



## The Use of Instagram in the Halal Food Information Sharing

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### Article

#### Article History

Received: 21/03/2023  
Reviewed: 15/06/2023  
Accepted: 30/06/2023  
Published: 30/06/2023

#### DOI:

[doi.org/10.29313/mimbar.v39i1.2157](https://doi.org/10.29313/mimbar.v39i1.2157)



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Volume : 39  
No. : 1  
Month : June  
Year : 2023  
Pages : 138-147

### Abstract

Virtual communities refer to people who use and share information on social media through the Internet. A virtual community that cares about the *Halal* lifestyle creates and shares content widely using Instagram to raise people's awareness of *halal* food. This article explores the use of Instagram in sharing information on *halal* food. This article is qualitative in nature and applies Virtual ethnography. The research subjects are the Halal Corner team and followers. The data is collected through observation, interview, and documentation. They are analyzed using the virtual ethnography method by Boellstorff. This article finds numerous reasons to share information on *halal* food through Halal Corner Instagram. The reasons are effective communication, social connectedness, content production, content characteristics and features, and reliable information source.

**Keywords:** Instagram; Social Media; Sharing; Virtual Community.

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### Introduction

The massive use of the Internet becomes a parameter indicating that the Internet is well accepted and gives a new way to communicate among people. *Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia* (APJII) reports that Internet users in 2010 were 42 million, and in 2022 the number of Internet users steadily increased up to 196.71 million (APJII, 2020). The wide use of the Internet in society affects the virtual communities' growth rate. Virtual communities increase steadily and become part of society (Castells, 2009). Tamí-Maury et al., (2017) explain that virtual communities are online-individual communities that use the Internet. Therefore, they can connect to and socialize to share the same interests and themes. A crucial aspect that is needed to develop and maintain the virtual communities' existence is the behavior of information sharing because the shared information attracts new members then the communities' members will gain profits from it. Sproull (2004) also sees that any information can give advantages to a virtual community. One of the virtual communities that actively shares information, especially on the *halal* lifestyle is Halal Corner. Halal-ness is crucial in Indonesia because the majority of the

population is Muslim. The number of Muslims in Indonesia is estimated to reach 229,771,974 million (Kementerian Agama RI, 2020) and World Population Review (2021) reports that Indonesia is the country that has the largest Muslim population in the world. This large Muslim population gives an advantage and challenge in sharing information and education about Halal food to society.

Virtual communities generally use social media as a medium to interact. One of the social media used by the Halal Corner community to share information on Halal things is Instagram. Instagram is a social media that enables users to share images and videos accessible through smartphones and private computers with various operation systems (Lee et al., 2015). Content in social media is interchangeably shared among users. The content -either professional or amateur- is a cultural activity form (Van Dijck, 2013). According to Nasrullah (2020), "*sharing*" is not only a technological facility but also a culture in social media that slowly becomes a new habit in the digital world. Speaking of *halal* food, social media can be used to share *halal* information such as knowledge of *halal* things, information on *halal* restaurants, review about *halal* food / restaurants, and *halal* product verification (Kamarulzaman et al., 2015; Khasanah, 2020). The relation between the Internet and *halal* food is that the Internet acts not only as an information channel but also a place to trace *halal* food (online traceability) (Sayogo, 2018).

This article focuses on Instagram because it is the most popular social media in the world. In Indonesia, it ranks third (We Are Social, 2021) and is one of the 10-top platforms tweeting halal food (Mostafa, 2020). This condition brings the *sharing* feature across social media platforms. The meaning of "sharing" in social media has changed. Then, it referred to the real things (for example: file, images, and videos) and they were shared in a distributive scale. Now, the meaning of "sharing" is broader. People use it to share their world and life. In social media, "sharing" means "participating" while in communication code, "sharing" means "informing" (John, 2012).

This article is a part of the studies exploring the behavior of Halal Corner in sharing information on halal food. It applies the social action media studies theory. The study of social action media is a research approach that emphasizes the interpretation of media audiences. It assumes that human constructs a meaning of media technology and text in the collective understanding frame (Schoening & Anderson, 1995). Today, many studies explore "sharing" in different contexts in social media. The most important theme of the previous studies is related to motivation, role, and information directing us to action and togetherness in social media. Few studies discuss how virtual communities use Instagram to share halal food information, especially their routine in using social media as a collective indicator. The social action media studies theory sees that an actor constructs media content and views the interaction between the actor and content. Therefore, the relationship between the actor and content related to the use of content in forming the reality of halal food can be seen. Virtual communities -through social media- are able to create and share information to Muslim communities aligned with the halal literacy purpose.

