

Digital Communication Practices through User Generated Content: The Case of Visitors at the Jogja NETPAC Asian Film Festival 2024

Trinia Sefti Asih*, Budi Dwi Arifianto

Department of Communication Science, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, 55183, Indonesia

*Corresponding author's email: trinia.sefti.isip22@mail.umy.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Keywords

Digital Communication Practice; User Generated Content; Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival

The development of technology drives changes in digital communication patterns that are increasingly participatory, where users no longer play the role of an audience but as content producers thru user-generated content (UGC). In the context of cultural events such as the Jogja NETPAC Asian Film Festival, the UGC produced by visitors becomes one form of digital participation that represents the festival experience in digital communication practices. This research aims to understand the digital communication practices formed thru UGC production by JAFF 2024 visitors on Instagram and TikTok platforms. The research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method, employing data collection techniques such as non-participant observation, semi structured interviews, and documentation. The initial results of the research identified key findings, namely the practice of user-generated content production by festival visitors on social media, the practice of sharing festival experiences thru visitors' social media post, and the emergence of digital interactions that further expand the dissemination of experiences to other users in the digital space. This research provides and understanding of participatory digital communication practices by users in the context of film festivals on social media.

1. Introduction

As time progresses, the public's need for information continues to grow. This need arises from individuals' curiosity about certain topics, which then drives them to seek information through various means. This information-seeking process is carried out using diverse methods, ranging from direct observation to leveraging technology for greater convenience. This phenomenon has become increasingly prominent in the post-pandemic digital era, where easy internet access allows people to connect and interact through various social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, X, and others (Rusmiati et al., 2022). Social media has become the primary platform for interaction and information dissemination (Maulana & Arifianto, 2025). This has led to a surge in the number of social media users, particularly in Indonesia; the steadily rising statistical figures each year do not merely reflect the intensity of platform usage but also signal a paradigm shift in communication from a one-way model to participatory and collaborative communication. This shift no longer views users merely as an audience but as content producers through User-Generated Content (UGC), which has become an integral part of digital communication practices on social media.

Previous research on digital communication has been conducted with a variety of focuses. Several previous studies have examined digital communication involving user-generated content. Digital communication on social media plays a role in shaping public opinion through its rapid dissemination, user interactivity, and the influence of public figures and influencers (Suhendra & Selly Pratiwi, 2024). As a digital communication tool, social media plays a crucial role in fostering interactive, democratic, and participatory two-way communication patterns (Zaxrie et al., 2024). Digital communication offers opportunities to expand the dissemination of cultural values (Herman, 2024). User-generated content on Instagram plays a vital role in supporting digital communication practices through active user participation (Suryatini et al., 2025).

This study aims to fill the gaps and lacunae in previous research by understanding the digital communication practices established through user-generated content created by visitors to the Jogja NETPAC Asian Film Festival. This study is expected to enrich perspectives regarding the role of the audience as active participants in digital communication on social media. Furthermore, this study can provide an overview of digital communication practices formed through audience participation in the creation of user-generated content at film festivals, so that the findings of this study can serve as material for reflection for event organizers in understanding the role of the audience as part of collaborative and participatory digital communication practices.

Digital communication practices are communication activities conducted using digital devices and platforms that are participatory, interactive, and digital-based. Digital communication can be understood as communication activities using the internet (Pohan et al., 2024). This shifts the oneway communication model toward a dialogic and collaborative one (Alotaibi, 2026; Poell et al., 2021). Digital communication via social media has a significant impact on social interaction in the modern era, enabling users to stay connected without being hindered by geographical boundaries (Syakhrani & Widijatmoko, 2024). In the context of social media, digital communication occurs among users themselves through messages, posts, or reviews shared online (Grewal et al., 2022).

Studies examining digital communication offer opportunities to expand cultural values, yet there are challenges in preserving their essence and integrity (Herman, 2024). Post-COVID-19 pandemic, society has begun adopting new digital communication methods, making digital media more fundamental to daily life (Novianti Indah Putri et al., (2022). Audience reach and engagement are key factors (Dewi & Bachtiar, 2025). In the context of public relations, communication and social media play a crucial role in fostering interactive, participatory, and democratic two-way communication (Zaxrie et al., 2024). Digital communication enables users to expand their social networks and drives changes in video content consumption (Andzani & Irwansyah, 2023).

User-generated content refers to various forms of digital content such as text, images, videos, or combinations of other formats produced and published independently by users of digital platforms (Baier et al., 2025). The popularity of UGC has increased with the rise of social media; user reviews, ratings, and Q&A sessions are categories of UGC (Rani et al., 2022). Content created by users is considered more trustworthy and authentic because it stems from users' genuine experiences (Hayat et al., 2024). According to Shao (2009) as cited in (Agustina & Mahendri, 2023), there are three indicators for identifying user-generated content: consumption activities, participation activities, and production activities.

