

## THE NARRATIVE OF GENDER ON INSTAGRAM CAPTION

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### ABSTRACT

Instagram is one of the most famous social media for the number of millennials in Indonesia. There are around twenty-two million Indonesian users of Instagram according to Instagram Monthly Active Users data. It was dominated by millennial users. Instagram is likable because everyone feels free to share their creativity in a fun way. There are many Instagram users from several gender men or women and circles such as influencers, celebrities, educators, politicians, etc. Instagram was chosen for this research because Instagram gives Millennials opportunities to write freely, so this means caption Instagram will be a great place to get some information about the reliability of gender stereotypes in their writing. This research takes the focus of the study of gender language style on Instagram captions endorsement and decides to choose some influencer as a target of research. This research aims that there is a slight difference between men's captions and women's captions on Instagram, especially on how they deliver the endorsement product. This research use critical discourse analysis (CDA) and text as a critical objective (TACO) as a methodology to analyze Instagram captions. The result of this study will be the literature that fills the information gap how the existing theory or some statement about women and men's writing style reliable to the reality in the Instagram caption.

**Keywords:** gender, Instagram captions, emoji uses, CDA.

### 1. Introduction

Instagram is one of the most famous social media for the number of millennials in Indonesia. There are

around twenty-two million Indonesian users of Instagram according to Instagram Monthly Active Users data. It

was dominated by millennial users. Instagram is likable for Millennials because they can share their creativity freely through a 'fun way'. Moreover, this application is provided Column caption to all users to add some description for their picture or video that they shared through this application. Further, talk about caption Instagram, all people can write freely in their caption, because it is a virtual world. Everyone can be anything. The sentence means everyone can create their ideal-self.

The post-modernist researcher argues that female and male language style is different, a male is more often use language as a tool to show the authority, power and firmness status and female is more often use a language to build their relationship with others through use more many clauses and verb that use to play feeling according to Ehrlich et al. (1991). However, Instagram is a social media platform that appears in the fourth revolution Industri Era where technology changes the manner of how humans interact with others.

Further, some researcher argues that every human has a demand to fit in the cultural norms such as gender performativity, Butler (1990). She explained gender performativity is likely the regulation of how a human does something based on their biological condition. For instance how women should act in society such as wear a dress. But, how Instagram users perform their gender through their caption. The caption that we focused on is about the uses of words.

However, some researchers said women are more likely to use emoji rather than men. Even though

Rovino, et al. (2020) argue that the use of emoji for both women and men are equal, women's language style sometimes is used to a male even though were not dominant and vice versa.

Therefore, this research will study the uses of words in caption Instagram of fashion influencers in the process of promoting a product. Then, we want to study how kinds of words perform gender identity on the Instagram caption of fashion influencer in the online advertisement?

However, the result of this study will be the literature that fills the information gap how the existing theory or some statement about women and men's writing style reliable to the reality in the Instagram caption.

Thus, this research will be conducted by using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Text as Critical Object (TACO) according to O'Regan (2006), there are potentials for the expressed words to signal a particular 'hidden message'. Caption Instagram was chosen for this research because Instagram gives Millenials opportunities to write freely, so this means caption Instagram will be a great place to get some information about the reliability of gender stereotypes in their writing.

## 2. Literature Review

As mentioned by some researchers men and women have different language styles. For instance, a scholar Anna Silvia (Ehrlich et al., 1991) argues that there are some differences in women's and men's writing styles. She argues that women are often using

many clauses, subjective vocabulary, many modalities, and grammatically complex, however, men are using more simple grammatical, some linking, objective tone, then semantic connector which means men usually connect some information explicitly. Other scholars explain the similar idea such as according to (Argamon et al., 2003) the writing characteristics that exist in female groups either in fiction and non-fiction is the uses of pronouns, according to their research the pronouns that often use by female groups are I, you, and she, on the other hand, male groups more often use determiners in their writing. Other scholars (Rovino, 2019) through his research found male has the tendency use “I” and “my” as the way to show assertiveness, otherwise female is more often using “we” and “our” to build intimacy with others. Further, as mentioned by (Monarth & Kase, 2007) they said that men usually use a language to show status, power, and authority but women usually use language to build a relationship or some people call it intimacy.

Further, according to post-modernists' perception men and women has their language style it is because of the biological condition that constructed how they should perform in the society in terms to fill the demand of cultural norms, Butler (1990). The terms, Cultural norms that some post-modernist researcher says, we can say it as the gender stereotype. It appears and becomes a reason why women and men perform as traditional men and women or they perform as how the stereotype of men and women is.

