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# Exploring young people's experiences with health-related content in social media platforms:

A qualitative study to inform youth-friendly services demand generation in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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**IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR US  
TO UNDERSTAND YOUNG  
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## ANJALI SEN

### UNFPA Indonesia Representative

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, listens to the voices of young people and supports their meaningful participation in decisions that affect them. “My Body, My Life, My World” is a UNFPA brand new initiative placing youth’s needs, aspirations,

and ideals at the core of our work to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action.

“My Body” ensures access to integrated adolescent reproductive health services and information for all adolescents and youth; “My Life” addresses determinants of adolescent and youth health and well-being, upholding rights and investing in human capital; and “My World” promotes adolescent and youth leadership as well as their fundamental right to participate in sustainable development, humanitarian action, and sustaining peace.

In accordance with these principles, this research report was conducted to understand young people’s experiences with digital health content to form the basis of demand generation strategies that will help connect more young people to life-saving health services and information. In this 21st-century world, digital platforms play a pivotal role in our efforts to reach young people, and hence it is essential for us to understand their feelings, needs, and aspirations in relation to digital health content—reaffirming that it is indeed young people themselves who know best what works for them.

In addition to putting young people’s experiences at the front and center of our work, this research also employed innovative, participatory methodologies—from drawings to photo elicitation to social media listening—with young people collecting data, writing, and leading the process. It is youth-led in every sense of the word, and allows young people to freely express themselves through diverse and creative modalities, adding a fresh perspective in the evidence base for youth-friendly services, demand generation, and digital health content for youth.

It is my pleasure to share this report as we take a step forward in creating a world where young people’s experiences and aspirations are better understood, their leadership and creativity are optimized, and their health and well-being fulfilled to the maximum extent possible. I would like to thank the technical team and our implementing partner, Yayasan Siklus Sehat Indonesia, who has facilitated the development of this important report.

# Introduction

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Youth-friendly health services (YFS) is an essential component in the fulfilment of adolescents' and youth's sexual and reproductive health rights, as acknowledged in the landmark 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)'s Programme of Action (United Nations, 1994). ICPD called for "meeting the educational and service needs of adolescents to enable them to deal in a positive and responsible way with their sexuality", which includes the provision of services that are youth-friendly—that is, accessible, acceptable, equitable, appropriate, and effective for young people (World Health Organization, 2009). Indonesia, a country where slightly more than a quarter of its population are of the age 10-24, has struggled to achieve this goal (Hull, Hasmi, & Widyantoro, 2004). Nevertheless, Indonesia has developed several initiatives to fulfil young people's health needs including adopting national

standards for youth-friendly services and implementing it in more than half of its 10,000 primary health centers nationwide (Ministry of Health Indonesia, 2018).

While data evaluating the effectiveness of these initiatives remain minimal, the Indonesia Demographic and Health Survey (Central Bureau of Statistics Indonesia, 2017) revealed that only 12% of girls and 6% of boys aged 15-24 know where to find reproductive health information and services. Paradoxically, the survey also revealed that health services providers were the most preferred source of reproductive health information and counselling by young people. With only half of youth aged 15-24 able to identify the risks of pregnancy and 30% of them knowing the fertile period accurately, enormous gaps in the provision of information and services still persist.

Studies have indicated that YFS



## “NEARLY 90% OF INDONESIAN YOUTH AGED 15-24 ARE CONNECTED TO THE INTERNET”

programming should include interventions on the demand side. This includes marketing and information dissemination to increase uptake of services (Denno, Hoopes, & Chandra-Mouli, 2015; Chandra-Mouli, Lane, & Wong, 2015; Keserton & de Mello, 2010). These interventions typically involve outreach activities to inform youth regarding the availability and characteristics of services, and encourage them to use those services. Demand generation components increase the ability and willingness of youth to obtain services (Denno, Hoopes, & Chandra-Mouli, 2015). In an age where mobile use of the internet is virtually ubiquitous, social media presents ample opportunities for YFS demand generation. Among Indonesian youth in particular, nearly 90% of youth aged 15-24 are connected to the internet. A more recent report done by Indonesia Internet Providers Association (IIPA) in 2019 found similar results. Social

media is listed as the second primary reason for internet use (IIPA, 2019), with youth spending over 3 hours per day on social media (Hootsuite, 2019) and youth aged 13-24 making up 45% of Indonesia’s social media audience profile. Given this data, social media platforms provide YFS programming with enormous opportunities for demand generation activities. Social media platforms can be a valuable platform to disseminate health-related information and messages to youth, since it allows interventions to be incorporated in their daily activities (Bull et al., 2012; Allison et al., 2012)—or in other words, it allows interventions to meet young people where they are.