Research examining user-generated content has been conducted with a variety of focuses. One study explains that user-generated content influences users to express their experiences, form opinions, and shape individual perspectives, thereby shaping practices (Iskandar, 2025; Putri, 2022). Furthermore, another study emphasizes that the production of user-generated content is a form of user participation in participatory culture on social media (Priatama & Jiwana Adikara, 2024). Other research on UGC highlights its significant role in helping travelers find information and engaging active content creators through photo and video uploads, travel reviews, and comments (Bilos et al., 2022; Chemin et al., 2025). Another study discusses UGC in the context of digital marketing, individual creativity and personal values, as well as the motivation to share information (Nisrina, 2021).

Since its inception, the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival has collaborated with NETPAC (Network for the Promotion of Asian-Pacific Cinema), one of International organizations

comprising 30 member countries and headquartered in Colombo, Sri Lanka (JAFF, 2024). JAFF was first held as a series of events organized by the local government (Pemda) to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the city of Yogyakarta (Ratna Setiawati, 2019). Film festivals contribute to Indonesia's cinematic culture and serve as a vital alternative distribution channel for works by young filmmakers (Permana et al., 2023; Setyawan et al., 2025). The main activities of film festivals, such as film screenings and supporting events—including discussions, workshops, and exhibitions—undoubtedly open opportunities for international collaboration, boost industry revenue, and expand the market (Syukriyah et al., 2025).

A study on the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival shows that the use of social media indicates that the dissemination of information and interactions related to the festival are active in the digital space (Arifianto et al., 2023). New media creates a sense of closeness with its audience, including at the JAFF film festival (Perdana, 2022). JAFF itself functions as a laboratory where young audiences negotiate their identities and construct meaning (Ayu Setyo Putri & Dwi Putra, 2025). Platforms play a role in the organization of JAFF, which can be seen as a way to connect with its audience (Perdana, 2022). The use of social media has become an important alternative in organizing film festival activities during the COVID-19 pandemic (Undiana Nandana et al., 2022).

Although various studies have examined communication practices and user-generated content on social media, there remains a gap in understanding the communication practices that emerge from user experiences within the context of events or festivals. Previous studies have largely highlighted the role of social media in supporting digital communication in general, such as in organizational and marketing contexts. Consequently, they have not deeply explored how users, as active audiences, produce, distribute, and interpret the content they create in digital spaces.

This research aims to fill this gap by understanding the digital communication practices formed through user-generated content produced by visitors. This study also analyzes how UGC represents festival experiences, as well as the interactions that are built in the digital space. Furthermore, this study aims to examine how visitors act as active agents who expand the festival experience. Thus, this research is expected to contribute to understanding participatory digital communication practices within the context of cultural festivals

2. Method

This study focuses on the digital communication practices of visitors to the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival through the production of user-generated content on social media, specifically Instagram and TikTok. The focus of this study is directed at visitors who engage in digital communication through UGC; this study positions visitors not merely as an audience, but as producers and actors of communication involved in digital communication practices through UGC. Thus, the discussion in this study will not cover the institutional communication strategies of the festival organizers, but rather highlights the participatory practices of users as content producers in the social media space.

The research method employed in this study is descriptive qualitative research. Following the methodology (Sugiyono, 2013), qualitative research is a social science approach that emphasizes meaning, process, and context in understanding social phenomena. This study adopts a descriptive approach (Wiksana, 2017) with the aim of analyzing the phenomena occurring without imposing specific treatments on the research subjects. This research design is employed to provide a contextual understanding of digital communication practices within a specific cultural event, namely the Jogja NETPAC Asian Film Festival 2024.

Data in this study were obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through digital non-participant observation of user-generated content uploaded by JAFF 2024 visitors on Instagram and TikTok. The content to be observed consists of photo and video posts, captions, comments, and other forms of user interaction that represent visitors' digital communication practices when discussing JAFF 2024 on social media. Interviews and documentation of JAFF 2024 visitors' content were also collected. Secondary data in this study was

obtained from various indirect sources, such as academic literature and official documents relevant to the research topic (Sugiyono, 2013).

The data collection process utilized several methods to ensure the depth and accuracy of the information. Non-participant observation was conducted on the Instagram and TikTok platforms, focusing on user participation in content creation, user interactions through likes, comments, shares, and the use of hashtags, as well as other platform features. In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach; the informants were visitors to JAFF 2024 who actively posted content related to their experience attending JAFF on Instagram and/or TikTok. Documentation began by identifying UGC samples created by visitors using keywords such as #JAFF2024, #JAFF19, or @jaffjogja. Data was then collected via screenshots, video downloads, and caption transcriptions. Samples were obtained per platform from the 2023–2024 period to ensure accurate and comprehensive data. This combination of techniques aims to provide a comprehensive overview of digital communication practices.