However, Instagram is an application that appears in industry 4.0 which is the technological development that has changed some of the cultural norms in society. The performance of

gender identity also appears because socially constructed, Baxter (2016). Furthermore, according to (Coleman & Ross, 2010) one aspect of social construction that changes society is media because society is not a fixed form, it can be changed. We realize that technological development has a correlation to media development and changes some cultural norms, which is change the social environment. Also, according to (Ehrlich et al., 1991) that in the adolescence stage women stereotype is less often appear but in nurturing mothers the women stereotypes often appear. It is because adolescence is the product of the social environment. So, through this research, it is possible to find some Instagram users who do not perform as gender stereotypes.

According to Rovino et al. (2020), they argue that actually men talk to show their authority but this style also was found in the women group but they do not dominate the style. He also talks about emoji that was used by both groups. However, emoji and emoticons (emotional icons ) are different. The scholars, Prada et al. (2018), argue that emoji are more often use than emoticon because emoji can be used broader than emoticons. Younger participants have dominated the use of emoji, further, the research was found females are more often use emoji but it is among young participants. Additionally, the previous study argues that emoji usually used by female groups rather than male groups. On the other hand, Wolf (2000) argues that emoticon was used by either female or male groups. Interestingly, the research was found that both groups use an emoticon to show humor and sarcasm but the differences appeared at the level of where they use more emoticon and the result is the uses of emoticon is increased when female in

the mixed-gender online chatting group, then the uses of emoticon are decreased when the male in the mixed-gender online chatting group. The researcher explains the decrease occurs in the uses of the emoticon in male groups because males try to make sure their emoticon is appropriate to show their emotions.

There are so many scholars through their research restate almost similar things about female and male language styles. The female language style relates to harmfulness, and the male language style relates to authority.

Therefore, according to Park et al. (2016) through his research about Gender and language on Facebook, argues that female is more often using a language involving emotions in their post on Facebook. Based on this research female groups are more often talk about their relationships, such as their friendship, their sisterhood, their family, and all the things about their relationship to other people, otherwise males less often using their emotion in their post.

Moreover, based on (Hernawati, 2018) through her research, she argues that males and females have a different style when they write their Instagram caption. Males write shorter captions, and the caption uses some emoticons and hashtags that relate to their post. The content of their posts is mostly about their physical activity. On the other hand, females write lengthy captions and involve so much information about personal issues to gain more attention and sympathy from their followers. They are considering how their post gets more likes, because of it they use some hashtag that is broader than their topic in terms to make their posts are detectable. Female is also likely to show their emotional side on their caption.

All of the arguments above describes that gender identity is a part of human life, but how it performs it depends on how external agent outside them influence themselves. As mentioned by Eckert (Ehrlich et al., 1991) that how adolescence performs their gender because of the influence of their environment. Connell in her Gender Theory about Hegemonic Masculinity which the theory gives more advantage to men, they were placed as the center of the world and it is because of the cultural norm and the arguments of manhood (Ehrlich et al., 1991). This theory shows the reason why men are the more often was placed as a leader. However, according to (Monarth & Kase, 2007) male is possible to talk in the feminism style language, and also female is possible to learn the male language style is because the woman with the dominant male-related language style will seem authoritative.

Hence, on Instagram, the environment will be tentative it changes faster overtime. This research will see the reliability of the result from some previous research about gender performance in Instagram users' writing style through their caption. This research will study ten captions from ten fashion influencers in promoting a product by using social media.

According to Klaus & Bailey (2008), women and men have a different way to advertise their product, women tend to build intimacy with the reader. However, men tend to look masculine and describe the product with a casual tone. Man's masculine style can be seen through the absence of a smile to show casual and masculine value. However, women's femininity is described through the

existence of a smile to build intimacy. According to LaFrance et al., (2003) argue that smile more often using by women and girls to build intimacy, and men less often using a smile.

### 3. Research Method

#### **Critical Discourse Analysis- Text As Critical Object (CDA-TACO)**

This research uses CDA-TACO to Instagram Caption analysis. CDA was chosen because we would like to explain how domination involving a people (Van Dijk, 2008). As we know, Instagram is an application that appears in industry 4.0 which is the technological development that has changed some of the cultural norms in the society and gender identity it also can appear because socially constructed, Baxter (2016). While Instagram provides followers features to their users and it becomes a new business when every user have a high number of follower are more likable because they are more popular and can increase a leadership opinion to another people (De Veirman et al., 2017). Because of that leadership opinion, we choose CDA as our approach to proving that their power

**Table 1: CDA Text As Critical Object (O'Regan 2006)**

Stages	Definition	Guiding question
Descriptive interpretation	How the text looks?/ what does the text trying to say?/Text topic/ Visual of the text/target readers	What is the Topic? Who is the target of reading? How the text presented?

could be involving people. Since we all knew that many influencers able to attract their followers' attention can give the influencer not only a power

to social control action but also give the power to control the mind of their followers/other people (van Dijk, 2008).