## Research Method

This article is qualitative and uses the constructivist paradigm and virtual ethnography method. Virtual ethnography is a research method that focuses on exploring social interaction in a virtual environment (Hine, 2008). The research informant is the Halal Corner community, consisting of the media department & community and their Instagram followers. Even though most of the data used in virtual ethnography are text in the virtual room, this article uses a combination of online and offline data collections. This article collects the data through observation, interviews, and documentation. Then, it is processed and analyzed, Boellstorff et al., (2012) has given a guideline for analyzing ethnography data in the virtual room. Furthermore, the steps to process and analyze data involve data systematization data thematization by looking for patterns and critical moments of a phenomenon; this step is supported with NVivo software. Then, this article develops narration and arguments. Finally, this article arranges and provides the result.

## Results & Discussion

### The Use of Instagram as the Platform to Share Information on Halal Food in Halal Corner

The halal food information distribution to society is not only our government's responsibility. A solid collaboration among all elements is needed to preserve the halal ecosystem. One of the strategies that can be conducted is to raise society's awareness and literacy: a national campaign on

the halal lifestyle (Indonesian Ministry of National Planning, 2018). Halal Corner uses Instagram to share information on halal food. Instagram is famous for being a platform that can share images and videos, which enables users to edit and filter them.

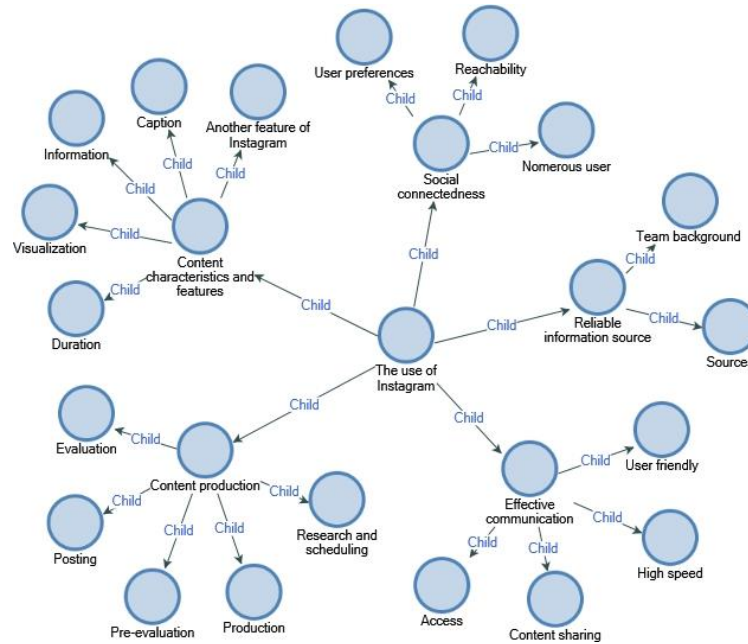


Figure 1. Visualization of Instagram Utilization

### Effective Communication

Based on the study (figure 1), effective communication attracts Halal Corners followers to use Instagram to share information on halal food. This effective communication is realized through the easy access to Instagram. This access has been explained by Tamí-Maury et al., (2017), who sees it as an advantage of virtual communities that use social media, where every virtual community content can be accessed every where (including during a trip) using smartphones connected to the Internet. Things that every virtual community has (such as portability, reachability, and device availability) have made Halal Corner's content readable by its followers. This finding is in line with the previous studies on the use of social media to share halal food information, where social media provides easiness for users to share information (Khasanah, 2020; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). An easy access to the Internet becomes one of the factors for users to gain information on halal things through social media (Khasanah, 2020; Yusoff & Adzharuddin, 2017). The easy access offered by social media is also strengthened with its high speed to deliver information. Once a user posts a content, another user will directly be able to enjoy it. In other words, a message can be quickly received by a user.

Instagram with the characteristics of social media embedded in it allows easy access and speed of information delivery. However, this does not rule out Halal Corner from sharing information on halal food directly with the public. The Halal Corner community shares information on halal food, besides using social media, they also carry out activities offline through several community activities, including Sebakul (Spread Halal Brushes) targeting MSME actors, sharing iftar or halal ifthor specifically for the month of Ramadan, other programs in the form of seminars, talk shows. , Islamic studies regarding the study of Islamic fiqh.