Apart from reaching young people with health-related messages, interventions using social media platforms have other benefits, they include; accessibility spanning geographical and time-

related barriers, low cost relative to number of people reached, capacity for personalization, and interactive functionality (Laranjo et al., 2015; Gold et al., 2011). In addition, when compared to web-based platforms, established social media platforms such as Instagram or Facebook usually have higher levels of user engagement and retention (Maher et al., 2014). Ralph, Berglas, Schwartz and Brindis (2011) specifically highlighted the benefits of using social media to connect youth to services; that is, the fact that social media allows communication between youth and service providers to be done confidentially and anonymously, establishes clinics' reputation as youth-friendly, helps reach youth that do not respond to in-person contact, and assists clinics in reinforcing messages and maintaining relationships with youth after initial in-person contact, among others.

It should be noted, however, that research evaluating the impact of social media interventions on health-related behavior change, including youth uptake of services, is still in its infancy. Systematic reviews that are currently available state that social media interventions show promise, but low user engagement and retention is a significant barrier in maximizing its impact and effectiveness (Maher et al., 2014); since higher levels of engagement and retention is deemed to foster deeper learning and better facilitate behavior change (Allison et al., 2012), more research

should be done to explore approaches, content, and other factors that keep audiences engaged in health-related social media content (Laranjo et al., 2015; Gold et al., 2011). This point is reflected in other demand generation and/or youth health studies, which argued that youth-targeted demand generation should be accompanied by further research that clarify mechanisms and highlight how to best deliver interventions (Denno, Hoopes & Chandra-Mouli, 2015), as well as called for accelerating approaches while "safeguarding fidelity to those factors that ensure quality and success" (Chandra-Mouli, Lane & Wong, 2015, p. 339). Social media-focused studies particularly called for client-oriented research regarding how beneficiaries use social media in their day-to-day lives, as well as the kind of health content that they find engaging, in order to design interventions that reflect, and is responsive to, the way beneficiaries use social media (Giustini, Ali, Fraser, & Boulos, 2017; Maher et al., 2014).

Despite its clear importance, client-oriented research that explores the health-related social media use and preferences of youth is, to our knowledge, limited. This qualitative research, done among youth aged 15-24 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, addresses this gap and aims to gain a deep understanding of the social media health world of young people using youth-led, participatory approaches. This approach is deemed necessary and appropriate for





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this kind of investigation, since it allows the researchers to explore young people's online experiences, particularly in relation to health-seeking behavior on social media, as well as accounts and content on social media that they find engaging.

This research was conducted in the context of a YFS delivery model that was initiated by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Indonesia in 2014 and is currently being implemented in Yogyakarta by Yayasan Siklus Sehat Indonesia (YSSI), called UNALA. Through UNALA, UNFPA Indonesia and YSSI “established a network of private general practitioners working

closely with youth networks to provide a comprehensive package of high-quality and youth-friendly health services” (UNFPA, n.a.). In efforts to ensure that UNALA is responsive to the needs of young people, UNALA also conducts demand generation interventions on social media, specifically Instagram. The study aims to explore young people's experiences with health related content in social media platforms within the context of the UNALA programme. The results of this research are aimed to inform UNALA's YFS social media demand generation to increase the uptake of services among Yogyakarta youth.

# Methods







## 2.1. Study design

This research is a qualitative study employing youth-led, participatory methods.



## 2.2. Study setting

The study was set in Yogyakarta, Indonesia where the UNALA programme is implemented. Yogyakarta province has 5 districts with a mixture of both urban and rural settings. Yogyakarta is a student town with over 30 universities and over 500,000 young people. The UNALA programme is a social franchise model that leverages private sector clinics to provide youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services to unmarried young people aged 15-24. UNALA conducts a series of marketing activities in schools and cafes, through established youth networks and through social media platforms to generate demand for its services. The UNALA programme partners with and trained 47 health providers strategically placed near youth hang-out spots, to provide youth-friendly services.



