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24

SYMBOLIC INTERACTION IN THE COMMENTS OF RAINBOW FILMING FOOTAGE ON MARS INSTAGRAM @CUPLIKANFILM82

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Abstract

Social media has become a digital communication space that enables users to interact and construct meanings through various symbols, including emojis. This study aims to describe the forms of symbolic interaction and identify the meanings constructed by users in the comment section of the Instagram account @cuplikanfilm on a post featuring the behind-the-scenes process of the film Pelangi di mars. This research employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive qualitative method. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation involving three informants and one expert triangulator. The findings indicate that symbolic interaction in the comment section is reflected through the use of emojis, informal language, and various forms of user engagement. Emojis are utilized as a means of expressing emotions, opinions, and appreciation toward the content presented. Furthermore, users interpret the film production content as a representation of visual quality, a source of expectations regarding the storyline, and a reflection of teamwork during the production process. User participation is not only demonstrated through commenting activities but also through reading comments and giving likes. The study concludes that meaning in digital interactions is formed through the interpretation of symbols influenced by users' experiences, understanding, and social contexts.

Keywords: *Symbolic Interaction, Instagram, Comments, Digital Communication*

Abstrak

Media sosial telah menjadi ruang komunikasi digital yang memungkinkan pengguna berinteraksi dan membangun makna melalui berbagai simbol, termasuk emoji. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan bentuk interaksi simbolik serta mengidentifikasi makna yang dibentuk pengguna pada kolom komentar Instagram akun @cuplikanfilm dalam unggahan proses pembuatan film Pelangi di mars. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data penelitian diperoleh melalui teknik observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan tiga informan serta satu triangulator ahli. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa interaksi simbolik dalam kolom komentar ditunjukkan melalui penggunaan emoji, bahasa tidak formal, dan berbagai bentuk keterlibatan pengguna. Emoji dimanfaatkan sebagai sarana untuk menyampaikan emosi, pendapat, dan apresiasi terhadap konten yang ditampilkan. Selain itu, pengguna memaknai konten proses pembuatan film sebagai gambaran kualitas visual, pembentuk harapan terhadap alur cerita, serta representasi kerja sama tim selama proses produksi. Partisipasi pengguna tidak hanya terlihat dari aktivitas berkomentar, tetapi juga melalui kebiasaan membaca komentar dan

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memberikan tanda suka (*like*). Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa makna dalam interaksi digital

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YAYASAN AKRAB PEKANBARU
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Volume 11 Nomor 3 Edisi Agustus 2026 (1390-1402)
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terbentuk melalui proses penafsiran simbol yang dipengaruhi oleh pengalaman, pemahaman, dan konteks sosial masing-masing pengguna.
Kata Kunci: Interaksi Simbolik, Instagram, Komentar, Komunikasi Digita.

I. INTRODUCTION

Advances in digital technology have encouraged the increasing use of the internet as a medium of communication, information dissemination, and expression of opinions. Based on the Digital 2026 Global Overview Report, the number of internet users in the world has exceeded 6 billion people or around 73.2% of the total global population. Meanwhile, the number of internet users in Indonesia reached 229.43 million people at the beginning of 2025 (Detik.com, 2026). This high number shows that the internet has become a digital space that makes it easier for people to access, obtain, and disseminate information quickly. The existence of the internet and social media allows users not only to access information, but also to actively participate in expressing opinions and building communication with other users. One of the most widely used platforms is Instagram, which provides a variety of interactive features, including a comment section as a space for exchanging ideas and responses to content. In the context of digital communication, the comment column can be understood as a space for symbolic interaction to occur. Users use language, emojis, and other symbols to express thoughts, emotions, and interpretations of an upload. Through this process, meaning is not only formed by content creators, but also constructed through interactions between users on social media. The phenomenon of symbolic interaction is also seen in uploads related to movies. As a mass communication medium, films not only provide entertainment, but also present messages and values that can be interpreted in a variety of ways by the audience. The development of social media has further expanded the space for discussion about movies because users can respond directly to the content they consume.