### Social Connectedness

Users use Instagram to connect themselves to their social environment because they need to take participation. This interconnection is expected that it can construct a connection, and develops a community by upholding democratic values, therefore; media can trigger a connection and social bonding (Van Dijck, 2013). A new online entity is formed through social media and enables individuals to connect with others to make contact without a border between online and offline. In addition, Maimone (2017) views that a technology used in new media is different from conventional media where social media can build a collaboration and cooperation, interconnection and relation among users that are spread widely.

Halal Coner uses social media to share information on halal food, including Instagram, Twitter, Tiktok, Facebook, and YouTube. But for now, three Halal Corner social media are most active, namely Instagram, Facebook (groups and fan pages), and Twitter. Halal Corner also has a website [halalcorner.id](http://halalcorner.id). Instagram Halal Corner's privacy settings are public accounts, so halal food information is not only for Halal Corner followers but also non-followers so it is hoped that sharing halal food information through Instagram Halal Corner can reach the wider community.

A characteristic that can be seen from an online community and distinguishes them from other organisations is the size or the number of members that is bigger than the other organisations; an online community consists of members from various backgrounds and less stiff relations (Li, 2011). In Indonesia, Instagram ranks second position as the social media that is widely used (We Are Social, 2022). According to Leaver et al., (2020), the dominant segmentation of Instagram users is the young generation. A huge number of users make them can interact socially. This relationship does not only connect people in real world but also in online world through Instagram. In other world, Instagram extends a connection (for example, friends or family) from the offline to online environment. It also builds a new relationship among people online without re-connecting them offline.

Instagram accommodates this social connectedness by providing users with suggestions. For example, suggested posts, suggested accounts and suggested advertising. Account connectedness will help users to gain information and sources about halal things because they will be directed to follow accounts (including communities, organizations, institutions, or influences) that discuss halal themes. Some of accounts that will be suggested to Halal Corner followers are Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal (BPJPH) or Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency, the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (@halal.Indonesia), Lembaga Pengkajian Pangan Obat-obatan dan Kosmetika (LPPOM MUI) (@lppom\_mui), and list of influencer accounts that actively share information on halal things are @aishhamaharani, @anca.id, @dianwidayanti, @galuhachandri, @kulinermuslim.id. Even some public figures are involved in Halal campaign, such as Marissa Haque (@marissahaque) and Adrian Maulana (@adrianmaulana).

One of the virtual communities' advantages is reachability. Content that is created can be widely delivered to virtual communities. As long as the Internet connection and supporting devices (smartphones and computers) are available, Instagram can be accessible everywhere, domestically and / or abroad. Instagram does not limit its use based on gender, meaning that both male and female can be Instagram users if they are at least 13 years old.

In the research on the diffusion of information in online communities regarding Instagram users connecting with other users, Garg et al., (2011) found that online partners influence the information dissemination process. Usman & Yennita (2018) research also reveals that member promotions are one of the factors that affect information sharing. A large number of Instagram users makes the characteristics of users very diverse, and the diversity of online friends - according to Beam et al., (2018) affects information sharing.

## **Content production**

In using social media, users also pay attention to content production. Cost of content production in social media is cheaper than program productions for mass media. For example, the content productions for newspaper and television programs are more expensive. Furthermore, the content production process will take more time. This cost comparison is caused by the user generated content. The user generated content performs their creative sides (Kaplan, 2018). Ismail (2020) suggests that a less effort content production in social media is a factor that motivates users to share information. This easiness attracts users to use Instagram. The content production by Halal Corner starts with research, research scheduling, production, pre-evaluation / revision, posting, and final evaluation (figure 2).