## 2.3 Sampling and participants

Purposive sampling was utilized to recruit participants that met the following inclusion criteria; 1) aged 15-24, 2) has been a resident of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, for at least 6 months. Twenty three adolescents and youth were recruited through referrals from YSSI's youth networks. Nineteen participants attended the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), participant-

produced drawings, and photo elicitation sessions (M = 5, F = 14, mean age 20.9 years, SD = 2.2); 12 participants were also selected (M = 3, F = 9, mean age 21.1 years, SD = 2.2) to take part in further semi-structured interviews and social media observations.



## 2.4 Procedures

Data collection was conducted during the period of September to October 2019. This study utilized five main methods of data collection, namely FGDs, participant-produced drawings, photo elicitation, semi-structured interviews and social media observation. These participatory methodologies were utilized to allow young people to express themselves using different modalities. The value of interactive methodologies has been discussed previously by Kitinger and Barbour (1999), who stated that interactive activities and stimuli give freedom to participants to develop their own vocabulary and narrative without the researchers imposing their own ideas and techniques. These methods were also conducted for methodological triangulation to increase the validity and credibility of results (Denzin, 2017). Three of the methods, namely FGDs,

participant-produced drawings, and photo elicitation, were conducted on a weekend at a local cafe with 19 adolescents and youth. Prior to the start of the session, participants signed informed consents to confirm their participation in the sessions, as well as to allow the researcher and facilitators to take photographs of the sessions and results. For participants below the age of 18, parental consent was also obtained prior to them coming to the sessions. The primary author, as well as 3 enumerators, all being young people themselves who have previously done various youth engagement work with YSSI, facilitated the sessions. Having fellow youth as facilitators was deemed to be important since it can minimize the potential power imbalance in the research-participant relationship, an aspect that is important to address in research with young people (Morrow & Richards, 1996).



## 2.4.1 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The participants were divided into 4 groups, with 4-5 participants and 1 facilitator in each group. Questions addressed participants' use of social media to look for health information, the kind of social media accounts that they use to look for health information, social media influencers, the kind of social media content that will make them want to access services, and the kind of social media content that they will need to know when to access services. Participants' answers were documented using A2 papers and post-it notes.

## 2.4.2 PARTICIPANT-PRODUCED DRAWINGS

Participants were asked to draw social media content that they like and/or will make them want to access services on mobile phone templates that the researcher prepared beforehand. Each participant was given 4 mobile phone templates. Drawing materials were provided.

## 2.4.3 PHOTO ELICITATION

A total of 7 Instagram content examples were presented to the participants; 5 are UNALA content, and 2 are from other health-related Instagram accounts. Participants were then asked to give feedback to the content, such as which aspects of the content that they like, don't like, think should be changed, should be maintained, and/or should be improved. Participants were given post-it notes to write their feedback.

## 2.4.4 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were conducted by phone with 13 respondents. The interviews were conducted



over a period of one week in October 2019. Individual interviews were deemed necessary in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of the topics explored in the FGDs, as well as to conduct methodological triangulation. The questions asked during the interview can be found in the following table:

TOPIC	QUESTIONS
Social media use	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which social media do you use most often? Why?</li> <li>2. What is your main reason for using social media?</li> </ol>
General preferred social media content	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. What kind of accounts and content do you like the most / find the most engaging? Why? Please list the specific account names, if possible.</li> </ol>
Health-related preferred social media content	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. How do you usually find health-related information on social media (e.g. search, hashtags, and stumble upon in timeline)?</li> <li>5. How often do you actively look for health-related information on social media?</li> <li>6. What kind of health-related accounts and content do you like the most / find the most engaging? Why? Please list the specific account names, if possible.</li> <li>7. What kind of accounts and content would motivate you to access health services?</li> </ol>
Social media influencers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Who are the social media influencers that you like the most / find the most engaging? Why? Please list the specific account names, if possible.</li> </ol>

## 2.4.5 SOCIAL MEDIA OBSERVATION

Social media (specifically Instagram) observation was also conducted with the same set of participants as the in-depth interviews. The purpose of this social media observation was to immerse the researcher into the Instagram world of the participants. An Instagram observation account was created with the username “@digitaletnography2019”. The participants were also notified beforehand that the researcher

was using this account to conduct the observation. They were asked to state their usernames so that that research account could follow their personal accounts, as well as the accounts that the participants were following. This was done so that the researcher could see the content and accounts that the participants were seeing in their own Instagram feed.



