



# The communication process at the open stage of a friendship relationship on Instagram's close friend feature

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## ABSTRACT

### Keywords

Openness  
Close Friend Instagram  
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Openness is vital in communication. With openness, communication will be effective because communicators and communication partners are open and honest. The development of technology at this time has changed how information is delivered and received. Social media is a place that is in demand by individuals to communicate. One of the media widely used to make openness is Instagram social media. Instagram social media itself has a public nature where everyone can consume the information shared. Along with the development and updates made by Instagram, the close friend Instagram feature appears, which can help users limit the information shared on the public space of Instagram to a more intimate space with a list of desired people. This study aims to describe the communication process at the stage of openness in the friendship relationship in the close friend feature of Instagram, which is analyzed using the social penetration theory of Altman and Taylor. This research uses a qualitative approach with a non-probability sampling technique with a purposive sampling technique. The results of this study describe a different process of openness in the use of Instagram's close friend feature.

## 1. Introduction

Rapid development accompanied by dynamic technological developments helps humans communicate and interact. Social media is new media whose character is different from existing media, such as television, newspapers, magazines and radio. The presence of social media has changed the way information is delivered and received, where information can be in the form of messages, images or sounds. According to Meike and Young (Nasrullah, 2020), social media is a transition between personal communication in the sense of sharing between individuals and public media for sharing with anyone without individual specificity. According to Utari, in new media there is a combination of interpersonal communication and mass communication. It is said to be mass communication because it reaches a global audience and at the same time, messages are created, directed and consumed personally, so it can be said to be interpersonal communication (Watie, 2016).

According to data from Napoleon Cat, the largest percentage of Instagram users in Indonesia are in the 18-24 age group (Rizaty, 2023). The educational background of social media users, with the most significant percentage according to Indonesiabaik.id data is at the Diploma/S1 education level, with a percentage of 97.55% (Finaka, 2018). One social media platform that is widely used is Instagram. Data from We Are Social and Hootsuite 2023 shows that social media Instagram is in third place with two billion active users (Naurah, 2023). On Instagram social media, users can share their activities through posts, long videos or reels, and Instagram Stories which are usually shortened to instastory. The large number of social media users on the same platform encourages individuals to choose Instagram Stories in the process of self-disclosure. In the dimension of self-disclosure on Instagram story social media, there are things that influence users, such as uncertain mood and time according to the current situation. Individuals tend to be dishonest about the conditions they face, individuals sometimes only upload imaginary stories or good things about themselves, and

sometimes users create these stories because there are demands from other parties for certain reasons (Mahardika, 2019).

In a more intimate process of self-disclosure, individuals choose to use other, safer media. This is done because users do not know all their friends on Instagram who watch Instagram Stories (Mahardika, 2019). In 2018, Instagram released its newest feature, namely the close friend feature, which gives users the ability to select a list of followers or followers of social media accounts who can view our Instagram stories without being known by followers outside the list of close friends (Herdiana, 2018). This feature allows users to create an exclusive circle of friends who are trusted by them.

According to Cristakis and Fowler (Mustafa, 2015) friendship relationships on social media tend to be cumulative and the nature of interactions is strongly influenced by the media. Apart from managing direct relationships with friends, social media users can also monitor or pay attention to their relationships at a higher level than outside social media. When carrying out activities on social media, users will be open to friends on social media, which will then influence the effectiveness of interpersonal communication. According to Joseph A. Devito (Ngalimun, 2018), interpersonal communication is the process of sending and receiving messages between two people or between small groups with direct feedback. This communication is a series of receiving, handing over and conveying processes which are processed by each party. Openness is carried out in an effort to find a solution or express feelings and annoyance in the heart so that the psychological burden is reduced (Suciati, 2020). With this openness, familiarity and closeness with other people can be established.