Figure 1. Instagra Profilem

Source : Instagram account @cuplikanfilm82 (2026))

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One of the Instagram accounts that actively presents film content is @cuplikanfilm82. This account shares various movie trailers, interesting scenes, and behind-the-scenes content of the film production process that is packaged in a concise and interesting way. One of the uploads that received considerable attention from users was a footage of the filmmaking process of Rainbow on Mars with the title "It takes hundreds of crews to work on a film with this artistic visual". The upload shows the film production process and manages to attract the attention of the audience through the visual display presented. The various comments that appear not only reflect the response to the content, but also show the use of symbols, language, and digital expressions that form the process of symbolic interaction between users. A number of previous studies have addressed symbolic interactions and user responses on social media. Research conducted by Agustya, Rahma, and Natalia shows that symbolic interactions in TikTok content are formed through the use of symbols, language, and social experiences shared by users in the comment column (Agustya et al., 2023). Denilza and Muzakir found that Instagram users' comments not only serve as a response to content, but also serve as a medium for the formation of empathy, opinions, and social meaning (Denilza & Muzakir, 2025). In addition, Parasetia and his friends revealed that user comments on film content on Instagram contain various forms of support, pride, and social meaning for the film being discussed (Agung Parasetia et al., 2025).

However, most of the research still focuses on analyzing the content of comments, sentiment, and discourse construction on social media. Studies that specifically discuss symbolic interaction and the process of user interpretation of filmmaking footage content through the Instagram comment column are still limited. Therefore, this research was carried out to fill this gap by examining the symbolic interaction and user meaning in the upload of the filmmaking process of Rainbow on Mars entitled "It Takes Hundreds of *Crews* to Make a Film With This Artistic Visual" @cuplikanfilm82 Instagram account. This study aims to describe the form of symbolic interaction and identify the meanings formed by users in the Instagram comment column of the @cuplikanfilm82 account on the upload of the filmmaking process of Rainbow on Mars.

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Volume 11 Nomor 3 Edisi Agustus 2026 (1390-1402)
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This study views the Instagram comment column as a digital communication space that allows users to interact through various symbols, such as language, emojis, and other forms of digital expression. These interactions show the involvement of users in the content while showing the process of forming meaning that occurs in digital communication. Therefore, *social media engagement* theory is used to analyze the form of user engagement with uploads, while Symbolic Interaction theory is used to understand the process of formation, exchange, and interpretation of meaning that occurs in the comment column.

II. THEORETICAL STUDIES

Symbolic Interaction

Social Media Engagement construct and convey meaning (Puryanto, 2023). Mead explained that symbolic interaction consists of three main concepts, namely mind, self, and society. Mind refers to the ability of individuals to interpret symbols through the process of thinking, the self is related to the formation of self-concept through social interaction, while society refers to the social environment that influences individual behavior. In this study, symbolic interaction theory was used to understand the process of forming meaning carried out by users through comments, language, emojis, and other communication symbols on uploads of footage of the making of the movie Rainbow on Mars on Instagram In addition to symbolic interaction, this study also uses the concept of social media engagement as a supporting theory to see the level of user engagement with a content. Social media engagement refers to user engagement that is shown through various forms of interaction, such as liking, commenting, and sharing content on social media (Maulidia et al., 2025). In the context of social media, comments are a form of active engagement that reflects the mutual relationship between the audience and the content consumed (Pratama & Pribadi, 2024). According to Linda D. Hollebeek, social media engagement consists of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions that reflect attention, emotional responses, and user actions to content (Maulidia et al., 2025). In this study, the theory of social media engagement is used as a supporting theory to understand the form of user involvement in the Instagram comment column @cuplikanfilm82 before being further analyzed using the theory of Symbolic Interaction.

Social Media

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Volume 11 Nomor 3 Edisi Agustus 2026 (1390-1402)
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Kaplan and Haenlein explain that social media is a collection of internet-based applications that allow users to create and exchange content that they produce themselves (in Raihan et al., 2023). The presence of social media has changed communication patterns that were previously one-way to be more interactive and participatory (Putri et al., 2022). The characteristics of social media include networks between users, information, archives, interactions, social simulations, and content dissemination that allow users to actively participate in building digital communication (Refilia et al., 2023). In this study, Instagram was chosen as the object of the research because it provides an interaction space that allows users to convey responses and build meaning through the comment column.