Data analysis was conducted thematically by identifying patterns of digital communication practices emerging from interview results and content analysis. This followed the three-stage process outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. To maintain data validity, this study employed source triangulation by comparing results from various sources. Through this approach, it is hoped that this study can provide a comprehensive understanding of visitors' digital communication practices through user-generated content in the context of a film festival.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Practices of Sharing Festival Experiences Through Visitors' Social Media Posts

Visitors to the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival serve not only as an audience attending the festival, but also as active participants in producing and sharing their experiences on social media, particularly Instagram and TikTok. Research findings indicate that this practice is reflected in the various posts or content produced by visitors on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok during the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival. Based on the results of digital observations conducted on content uploaded by visitors, most of the content produced features documentation of the atmosphere during the festival, activities following film screenings or discussions, events outside the screening areas, as well as visual elements of the event's identity such as movie screens, festival posters, and the bustling atmosphere of the audience. These findings indicate that visitors' participatory experience in attending the festival does not occur solely within the physical space of the event but extends into the digital realm through the practice of user-generated content.



Figure 1. Content uploaded by JAFF 2024 visitors on Instagram and TikTok.

Figure 1 shows examples of user-generated content uploaded by a visitor to the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival 2024 on Instagram and TikTok. The content features visuals inside the cinema auditorium as well as JAFF's visual identity, "Metanoia," which serves as the main theme of JAFF 2024. The second post features visuals of the poster and visitors documenting their experience attending the festival.

Content production by festival attendees is not merely for personal documentation but also serves as a way to share their festival experience with their social networks, friends, and social media followers. Findings from interviews with informants indicate that content production by visitors to the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival suggests that the posts created, particularly through Instagram Stories or short videos, are intended to inform followers of their presence at the film festival.

"I posted three Instagram Stories with captions and tagged JAFF Jogja because I wanted to let my mutual followers know that I was attending this event—it was purely about sharing." (Informant 3, student).

This finding indicates that posts or content produced by visitors serve not only as documentation of personal experiences but also as a digital communication medium that facilitates the exchange of information among social media users. These posts also elicit responses from other users, whether in the form of likes or direct messages asking for information about the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival.

Based on these overall findings, it appears that the user-generated content produced by festival attendees tends to focus on representing their experience of attending the event rather than on producing analytical content about the films they watched. This trend indicates that social media is utilized by visitors as a space to showcase their experience of attending the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival while simultaneously constructing a representation of that experience in the digital realm. Thus, the practice of digital communication through user-generated content by festival-goers can be understood as a form of digital participation that extends the physical festival experience into the communication ecosystem of social media.

3.2 Practices of User-Generated Content Production by Festival Attendees on Social Media

In addition to serving as a means of sharing the experience of attending the festival, social media also plays a crucial role as a space for visitors to produce various forms of user-generated content during the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival. Based on the results of online observations conducted by the researcher of visitors' posts on Instagram and TikTok, the content produced generally takes the form of photos or short videos showcasing the atmosphere and activities during the festival. Social media serves as a medium enabling visitors to document and share their experiences in real-time; content production occurs while visitors are at the event venue.

One informant explained that they recorded various moments during the festival, then edited them before uploading them to social media. Content production occurred spontaneously when they encountered moments they found interesting while attending the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival.

"My initial intention was just to go out and take photos, and I captured the JAFF moment. But during the editing process, I got distracted by the moment with Angga and Shenina. So I made the edit a little more fun and less monotonous." (Informant 1, Freelancer)

This finding illustrates that content production is not merely spontaneous but also involves selecting moments and visual processing before the content is shared on social media. There appears to be a tendency for user-generated content produced by visitors to be situational and shaped by the dynamics of their experience while at the event venue. The content produced generally focuses on moments considered interesting or possessing a certain experiential value, such as actor interactions, the atmosphere of film screenings, or activities taking place around the festival. This trend indicates that visitors' UGC production practices are not merely documentary in nature but

rather a process of curating selected experiences to be represented on social media. Consequently, visitors act not only as festival audiences but also as content producers who actively construct representations of the festival experience within the digital space.

3.3 Digital Interactions That Expand the Dissemination of Experiences on Social Media

Content created by visitors to the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival gives rise to various forms of digital interaction on social media. Based on interviews with informants, the posts they produce are not only viewed by the audience; visitors also receive responses from other users, which generally take the form of likes, comments, shares, reposts, and direct messages, as well as other interactions related to information about the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival.