Research from Muhammad Rachdian Al Aziz entitled "Self-Disclosure Phenomenon in the Use of Social Media Platforms (Descriptive Study of Celebrity Accounts)" explains the influence of self-disclosure theory on the celebrity phenomenon on the development of relationships between celebs and their followers. as well as the relationship between gender and self-disclosure (Al Aziz, 2021). Nadya Rahmaningtyas and Citra Angga Rani Riswari's research entitled "Motivation for Student Self-Disclosure through Instagram Story" explains that the forms of self-disclosure carried out on Instagram Story by students at the Unitomo Faculty of Communication Sciences are different and this is influenced by motivation and goals to be achieved (Rahmaningtyas, 2020). Rifqi Asy Syifa's research entitled "The Influence of the Intensity of Using the Instagram Close Friend Feature and Self-Disclosure Behavior on the Instagram Close Friend Feature on Affiliate Fulfillment" explains that there is a significant influence between the influence of the intensity of using the close friend feature and joint self-disclosure behaviour the same towards affiliate fulfilment (Syifa, 2016). Unlike previous research, this research will describe the communication process at the openness stage of a friendship relationship in Instagram's close friend feature.

## 2. Method

This research uses a research method with a qualitative descriptive approach. According to Jane Richie (Moleong, 2014), qualitative research is an effort to present the social world and its perspective on the world in terms of concepts, behaviour, perceptions and issues about the humans being studied. The object of this research is openness to the use of the Instagram close friend feature. In selecting the unit of analysis, this research uses a non-probability sampling method where each individual or unit of the population does not have the same probability of being selected. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, where the sampling technique is data sources or informants with certain considerations (Lestari, 2021). The subjects of this research are students who use Instagram's close friend feature. The data collection techniques used in this research are interviews and documentation. After the necessary data has been collected, the researcher then carries out data analysis. The data analysis stage, according to Miles and Huberman (Herdiansyah, 2014), consists of four stages, namely data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusions or verification.

In conducting qualitative research, a validity test is carried out to show the validity of the data in the research. According to Patton (1987) (in Moleong, 2014), triangulation with sources means comparing and re-checking the degree of trustworthiness of information that has been obtained through different times and tools in qualitative research. In this study, there were two informants with three Instagram close friends, namely:

1. Informant S, 22 years old female student at a private university in Yogyakarta, has been using the Instagram close friend feature since 2022. With Instagram close friends, D is 22 years old, SR is 22 years old, and A is 22 years old.
2. Informant Y, 23 years old male, a student at a private university student in Yogyakarta, has been using the Instagram close friend feature since 2019. With Instagram close friends DF 22 years old, L 22 years old, and T 22 years old.

### 3. Result and Discussion

In explaining the communication process at the openness stage of a friendship relationship in the Instagram close friend feature with student subjects, we need to look at the process of developing a relationship that occurs in the friendship. According to Altman and Taylor (in Putu Cinintya Manu et al., n.d.), in the onion model, the penetration stages are divided into seven parts, namely: 1.) Non-verbal artefacts that can be seen with the eye (dating, worldwide, studies, tastes) 2.) Biographical data (name, address, age, job), 3.) Preference for something (clothing, food, music), 4.) Goals, Aspiration (goals), 5.) Religious convictions (religious beliefs), 6.) Deeply held fears and fantasies (trauma, experiences and personal problems), 7.) Concept of self.

In the first stage of penetration, the non-verbal artefacts (dating, worldwide, studies, tastes). This can be illustrated through posts shared by informants S and Y on their close friend feature, where informants S and Y share information about dating. In the second stage of penetration, biographical data (name, address, age, occupation). Informants S and Y show things related to their work to their close Instagram friends by sharing what they are busy with at work or what they are doing. In the third stage of penetration, namely a preference for something, only informant S showed his preferences regarding the music he likes or his hobby of dancing to his close Instagram friends. In the fourth stage, informants S and Y did not share their goals with close friends on Instagram because it was more comfortable to keep to themselves. In the fifth stage, namely religious convictions, only informant S shared this information with close friends on Instagram, but there was no discussion regarding this matter. In the sixth stage, namely deeply held fears and fantasies (trauma, experiences and personal problems). Informant S revealed this personally via direct message to his close friends on Instagram, namely D, SR, and A. Informant Y only shared this information with DF because DF and Y often met, so Y was quite open when he was a close friend on Instagram. The seventh stage of penetration is self-concept, which is the various things that make up a person's self. However, informants S and Y did not reach this stage.