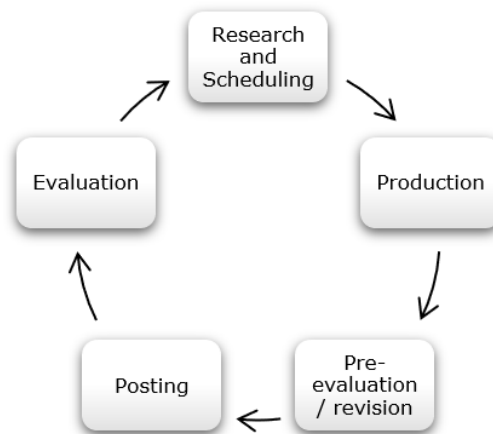


Figure 2. Halal Corner Instagram content production process

The purpose of producing and distributing content by Halal Corner started with the research first is to see the trend and idea. The research is usually conducted to view issues on halal things, regulation development on halal things, and timing adjustment with content schedule. This research is conducted online. The next process is to do content scheduling. This scheduling has a purpose to make content become more directed and clearer which will be easier to be shared. One schedule is arranged to determine timeline for a month, which means the content that will be posted throughout that month should be based on the schedule. However, this schedule is tentative. Content can potentially be posted out of schedule if there is another urgent information -that is being viral- needs to be posted immediately. This step should be do to preserve the timeliness and trending values to engage users' attention. In a day, Halal Corner schedules to post three contents. They will be posted around 6 a.m., 12 p.m., and 3 p.m. The timing is based on highest engagement in Instagram. Content about du'a, hadiths, Islamic quotes will be posted around 6 a.m. Content about tips and information on activities conducted by Halal Corner activities will be posted around 12 p.m. While content about halal information (for example, critical point) will be posted around 3 p.m.

The next step in content production by Halal Corner is to carry out the second research. This step focuses on exploring information and data that adjust to the scheduled themes. After determining the day for themes to be posted, Halal Corner team will collect materials from various sources. The team does not create their own articles. Yet, they only gather data from various sources and create content based on those sources. The team is aware that creating articles, especially focusing on critical point of halal food, can only be conducted by certain people. Supporting experiences and specific knowledge are needed. Halal Corner has three websites managing articles discussing halal food viewed from chemical education and food science. Halal Corner Instagram also collects information from other articles and then re-creates them to be a more-simple text with more visualization and other supporting elements added to them. Therefore, a read who wants to read them have to go to the Halal Corner website first.

Halal Corner designs their content using a graphic design application named Canva. The team produces content by transforming information they have gained to be a more summarized text with more images and elements that have been adjusted to the themes. One of the strategies conducted by Halal Corner team to engage their followers' attention is to keep updating the template color periodically. The content production timeline is flexible and can fit to each Halal Corner team's schedule. Things that need to be paid attention when producing content are text writing and styling, color, element, and basic template that signifies Halal Content. Accuracy gives a contribution to the acceptable content because (Lindlof, 2009) explains that social media content is considered to be "new" when it is consumed.

Content that has been produced is not directly posted in Instagram because it must undergo the following pre-evaluation and revision steps. The content will be sent to media Telegram group. It will be evaluated. If the data and design used for that content need to be updated, added, and improved, that content will be revised by Halal Corner team. Social media can be a place to share information (Rohman et al., 2018). However, the shared information must be filtered because social media can be a place to deliver dysfunctional information (for example, hoax) (Chadwick et al., 2018). In this pre-evaluation / revision step that Halal Corner team is needed to be a gatekeeper. Every

textual information and design in content are evaluated by full member, whether the information is valid / invalid and whether the design is eye-catching / not. This gatekeeper plays an important role to confirm that the content does not contain false information before being shared to society.

Halal Corner has three certain hours to post content in a day. However, the content posting is not always on schedule due to Halal Corner admins' another business. This scheduling problem has been solved by using an application that help scheduling which is called Creator Studio. Regular posting can benefit the account because it will maintain followers' engagement and improve post interaction. Post interaction is number of likes, comments, shares, and saves given by followers. Thus, the account reachability can be broader and increase followers. On the other hand, irregular postings will also contribute to low engagement. Posting consistency can influence interaction in Halal Corner Instagram. This finding is in line with dos Santos et al., (2019) revealing that an indicator of good information sharing can be seen from its regular posting. Engagement with followers, in the end, will influence the followers' increase and is an asset of an account.

Halal Corner media team evaluates Halal Corner social media, yet the timing is flexible. It can be conducted per month or every three months. The team also holds a certain meeting to discuss specific cases. This meeting is organized if there is a special momentum related to Halal Corner social media (for example, numerous responses and feedback from followers about content that has been shared or significantly decreased engagements).

### **Content characteristics and Features**

Users open Instagram to obtain information about *halal* food. Thus, the Halal Corner community -through their Instagram account- can be a place to gain halal food information for their members. This finding is in line with Purnamasari (2020) that discover social media can give information support to members and become a platform to offer promos and campaigns (Rachmandani et al., 2020; Susanti et al., 2020) Beside Halal Corner Instagram, members can gain halal food information through communities, institutions / organisations, and influences discussing *halal* things.