Based on Fairclough, there are three levels in CDA Fairclough's model: the text, discourse practices, and social practices. This then becomes a basis of the TACO approach by O'Regan that consist of descriptive interpretation, representative interpretation, social interpretation, and deconstructive interpretation. In TACO perspective, the texture of the text shows lexical, grammatical, and genre dimension which all of the frames of social references seems to be make sense (O'regan, 2006). John O'Regan also provides a table for his approach. (O'Regan, 2006: Rovino, 2019)

Representative interpretation	What are the social values of the discourse features of the text?	Discourse Features: Image/ vocabulary/ grammar/genre ?
Social interpretation	What social framework the text seems to be a part (gender, race, politics, economy, business, family, class, income, sex, age, property, etc.)	What social framework the does text seem to be a part of?  What a typical kind of social framework?
Deconstructive interpretation	From the three aspects above, which appear to be contradicting and undermine the text preference	Does any aspect of the text structure (descriptive, representative, social,) contradict and undermine the text's preferred reading?

TACO was made to develop understanding and overview moving



to a more detailed analysis. So by the descriptive interpretations would be presented on how the text looks likes? What is the text trying to say? What kind of people would read the text? (O'Regan 2006). Representative interpretation allows for evaluating social values and also descriptive interpretations. Social interpretation allows for evaluating descriptive and representative interpretations.

Deconstructive allows evaluating 3 stages to see if the elements support or contradict each other (Rovino, 2018). So we can conclude that the elements above are mutuals to each other in the text.

In this study, we would take Instagram Captions as the topic. We choose an influencer with a minimum of 100,000 followers on their Instagram. We would like to highlight an endorsement activity toward influencers on their Instagram. Since endorsement is known as one of the best strategy marketing online, many people choose endorsement to market their products. So we decide to choose an influencer who has an endorsed brand on their Instagram as a target of this research. We choose an influencer who is supposed to be a fashion trend followed by their followers. Because an influencer is someone who is followed by many people especially teenagers because of their actions that are motivated or inspired by other people, they would be such a huge person which many people would emulate them. And that gives an influencer control of social

Since the topic that would be discussing is a gender issue related to Instagram Captions. So we would like

to take two groups contains men and women to give a comparison if there were any differences between men's and women's Instagram captions. There would be 2 groups on this topic. Group A is a group that contains five female influencers. And group B is a group of five male influencers. We would consider Caption uses on Instagram, but we would go to more details about how they deliver endorsement products.

Some journals claimed that Text messages that women are more likely to show their emotional side while men are more likely to show their physical activity, (Hernawati, 2018). On the other hand, other researchers (Klaus and Bailey, 2018) found that women tend to build intimacy with the reader while men tend to look masculine with a casual tone. So in this research, we would like to find out the truth about language style that usually appears toward men and women when advertising some product.

We would like to use the TACO method to give a detailed analysis through the Instagram caption. We will analyze with a TACO's table contains descriptive, representative, social, and deconstructive. In the end, we will compare the results of group A and group B that contains men and women, Is there any specific different result or not. For a sample, we would like to take 5 captions from every 5 members of the group. To give a limit on a study we decide to not focus on the photo of Instagram users, but only on captions.

For an ethical code, we considered keeping the privacy of the influencer that we use. Because the

purpose of these studies is not to give the advantage or disadvantage for the Instagram users but only for the benefit of the study. We would only write the caption and sensor the brand product with *@brandname*. If there should be an image that we should show we would edit the image so no one would know the identity of the Instagram users that we take. But since this research focused on the text as an object, we would minimize the use of images in this study. In addition to maintaining privacy, it also gives a limit of the study only for a text preference. Due to privacy policy, we would also give a sensor for the influencer's username.

## 4. Result and Discussion

### Descriptive Interpretation

#### Stage. The Frame of the Text.

The general intention of the Instagram caption that was collected as the data collection is to describe the quality of the product that they promote. Moreover, the text just not was written with the same intention, but also with the same tone. Six of ten samples show that a similar tone in the online advertising process and the tone is they make the product as their favorite things. Such as, one of ten Instagram users said:

***"A suede jacket was the first fashion object I ever wanted,... . @brandname".***

The intention of the sentence created by the writers is the suede jacket is his favorite fashion items and recommended fashion item that everyone should have, and an online shop account was recommended by the writer. The general intentions of the caption were concluded as

promoting the quality of the product from a shop, consider the writer as the fashion influencer.