From the various stages in the onion model by Altman and Taylor. Informant S is more open with his close Instagram friends regarding romance because, according to S, on average, they experience this and have experience with romance. Meanwhile, informant Y was more open about romance for reasons of comfort and felt connected when talking about romance. This is because Y thinks that her close Instagram friends also have their own love stories and for other topics, Y prefers to keep them to herself because other people don't need to know in more detail.

The depth of messages between informants and close Instagram friends will vary even though the information is obtained simultaneously. This is because the responses received by informant S and informant Y towards close friends are also different. Informants S and D mostly exchanged stories about their current romantic relationship because S felt that S and D had the same love story. Informant S could tell SR more stories because S thought that SR had more experience in love. When S experienced problems, SR could give a solution, and S did not hesitate to tell about her fears that her relationship with a man who was close to her could not continue. Informant S tells stories with A because S likes to tell things to A and sometimes A also tells his love story to S. Informant Y tells many stories with DF because Y is more confident when telling in more detail with people he often meets the real world so that when he is a close friend Instagram Y is more comfortable to tell. Informant Y did not tell L much because they had not seen each other for a long time, even though L knew Y partner. As with the previous couple, informant Y did not tell T much because T was a typical person who listened by looking at the story I shared. Depth is very important in the penetration process, but breadth is also as important as depth. Breadth without depth describes ordinary friendship relationships (Griffin, 2019).

According to Altman and Taylor, there are four stages of relationship development (West, 2017), namely: 1. Orientation stage, self-disclosure to others is only minimal and formal, 2. Exploratory effective exchange stage, you are starting to feel comfortable disclosing personal information, 3. Stage affective exchange stage, there is comfort in their relationship, 4. Stable exchange stage, informants are willing to reveal intimate parts of themselves.

S friendship relationship with D and A on close friend Instagram is at the exploratory affective exchange stage with the characteristic that they are starting to feel comfortable disclosing personal information. In the evidence of the conversation, S said that on a close friend's Instagram, if S was having problems in love, he would listen to her story first until S finished telling the story, then D would encourage her by telling S not to think too much about men because the world is still big and men not only him. Meanwhile, in the evidence of the conversation, A said that on a close friend's Instagram, if S was having love problems, A would listen to his story and pay attention by encouraging him, such as telling S that it was okay if not now and that S would find a better person in the future. The friendship between S and SR on Instagram's close friend is at the affective exchange stage, characterized by comfort in their relationship. In the evidence of the conversation, SR said that on a close friend's Instagram, if S was having love problems, SR would listen to his story first and then provide a solution if S asked for it, for example, when S was close to a toxic man who controlled S life too much, SR advised to end the relationship because S happiness was more important than being with the man, but S was not happy.

Y and DF friendship relationship on a close friend Instagram is at the exploratory affective exchange stage with the characteristic that they are starting to feel comfortable disclosing personal information. In evidence of the conversation, DF said that on his close friend's Instagram DF would respond if Y was working overtime by giving attention, such as by reminding him to pray and when Y was having problems with his girlfriend DF would encourage him by saying to be patient and the world is still wide so don't drag it out later either because the problem will be solved. Y friendship relationship with L and T on a close friend's Instagram is at the orientation stage based on the characteristics of the conversations that occur as shallow and formal without judging each other. In the evidence of the conversation, L said that on his close friend's Instagram, L rarely responded to the information Y shared but responded when Y shared about his romance by joking that Y was crazy. Meanwhile, in the evidence of the conversation, T said that T on close friend Instagram prefers to rarely respond to the information shared and only responds to ask about Y condition.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on research data and discussion regarding the communication process at the openness stage of a friendship relationship in the close friend Instagram feature, it can be concluded that the openness process between informants and friends on close friends Instagram is different. Informants opened layers randomly and the topics discussed on close friends Instagram S and Y with close friends only opened up about romantic relationships with different depths of information. The level of friendship relationships that occur in the Instagram close friend feature with Instagram close friend, there is one pair of friendship relationships that reaches the highest stage and only reaches the affective exchange stage. Not all close friends on Instagram have reached the same stage based on the characteristics shown by close friends on Instagram in responding to information and no relationship has yet reached the stable exchange stage.

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