A reason to choose Instagram to be a platform to search for information on *halal* things is because today most of conventional mass media lack programs talking about *halal* lifestyle. Programs that discuss *halal* things are usually created in specific time such as Ramadhan or when the news about blending of beef and pork becomes viral because this issue is sensitive for Muslims and the news contains high news values.

Instagram enables users to obtain information that they require easily. This easiness is related to a feature owned by Instagram, that is search icon. Users can search for information by entering keywords. They can see hashtags, accounts, audios, signs / symbols, and places / destinations (Pusat Bantuan, 2023a). Speaking of halal food information, Halal Corner inserts hashtags to each post they publish. The purpose is to make their members find the halal food information they need easily. Users can add hashtags to their posts, captions, and comments. The hashtags that Halal Corner team applies is various. They usually consist of main theme, keyword containing the main theme, full community name (#halalcorner) or community name acronym (#hc), and slogan.

Another Instagram characteristic is their interesting visualizations presented in the form of images and videos. These visualizations can attract Halal Corner followers' attention. Images in Halal Corner's posts are not the main element. They are complementary to captions and information. Therefore, the information seems to be more eye-catching. Another characteristic Halal Corner show is their short text. The purpose to explain every post shortly to avoid followers' boredom. Content is designed by combining text and images to show complementary beauty. Halal Corner also pays attention to the image position to make sure that it will not disturb or blur information. Next, interesting title and color combination in every content are taken care of.

Besides images, Halal Corner shares short videos. Lee et al., (2015) assumes that images and videos are the advantages Instagram has users use them to express themselves. In addition, Instagram provides their users with features to edit and filter photos. Instagram can synchronize posts with other social media. Instagram emphasizes their authenticity through images and videos because it is related to intellectual property. Terms and conditions that is applied by Instagram regarding images and videos is users are not allowed to post any images and videos about immoral acts and to create accounts that will be use to spread hatred, terrorism, online gambling, and other crime. Instagram will delete improper images and videos (Pusat Bantuan, 2023b). Halal Corner attempts at following Instagram's rules to upload images and videos.

Images are content that currently dominates Halal Corner's Instagram posts. There are 25 image content and five halal food video content from February to March 2022, but that doesn't mean users don't like videos. So far, most of Halal Corner's followers prefer reels to longer-duration videos.

As the following excerpt from the interview with the head of the Instagram Halal Corner team: "Compared to other social media Halal Corner, Instagram is still number one. Well, especially now that there are netizens who have started switching from pictures to videos. So now the delivery of people prefers short videos, those video posts."

The videos that are uploaded to Halal Corner Instagram are not specially created by the team. Indeed they are produced by the YouTube and Tik Tok team, collaborating with other media. In other words, creating videos in Halal Corner involves many teams because of the complexity of creating videos compared to photograph production. Video making starts with theme determination, model preparation, video shooting, and video editing (i.e. adding texts and back sound). Next, videos that are successfully edited will be shared with Telegram group. This video can be uploaded to all Halal Corner's media social platforms. Besides video, an image that is produced by Halal Corner can be uploaded to all Halal Corner's social platforms. Short videos/reels uploaded by Halal Corner are not only produced by the Halal Corner team. They are taken from the Halal Corner webinar and Halal Corner Instagram Live.

Users can add a description to a post on Instagram to give clear information to their followers. A description on Halal Corner Instagram is a text written under the uploaded videos or images. It describes the videos or images. The description format is greetings, a content summary, the slogan "Halal is my way", and hashtags. Suggestion to visit Halal Corner website or other sources is also added to the description to give more detailed information on the content. This format meets Halal Corner Instagram's expectation that wants every content to be short yet informative. Therefore, Halal Corner suggest that their members should visit the available sources in the description if they want to read more information.

The characteristic of Instagram that is attached to Instagram is its video with shorter duration. This short video attracts more users to choose Instagram over other user generated content platforms such as YouTube. Social action media studies focusing on the actor's routine see that most Halal Corner's followers access Instagram during their leisure time or when they take a rest in between their work hours. It means that Instagram is a tool used by users to kill their leisure time and to get rid of their stress in between their main activity. Therefore, information delivered on Instagram should be brief and straightforward. Halal Corner team understands the importance of the short duration. Thus, they create short content yet it is informative so the content can meet their followers' need.