The intention of online advertising is important to influence the behavior of the readers (Instagram users). According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the intention is a value that influences behavior. Other than that, Ajzen, (1991) argues that people's behavior is the reflection of the values that they agree with. The stronger the intention to describe the planned behavior, the more it will be performed. Hence, the Instagram caption of fashion influencers that promoted a product more much describes a product as their favorite item, recommended item, and loveable item.

### Genre

The samples of the Instagram caption analyzed by the researcher shows that the macro genre of the text is persuasive language. Two factors become the guide to conclude that the text is persuasive language. According to Labrador et al., (2014), the factors are the type of sentence in the caption. One is to describe the product and another one is to describe the value that was given by some users to the product. The value was described to convince people to purchase the product.

According to Janoschka (2004), the purpose of using persuasive language is drawing readers' attention, through making creative catchphrases, using some emotional expression, metaphors expression, and creative comparisons expressions to gain readers' attention. Those

explanations reflect that using the colloquial style in online advertising help the fashion influencer either women or men have a good interpersonal relationship with their potential customer. As mentioned by Fairclough (1989) this strategy called synthetic personalization.

According to the data was analyzed by the researcher, all of the samples (N:10) either in women's caption or man captions show the existence of synthetic personalization strategy in the process of promoting their product.

For example:

***"I know you guys will love it as much as I do!"***

## Topic

As mentioned by Fairclough (1989) about synthetic personalization strategy that tends to be used in advertising, so it can show that the advertisement text usually was created in the informal style. Consider the data that was analyzed by the researcher proved the argument from Fairclough. All of the samples show the informal style of language. The informality of the text can be seen by the generic structure of the text. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the characteristics of informal language are the uses of contractions, ellipsis, and exclamation.

Example:

"I finally get to start dressing up again but I couldn't decide between casual penny loafers or dressier oxfords! This @brandname from @brandname seem to be the perfect solution #brandname #ad"

## Representative

### Interpretations Image

All the samples show that the relation between text and visual is highlighting the product. Nevertheless, there are differences between men and women who presented the product. According to Klaus & Bailey (2008) women are often can be influenced by the ad than men. Other than that, according to Plante, et.al (2019) women has better language art skills rather than man. Additionally, Klaus & Bailey (2008) argue that women advertisers build intimacy to the reader rather than man. Man advertiser looks more casual, hence man is likely to advertise sports items and casual items. According to the data, collection men look more casual and women build intimacy through their smiles. (LaFrance et al., 2003) argues there is the tendency that men and adolescent boys less often to smile than women and girls. The previous study and the data showed and proved gender stereotypes exist in online advertisements.

## Vocabulary

Female groups use many more adjectives to show their emotion to the product, and the man describes the product with a casual tone. According to Anna Silvia (Ehrlich et al., 1991) argues that there are some differences in women's and men's writing styles. She argues that women are often using many clauses, subjective vocabulary, many modalities, and grammatical complex, however, men are using more simple grammatical, some linking, objective tone, then semantic connector which



means men usually connect some information explicitly. The findings proved the previous research by Anna Silvia.

The example from the male group:  
**In between office work and flat hunting in London. Always in great company @brandname x @brandname bag**

According to the sample above the product from a recommended online shop was described or promoted by the writer by using a simple grammatical and objective tone.

The example from the female group:

**My @brandname RUNWAY collection is available today!!! So excited to share it with all of you! And thank you to @brandname for getting me all dressed up in some of my favorite pieces (like the copper skirt above). ☑Click the link in my bio to see the whole collection...**

Based on the example above the product was promoted and described using some adjective and subjective vocabulary.

## Grammar

The pronouns "I" appear more much in the male group. However possessive pronouns "my" appear oftentimes in the female group. It approves the arguments from Klaus & Bailey (2008) that say females tend to claims the product but inversely proportional to men.

The example from the male group:  
**I finally get to start dressing up again but I couldn't decide between casual penny loafers or dressier oxfords! This**

**@brandname from**

**@brandname seem to be the perfect solution #brandname #ad**

According to data collection that was analyzed by the researcher, there are three from five samples from the male group that using I in their caption in promoting the products or their recommended online shop.

The example from the female group:

**My @brandname RUNWAY collection is available today!!! So excited to share it with all of you! And thank you to @brandnames for getting me all dressed up in some of my favorite pieces (like the copper skirt above). ☑Click the link my bio to see the whole collection...**

The interesting data appears that female groups are likely to claim that the products are their favorite or using the possessive pronouns 'my' in their caption in the promoting products or recommended shop.