Film as a Communication Media

Film as a Communication Media Film is one of the mass communication media that conveys messages through a combination of visual and audio elements. In addition to serving as a means of entertainment, films also play a role in conveying values, ideas, and representations of social reality that can influence the way audiences understand a phenomenon (Kustiawan et al., 2026). The meanings contained in the film can be interpreted in a variety of ways by the audience according to their respective backgrounds and experiences (Romziana et al., 2025). Along with the development of digital media, film is no longer a completely one-way medium, but has been connected to audience participation through various social media platforms (Fuchs, 2021). In this study, the film Rainbow on Mars is understood as a communication medium that elicits various audience responses on Instagram, thus allowing symbolic interaction and the process of meaning to the content displayed.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Creswell said qualitative research is understood as an approach to construct and describe a phenomenon or case in depth (Ultavia et al., 2023). In qualitative research, the author plays a role as the main instrument or human instrument in the data collection process (Sugiyono, 2023). This approach was chosen because it is able to provide a deep understanding of the process of meaning carried out by users in the Instagram comment column. This research was carried out on the @cuplikanfilm82 Instagram account with a focus on an upload titled "It Takes Hundreds of

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YAYASAN AKRAB PEKANBARU
Akrab Juara : Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Sosial
Volume 11 Nomor 3 Edisi Agustus 2026 (1390-1402)
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Crews to Make a Film With This Artistic Visual" which shows the process of making the film Rainbow on Mars. The account was chosen because it shows a high level of user interaction through comments, comment replies, and various other forms of responses relevant to the research objective. The study took place in the period April to June 2026, with data derived from user comments on posts published on March 24, 2026.

The selection of informants was carried out using purposive sampling techniques. Purposive sampling is a sample determination technique that is carried out based on certain considerations or criteria according to research needs (Sugiyono, 2023). The informant was selected from Instagram users who had commented on the upload "It takes hundreds of crew to work on a film with this artistic visual", contained elements of meaning to communication symbols, such as words, sentences, emojis, or digital forms of expression, understood the meaning of the comments given, and were willing to be research informants. This research involved three main informants. To increase the credibility of the data, the research also involved an expert triangulator, namely Iin Soraya, S.Sos., M.M., M.Ikom., who has competence in the field of communication and plays a role in reviewing and verifying the results of research analysis. The analysis is carried out based on all data that has been collected through various data collection techniques, such as observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and triangulation (Sugiyono, 2023). Observation was carried out by directly observing user comments on the upload of footage of the making of the film Rainbow on Mars to identify the forms of symbolic interaction and meaning that emerged. Documentation is done through the collection of screenshots of comments, comment replies, and uploads related to the research object. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to informants to gain a deeper understanding of how users interpreted the uploads, the use of language, symbols, and emojis contained in the comments

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

Forms of Symbolic User Interaction in Instagram Comments The results of the study show that the symbolic interaction in the comment column of the Rainbow on Mars filmmaking process is formed through the use of emojis, informal language, and various forms of user responses to content. These findings are in line with George Herbert Mead's Theory of Symbolic

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Interaction, which explains that individuals act based on the meanings they give to symbols that appear in social interactions. In the context of social media, emojis and language used in comments serve as symbols that help users convey feelings, judgments, and understandings of a post. Based on the concept of mind, users carry out the process of interpreting the symbols they use and those they encounter in the comment column. The results of the study show that emojis are not interpreted uniformly by all users. Although the symbols used are the same, the meanings that appear can be different because they are influenced by each individual's experience, knowledge, and communication context. The findings are corroborated by expert triangulators who state: "The meaning of emojis is not permanently attached to the symbol, but rather is formed through the user's interpretation in a particular communication situation." (Iin Soraya, S.Sos., MM., M.Ikom., June 11, 2026). Expert Triangulator Also explains that “The meanings contained in emojis are not universal, but are formed by individuals based on the experiences, understandings, and social context behind the communication process." (Iin Soraya, S.Sos., MM., M.Ikom., June 11, 2026). The findings show that the meaning of symbols in digital communication is formed through a continuous process of interpretation according to the user's social experience. Not only emojis as symbols, the use of informal language in the comment column shows that language is an important symbol in the process of social interaction. The language users use reflects a social media communication culture that is more relaxed and flexible than formal communication. In the theory of symbolic interaction, language is the primary means by which individuals can construct and exchange meaning. Through the use of informal language, users can express their opinions, appreciation, and responses to uploads in a way that is considered easier and more effective. These findings suggest that language symbols have an important role in shaping the interactions that occur on social media. According to the Expert Triangulator, namely. “Mixing these codes into communication strategies used to create closeness, facilitate interaction, and adjust to the communication culture on social media." (Iin Soraya, S.Sos., MM., M.Ikom., June 11, 2026). This shows that language not only serves as a tool for conveying information, but also as a symbol that helps users build closeness and meaning in digital communication. The results of the analysis show that the language in the comment column serves as a symbol of flexible communication and adapts to the characteristics