The observation was done through scrolling through: 1) the “Home” feed, which is the main landing page of the platform where users can see the posts of the accounts that they are following, as well as 2) the “Profile” feed of accounts that the participants stated were their favorites during the interview, where users can only see and browse the posts of that particular account whose profile they are currently viewing. In addition, the participants were asked to send content and/or accounts that they like to the research account through Instagram’s “Direct Message” feature. The researcher observed content that was “liked” or commented by one or more participants, content of accounts that

the participants stated were their favorites during the interview, content that was sent to the researcher by the participants through “Direct Message”, as well as content that was health-related; specifically, the research took note of the content’s substance (what topics or thematic areas was the content focused on), format (such as infographics, videos, comics, etc), copy (the words and language style used in the caption and content) and visual design. Observations were recorded through field notes as well as archiving and screenshotting said content.





## 2.5 Analysis

Themes were identified based on these results. Subsequently, depending on what the theme is referring to, the researcher classified them into 7 predetermined categories, namely 1) health information-seeking, 2), preferred social media platform (hereinafter referred to as “platform”), 3) preferred substance of social media content (hereinafter referred to as “substance”), 4) preferred format of social media content (hereinafter referred to as “format”), 5) preferred visual design of social media content (hereinafter referred to as “visual design”), and 6) preferred copy/ writing of social media content (hereinafter referred to as “copy”).



# Results





The following are the themes that emerged, organized based on category, along with illustrative examples:

## 3.1 Health information-seeking

### 3.1.1 Young people stumble on their health-related information in social media platforms

The study revealed that despite being a significant source of health information and education for young people, they did not actively seek the information in social media platforms. Young people from our study often obtain this information by stumbling upon it in their social media feed. Content that piques young people's interest and curiosity often triggers young people to seek more information about the topic. The following quote from a female FGD participant illustrates this point:

***“Kalo cari-cari gitu sih jarang, seringnya lagi scrolling di timeline terus nemu yang bikin kepo, baru cari tau lagi.”***

(“I rarely look for health-related information on social media. What happens more often is when I scroll through my timeline, I find something that makes me really curious, and then I try to find more information about it.”)

- Female participant during FGDs

## 3.2 Preferred format of content

### 3.2.1 Infographics, short videos and comics are the most preferred social media content format

Participants consistently stated that they prefer content to be in the format of infographics, which are visual images such as a chart or diagram used to represent information or data, short videos, and comics. When information is packaged in infographics, short videos, and comics, participants find the content more appealing and eye-catching. They also explained that these formats make it easier for them to understand the information that is being presented in the content.

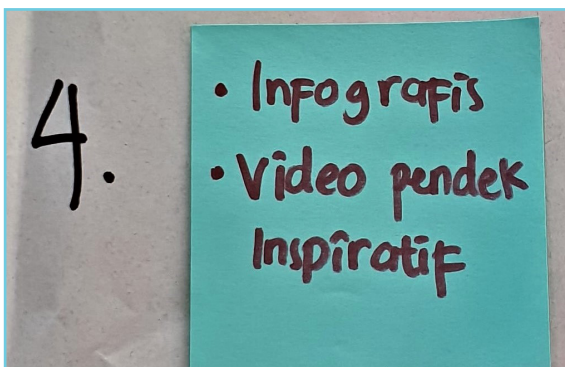


Figure 3.1 Participants' answers during FGDs, mentioning infographics and short videos as their most preferred content format



Figure 3.2 Participant's content drawing, a comic featuring characters from the show Spongebob Squarepants

## 3.3 Preferred social media platform

### 3.3.1 Instagram and YouTube are the most preferred social media platforms for health-related content

Nearly all of the participants stated that with regards to social media, the platforms that they prefer for health-related content are Instagram and YouTube. This was also apparent in the content drawings; almost all of the content drawings produced was on Instagram or YouTube. Some participants stated that this is because Instagram and YouTube are the most popular social media platforms among their friends. The following are illustrative quotes.