## Social Interpretation Social framework

Social interpretation is related to the social framework where the text places. The social framework towards this text related to gender influence in economic marketing but more likely pointed out how gender influencers promoting endorsement products. Klau and Bailey (2008), found in their study that women more easily persuasive than a man. **"I've always been super cautious with skincare products and I've created your favorite kit",// "we also**

**created the cutest cosmetics bag to keep all your new faves in. I know you guys will love it as much as I do**".

The underlined word shows that she understands what women need and also expressing her interest in skin care products. It proves that female is likely to show their emotional side on their caption (Hernawati, 2018).

While women show a more emotional side, men more likely to show their physical activity. "**I won't be traveling this summer which is a little tough but I'm looking forward to spending time in the garden with a good book on the table, a @brandname in hand, and @brandname on my back! #ad**". This caption shows that men likely to show their activity, and the hashtag #ad in the back which means advertisement shows that men did not cover up the fact that they are doing advertising while a women make the advertisement more natural.

Furthermore, according to Klaus and Bailey (2008), women show more favorable objectives and subjective claims while showing no preference claims. That means women more likely to claims the product as theirs while a man didn't show objectives claims. "**So excited to give you a little sneak peek into my new S/S' 20 pieces from my collection with @brandname Get ready, they launch this Sunday 5/3 at @brandname store and online! They are so cute and perfect for spring! \*flower emoticon\***". The underlined phrase shows that the women claim the product as her stuff.

On the other hand, men wouldn't show objectives claims. "**I**

**finally get to start dressing up** again but **I couldn't decide** between casual penny loafers or dressier oxford! This @brandname from @brandname seems to be the perfect solution #brandname #ad" Once again, the men group shows no emotional desire and no objectives claims. They replace the word "my" which representative objectives claiming with the word "i".

It can be summed up that women using their emotional side and objectives claims on their caption while men are more likely to show their physical activity with no objective claim.

### Deconstructive Interpretation

The sample that we have shown the combination of three stages above that is descriptive, representative, and social interpretation. The example from the female group

My @brandname RUNWAY collection is available today!!! **So excited** to share it with all of you! And thank you to @brandname for getting me all dressed up in some of my favorite pieces (like the copper skirt above).

👉Click the link in my bio to see the whole collection...

Based on the example above the product was promoted and described using some adjective and subjective vocabulary. The word with underline shows that the woman claims the product as her stuff and expressing her emotions by the word 'so excited'.

Another caption from male groups, "**I finally get to start dressing**

up again but I couldn't decide between casual penny loafers or dressier oxfords! This @brandname from @barandname seem to be the perfect solution #brandname #ad" the caption above shows that a male group more casual with simple grammatical. The underlined word shows that men are more likely to show their physical activity without claiming the objectives. Hashtag #ad shows that men are more open up to shows that they are doing advertising.

## 5. Conclusion

The result of this study shows that women and men have their way to promote a product in online advertising. The differences between women's and men's styles can be seen by looking at their caption, and their picture provided to support their words in the caption.

According to Klaus & Bailey (2008), women are often to build intimacy with their readers. The intimacy can be seen by the picture that supports their words. The pictures show women are often using a smile in their photos while promoting a product on social media (LaFrance et al., 2003). Whereas, men are likely to use simple grammatical, and use objective vocabulary, according to Anna Silvia (Ehrlich et al., 1991). The objective vocabulary means the words used by men is enough to describe the product, however, women more often using many vocabularies and show their emotion in their caption (Hernawati, 2018).

Other than that, all of the data collection that was analyzed by researchers show more either female and male group using persuasive

language in their caption in the process of promoting a product in social media. Such as the use of creative catchphrases, using some emotional expression, metaphors expression, and creative comparisons expressions to gain readers' attention Janoschka (2004). Even though, the uses of emotive expression are often used by the female group (Hernawati, 2018).

Additionally, there is another similarity between women and men group in online advertising such as the uses informal words or colloquial words or language to serve their reader as an individual or build a good interpersonal relationship with their readers. This strategy is called synthetic personalization by Fairclough (1989).

Hence, The result of the data collection is women are often using emotional expression in their caption while promoting a product. The emotional expression can be seen by the uses of some adjectives, and the uses of "my" which show the tendency women are often to claim the product as their favorite items. On the other hand, men often use simple grammatical, casual tone, and objective vocabulary that means use minimal words that enough to inform the readers about the product. The casual tone can be seen by the uses of pronouns "I" are often using by men according to Klaus & Bailey (2008) in their caption during promoting a product on social media.

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