in an audience to increase popularity. The larger the audience and the higher the interaction in the comments, the more content the accounts generate.

The potential for female Instagram users who are exposed to entertainment content containing gender stereotypes is high considering the findings of TNS that out of 89 percent of Instagram users in Indonesia (age range 18-34 years), 63 percent are women (Wijaya, 2019). The
problem is that the stereotyped gender has been hegemonized and embedded closely marked by the acceptance or stereotyping ideas. This condition can be found in the difference of opinion in the comment posted by @Alfysaga on November 27, entitled "MANDATORY LEARNING!! WHEN A GIRL WANTS TO MARRY." Instead of breaking the stereotype, some women choose to comment neutrally and tend to agree. One of the accounts of @Intanswulandari wrote, "I be like" which means "I am like this" or another account of @Amelindazulaika said, "After becoming a wife, all work becomes possible. Because of urgency, we must be able to do it," added with a smiley emoticon.

The interaction in the comments on the @Alfysaga and @Dagelan accounts is a tangible form of affordances or the ability of the media to create relationships between humans, which is realized through internet network technology. The interaction shows Instagram’s position as media with high interactivity, so a platform-oriented approach is needed to look at the capabilities of Instagram’s social media (Rathnayake & Winter, 2018). In terms of technical aspects, the Instagram platform has some advantages such as being user-friendly, simple, practical, and having a systematic mechanism for some features offered such as stories, feeds, and so on. Besides the technical aspects,
Instagram has its high popularity among social media users or in other words, it is widely used by various groups. The portability of Instagram for various groups can be seen in its ability to be accessed with various devices, anytime, and anywhere. This is also an opportunity for individuals to access various entertainment content provided by their favorite accounts, starting from the local including private rooms (Schrock, 2015). In this context, entertainment that is accessed unconsciously contains the value of gender stereotypes that can be embedded in the individual's personal space so that its existence becomes lasting and hegemonic; where individuals will maintain a conscious connection with things they feel close to them. In terms of multiplexes, a person can connect through Instagram due to its ability to provide content, either in the form of images or videos that implicitly contain gender stereotypes. The content can be easily consumed by the public to create a sense of 'closeness' through a very high intensity or frequency of exposure. Features offered by Instagram such as Instagram stories, feeds, comments, likes, search engines, direct messages, Instagram TV, and others are easy means for an individual to be exposed to gender-stereotypical content, interact, and be involved in it. The features belong to the aspect of multimediality (Schrock, 2015).

Then, in the aspect of directness in the context of exposure to entertainment content with gender stereotypes, it does not occur in real-time and there is a pause (Schrock, 2015). Besides, Instagram’s ability to create a tagging system, in video content, images, or comments, can be said very effective because it is also accompanied by a notification system. Thus, the message given will be immediately visible to the recipient. Even if a user already likes an account, he or she will be able to turn on the notification feature when the account post something new either through stories, feeds, Instagram TV or others to ensure that none of the posts are missed.

The utilization of various potential capabilities offered by Instagram as social media is one of the main reasons for the high potential for exposure to entertainment content with gender stereotypes (Lomotey, 2020). In the context of posting of @Alfysaga and @Dagelan accounts, some female users who write comments of approval show the acceptance of gender stereotypes by parties exposed to the content. In line with Watie (2016), there are some groups of women who are exploited and stereotyped in the media but do not feel disturbed. This hegemony will continue to last and have an impact on women themselves. In socio-economic life, women will continue to exist in the chains of limited access and roles in the public sphere. Therefore, their opportunities to advance are obstructed as their image has been discriminated against from the start.

CONCLUSION

Advances in information technology result in the existence of social media as a platform that has affordances or the ability for everyone to utilize it to meet their needs. Through affordances such as; portability, availability, multiplexity, continuity, and multimediality, Instagram has become a platform that users rely on to produce various content. The content produces interactions for various interests, including the perpetuation of gender stereotyping – by still viewing women as an inferior and weak gender.

Not only at the level of commercial advertising, through social media, content with gender stereotypes is also presented in a relevant form and close to the audience; namely entertainment content. Attractive visuals and entertaining narratives make the construction of gender stereotypes in entertainment content may not be realized directly, but it requires a long process to form a hegemony in the audience’s minds.
It can be concluded that the media have affordances related to the formation of interactions between humans, including the perpetuation of the hegemony of female gender stereotypes. It can be minimized if social media users can have the capability to understand, interpret, and utilize the affordances of technology and media wisely.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