Besides post and reel, Instagram has Live feature. It allows users to make a live video to let them directly interact with their followers. The good thing of this Live feature is users can archive their Live video and re-access it to be later shared with their followers. Halal Corner does not frequently do the Live video because they have to adjust the Live performance to their team's schedule and (people) source availability. Currently, Halal Corner collaborates with MQ FM and Dakta radio as sources for a Talkshow in their programs. A talkshow discussing the halal lifestyle is delivered via Zoom application or Instagram Live streaming. The talkshow recording can be processed to be an Instagram post, YouTube, and other social media of Halal Corner. In addition to the mentioned features, Instagram has another feature named Direct Messages (DM). Direct Message enables users to send texts, images, and videos to one user or more. Instagram is also equipped with audio and video calls that be used by eight participants at maximum.

## **Reliability**

Followers use Halal Corner Instagram to gain information on halal food because to them the information is reliable. This reliability comes from the actual and reliable sources Halal Corner use, the team with supportive background, and the Holy Quran and Hadiths as their references which are usually used for the 6 a.m content to share a focus on du'a and hadith. Other sources that are used: LPPOM MUI, MUI regulations, and scientific articles on *halal* things such as critical point about food. Meanwhile for the content focusing on tips, Halal Corner Instagram refers to national media with high reputation. Other references are influencers discussing *halal* things. It has been a common thing for influencers to share and reshare their content without edition or re-laid out by inserting the credible source. However, mostly Halal Corner inserts information about the credible sources as depicted in figure 3. The content information is visible in the first picture like in the content for April 14, 2022 about "Truffle Oil Dimana Titik Kritisnya?", the credible source is LPPOM MUI. Meanwhile the content for April 17, 2022 about "Manfaat Memakan Kurma", Halal Corner cites national mass media Detik as the credible source.



Figure 3. Halal Corner Instagram Content

Team's background has been paid attention by Halal Corner's followers to follow every halal food content posted on Halal Corner Instagram and make the content as their information reference. Some members of Halal Corner study Biochemistry, Chemistry, or Food Science. Therefore, the information shared is based on the disciplinary literacy in science each member has. Furthermore, the Halal Corner chairman was LPPOM MUI employee. This current chairman's background becomes one of the reasons for followers to trust content shared by Halal Corner Instagram. The content quality is also supported by some members whose knowledge and skill in mass media and writing. For example, the YouTube lead team of Halal Corner was a director assistant in a national private television while the media team lead of Halal Corner is a professional blogger.

In addition to supportive background, some Halal Corner members join workshops and training held by the internal or external community. The training discusses halal food and the regulation, and editing techniques for producing content. The team also teaches themselves about design and copywriting in Instagram and YouTube from content creators who actively share their tips.

Halal Corner members' backgrounds and credible sources make their content acceptable to their followers. Sloan et al., (2015) see sharing in the community can encourage trust and give preference in decision-making. The followers' trust in sharing information on halal food on Instagram Halal Corner is one of the factors followers use Instagram as a reference for information on halal food.

Instagram provides many conveniences as a means of sharing halal food information. They include access, speed and broad reach, low cost of content production, features that are easy to use, and social connectivity. These conveniences make Instagram one of the proper media for sharing halal food information. Even though Instagram is currently the most active and highly interactive Halal Corner social media account, given the heterogeneous Indonesian society, Halal Corner still utilizes other social media to share information on halal food. In addition, through the Halal Corner community division, they continue to educate and share information through face-to-face activities with the public.

## Conclusions

Halal Corner followers use Instagram to gain information on halal food triggered by numerous reasons. First, effective communication indicated by the uncomplicated procedures to access it, share messages quickly, use it with ease (*user friendly*), and share content easily. Second, social connectedness. Instagram - like other social media - can be reached widely, has numerous users, and can provide its users with suggestions. Third, content production. The content production process in Halal Corner starts with research and scheduling, production, pre-evaluation / revision, posting, and final evaluation. Fourth, content characteristics and features such as share information, visualization, caption, timing, and live. Fifth, reliability. The Halal Corner followers access Halal Corner because they believe in the halal food information delivered by trustworthy sources and the Halal Corner team whose supportive educational background and experience. Instagram can be used as a medium for sharing information on halal food. However, the halal lifestyle campaign must be carried out massively and involve all resources. That is, not only through social media but also through face-to-face communication.



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