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Volume 11 Nomor 3 Edisi Agustus 2026 (1390-1402)
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of social media. The use of informal language, abbreviations, and English mixtures reflects the user's efforts to communicate more effectively. These findings show that the meaning of language in digital communication is shaped by the habits and contexts of use that develop in social media. In addition, the research findings show that interactions between users in the comment column have not fully resulted in active two-way communication. Not all comments get a response, so most interactions stop at the point of expressing their opinions. This suggests that the existence of a comment column does not always create an ongoing conversation between users.

However, users still show engagement in the comment column through reading other users' comments and liking certain comments. This form of engagement shows that interaction on social media is not always realized through direct conversations, but can also occur through participation in observing and responding to available content. Thus, user *engagement* is still formed even though the verbal interaction that occurs is relatively limited.

These findings are reinforced by the statement of the expert triangulator explaining that:

"Effective interaction is generally characterized by a response or feedback from the recipient of the message. However, on social media, not all forms of user participation result in mutual communication. Users can stay engaged through commenting, while the recipient of the message has the freedom to respond or ignore it." (Iin Soraya, S.Sos., M.M., M.I.Kom., June 11, 2026).

The statement suggests that user engagement on social media does not always result in two-way communication. Even if the comment doesn't get a response, the user still participates in the interaction through the expression of their opinion. Thus, comments can be understood as a form of participation that is one-way, but still has meaning in the digital communication process.

User-Constructed Meaning of Uploads

The results of the study show that the upload of the filmmaking process of Rainbow on Mars is understood by users as an illustration of visual quality, technical ability, and seriousness of the production team in producing a film work. Based on the perspective of Symbolic Interaction, the meaning is formed through the user's interpretation of the various symbols displayed, such as *behind-the-scenes impressions*, the involvement of many crew members, and the narrative that accompanies the upload. These symbols are then interpreted as representations of

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professionalism, the progress of Indonesian cinema, and the complexity of the film production process. These findings are in line with the research of Septiana et al. (2026) who stated that the meaning of symbols is formed through an interpretive process influenced by individual social experiences and interactions. In this study, the visual of the production process is not only understood as a documentation of filmmaking activities, but also as a symbol that reflects hard work, collaboration, and overall production quality.

This is reinforced by the statement of the expert triangulator explaining that:

"Visual quality not only serves as an aesthetic element, but also becomes a symbol that represents the production value and overall quality of the film in the eyes of the audience. The visual sophistication displayed forms a positive perception of the audience towards the development of the national film industry and is a marker of the increasing quality of Indonesian film production in the modern era." (Iin Soraya, S.Sos., M.M., M.I.Kom., June 11, 2026).

Based on this statement, visual quality can be understood not only as an aesthetic supporting element, but also as a symbol that shapes users' perception of the quality of film production and the development of the Indonesian film industry. Not only that, the findings of the study show that users not only interpret the uploads of the filmmaking process *of Rainbow on Mars* from the visual aspect, but also form expectations for the quality of the story that will be presented. In the perspective of Symbolic Interaction, the visual symbols that appear in the upload become the basis for *the audience* to interpret and build expectations for the overall quality of the film. Informant 1 and Informant 2 consider that good visual quality needs to be balanced with a strong storyline so that the film can provide a more meaningful experience. Meanwhile, Informant 3 emphasizes the importance of maintaining the quality of technology and visuals that have been achieved in the production process. The findings show that *audiences* view visual aspects and story as two interrelated elements in determining the quality of a film. The visual symbols displayed not only form an impression of the production process, but also raise expectations regarding the quality of the narrative that will be presented. This is reinforced by the statement of the expert triangulator stating that:

"Visual quality is important as an aesthetic appeal and support, but a strong story remains the key foundation that determines the film's success in conveying meaning, building emotional

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YAYASAN AKRAB PEKANBARU
Akrab Juara : Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Sosial
Volume 11 Nomor 3 Edisi Agustus 2026 (1390-1402)
https://doi.org/10.58487/akrabjuara.v11i3.2887

engagement, and leaving a deep impression on the audience." (Iin Soraya, S.Sos., M.M., M.I.Kom., June 11, 2026).