The results of the interviews showed that posts made by visitors can spark digital conversations that reflect digital communication practices; one informant explained that sharing content about JAFF on social media elicits responses from the audience.

“Since I posted it on Snapchat, most of the responses were likes or hearts. There were also some DMs asking if they could watch for free or if they had to pay.” (Informant 2, Student).

Other findings also indicate that interactions are not limited to direct responses to content but are linked to the potential for increased engagement with JAFF.

“Maybe when people see the content, they become aware of it and want to come to JAFF too. Because the number of people watching my content has reached two thousand.” (Informant 1, Freelancer).

The interview results show that the content or posts produced serve not only as personal documentation but also as a source of information for users interested in festival activities.

Based on the findings, a trend of digital interaction emerges through visitors’ posts in expanding the dissemination of festival experiences on social media. Other users’ responses to the uploaded content indicate that the experience of attending the festival does not end with the individual who posted the content, but can reach a broader audience in the digital space. This trend illustrates that digital communication practices through visitor-generated content are not merely about producing and sharing content but serve as a platform for contributing to the development of digital communication practices that enable experiences to be disseminated and known by users on social media. In the context of digital communication, such interactions are referred to as user-to-user communication.

3.4 Presenting the Results

This study shows that the digital communication practices generated by visitors at the Jogja NETPAC Asian Film Festival are shaped by the production and distribution of user-generated content on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Visitors are not merely an audience but active users who produce and share content throughout the festival. The content consists of documentation of the festival atmosphere, film screenings, discussion sessions, and other activities deemed interesting by visitors. This practice indicates a shift in the role of users in digital media, where users are no longer merely consumers of information but content producers shaping the flow of digital communication on social media. This aligns with the concept of user-generated content, which emphasizes active user participation in creating and disseminating information in the digital space (Iskandar, 2025).

Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that user-generated content serves not only as personal documentation but also as a means of sharing experiences with other users on social media. In this context, the practice of sharing experiences can be understood as part of a participatory culture relevant to the theory of participatory culture, in which social media users are active in building and disseminating collective experiences in the digital space (Jenkins et al., 2016). Thus, the experience of attending a festival does not occur solely in the physical space but is extended into the digital realm through content produced by visitors.

The digital interactions arising from visitors' posts indicate that digital communication practices do not stop at the production and distribution of content but involve the exchange of information among users on social media. Responses such as likes, comments, shares, or direct messages indicate that the content uploaded by visitors triggers two-way communication in the digital space. This demonstrates that the festival experience is not merely an individual one but can reach a broader audience through interactions on social media. Thus, the digital communication practices formed through visitors' UGC play a role in expanding the dissemination of information (Syakhrani & Widijatmoko, 2024).

This study reveals significant implications for the context of digital communication on social media. Functionally, this practice demonstrates that social media is utilized as a communication space enabling interaction among users, thereby expanding the festival experience and sharing it with a broader audience (Zaxrie et al., 2024). Moreover, the use of new media facilitates access to information for users (Winani & Ishak, 2025). From a critical perspective, UGC digital communication practices indicate that the representation of festival experiences shared on social media tends to be selective; visitors only showcase specific moments deemed interesting and of experiential value. This clearly demonstrates that the festival experiences circulating in the digital space are the result of user construction, not merely a complete representation of the entire experience occurring in the physical space.

4. Conclusion

The digital communication practices of visitors to the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival are shaped by the production, distribution, and interaction of user-generated content on social media. Visitors are not merely an audience attending the festival but active users who produce and share content throughout the festival. Content is generated from the festival atmosphere, film screenings, discussions, and specific moments considered to hold experiential value, which are then shared on social media. This study confirms that visitors' digital communication practices play a crucial role in shaping and disseminating festival experiences on social media.

This study contributes to the field of digital communication studies by demonstrating that user generated content (UGC) functions not merely as personal documentation but as a communication medium that constructs representations of cultural experiences within the context of festival events. Unlike previous studies that tend to focus on UGC as a form of marketing communication strategy, this study positions UGC as a digital communication practice that connects digital interactions on social media. This study expands our understanding of how festival experiences are selectively constructed by users, as well as how content plays a role in shaping audience perceptions and engagement with a cultural event in the digital space.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations, namely the small number of informants and the scope of content observation, which was limited to a portion of visitors' social media posts. Additionally, this study has not yet thoroughly examined technical aspects such as content production processes, visual selection, editing, color grading, and the representational strategies used by users in constructing festival narratives. Therefore, future research is recommended to develop a more comprehensive analysis of the user-generated content production process, including comparing various social media user accounts to examine differences in production styles, engagement levels, and the resulting impact of communication. This approach is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of digital communication practices within the context of cultural events on social media.

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