Based on this statement, visual quality and story strength can be understood as elements that support each other in shaping the viewing experience. Thus, *the audience*'s interpretation of the upload not only leads to an appreciation of visual quality, but also develops into an expectation for a narrative that is able to convey meaning and build emotional engagement of the audience. In addition, the results of the study show that behind *the scenes content* is interpreted by users as an overview of the film production process that involves cooperation, coordination, and contributions of many parties. In the perspective of Symbolic Interaction, the activities of the production team displayed in the upload become symbols that are then interpreted by *the audience* as a representation of the collective work behind the filmmaking. The informant views the production process not only as a technical activity, but also as a form of collaboration and dedication in producing quality film works. These findings show that *audiences* not only focus on the final result of the film, but also pay attention to the processes behind it. *Behind-the-scenes* footage helps users understand the complexity of film production, the roles of the various parties involved, and the amount of effort required to produce a cinematic work. Through this understanding, there is a greater appreciation for teamwork and creative processes in the film industry. This is reinforced by the statement of the expert triangulator stating that:

"This statement shows that *behind the scenes is* not only understood as documentation of the production process, but also as a representation of the cooperation and contribution of the various parties involved in filmmaking." (Iin Soraya, S.Sos., M.M., M.I.Kom., June 11, 2026).

Based on this statement, *behind the scenes* can be understood not only as a documentation of production activities, but also as a symbol that represents collaboration, hard work, and the team's contribution in the filmmaking process. Thus, *behind-the-scenes* content plays a role in expanding *the audience'*s understanding and increasing appreciation for the production process that takes place behind the scenes.

Engagement in comments

In addition to findings related to symbolic interaction, this study also found that user engagement is not only realized through the activity of commenting, but also through giving likes and reading

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YAYASAN AKRAB PEKANBARU
Akrab Juara : Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Sosial
Volume 11 Nomor 3 Edisi Agustus 2026 (1390-1402)
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the comments of other users. These findings suggest that user participation in social media can occur in various forms, both actively and passively.

Based on the concept *of Social Media Engagement*, user engagement can be understood through cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. In the cognitive dimension, users show interest in uploads by reading other users' comments to gain additional information, understand different perspectives, and compare different views. These activities show that users are actively processing the information they receive in the digital space. According to expert triangulators: "The action shows that the *like* feature is used as a form of support, approval, or acknowledgment of opinions that are considered to be in accordance with the user's personal views. The findings of the informant's statement in the activity of reading comments are a form of user participation in social media.

V.CONCLUSION

Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa interaksi simbolik pada kolom komentar unggahan proses pembuatan film *Pelangi di Mars* di akun Instagram @cuplikanfilm82 berlangsung melalui penggunaan simbol dan bahasa yang ditafsirkan oleh pengguna. Emoji serta bahasa informal menjadi bentuk komunikasi yang paling banyak digunakan, meskipun interaksi antar pengguna belum berkembang secara intensif. Hasil penelitian juga menunjukkan adanya beragam pemaknaan terhadap unggahan, mulai dari penilaian terhadap kualitas visual film, harapan terhadap jalan cerita, hingga pemahaman mengenai proses produksi yang melibatkan berbagai pihak. Temuan tersebut menegaskan bahwa pengguna media sosial berperan aktif dalam membentuk makna berdasarkan pengalaman dan pemahaman yang dimiliki masing-masing.

Penelitian di masa mendatang diharapkan dapat memperluas kajian interaksi simbolik pada berbagai media sosial dengan melibatkan objek penelitian, informan, serta simbol digital yang lebih beragam sehingga memberikan pemahaman yang lebih komprehensif mengenai proses pembentukan makna dalam komunikasi digital. Dari sisi praktis, temuan penelitian ini dapat menjadi bahan pertimbangan bagi kreator konten dan industri perfilman dalam memanfaatkan kolom komentar serta konten *behind the scenes* untuk memperkuat interaksi dengan *audiens*, meningkatkan partisipasi pengguna, dan membangun citra positif film. Selain itu, pengguna

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Volume 11 Nomor 3 Edisi Agustus 2026 (1390-1402)
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media sosial diharapkan dapat lebih cermat dalam menggunakan simbol komunikasi digital karena setiap simbol berpotensi dimaknai secara berbeda oleh masing-masing individu.

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