***“Paling sering sih kalo nggak Instagram, ya YouTube.”***

(“I use Instagram most often, or YouTube.”)

- Male participant during interview

***“Sukanya main Instagram sama YouTube, sih.”***

(“I like using Instagram or YouTube.”)

- Female participant during interview

## 3.4 Preferred substance of content

### 3.4.1 Related to recent events, trending topics, and “viral” things

In each data segment, data shows that participants like health content that does not purely talk about health, but rather health content that is related to recent events, trending topics, as well as “viral” things, which are images, videos, any content, etc., that is circulated rapidly and widely among Internet users. Recent events may also include international or awareness days such as Mental Health Day. This was evident both in participants’ own content drawings as well as content samples from the social media observation. The following are illustrative examples.

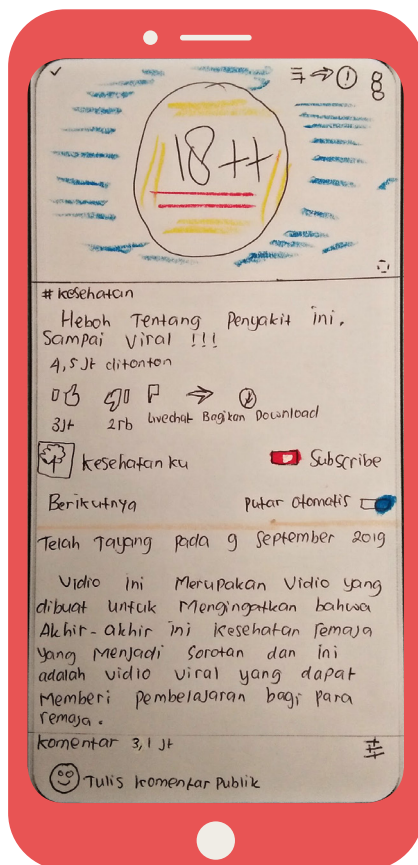


Figure 3.2: Participant’s content drawing, a post on YouTube regarding a disease that recently went viral

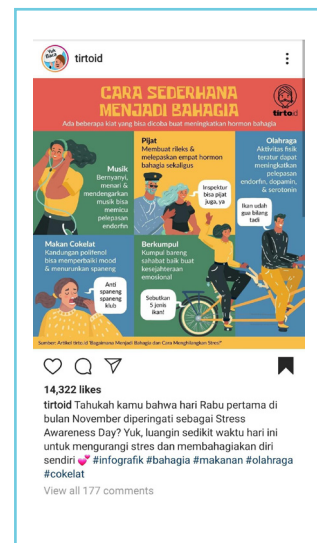


Figure 3.3: Content sample from @tirtoid regarding simple ways to increase one’s happiness, in celebration of Stress Awareness Day in November. This content was sent to the research account by a female participant.

### 3.4.2 Related to strange health cases

Participants also stated that they enjoy looking at health-related content that discusses strange health cases. Strange health cases in this context means individuals with a health issue that is out of the ordinary or out of the range that is considered 'normal'. Participants

explained that this kind of content piques their curiosity and makes them interested to read more. Aside from that, they also mentioned that reading about other people's real health issues enable them to learn from other people's experiences and/or mistakes, so that they know what to do and what to avoid. This following examples illustrate this theme.



***"Aku sih suka kalau baca-baca tentang kasus-kasus unik yang aneh-aneh gitu, karena aneh jadi bikin kepo. Soalnya kan jadi bisa belajar dari pengalaman dan kesalahan orang lain."***

("I like to read about unique and strange cases, because it makes me really curious. It also helps me learn from the person's mistakes and experiences.")

- Male participant during interview

Figure 3.4: Content sample from @ngumpulrekeh regarding a strange case where a man was found to have 4 kidneys. This account was sent to the research account by one of the participants.



### 3.4.3 Content that increases threat/risk perception related to habits and lifestyles

A theme that was identified in almost all data segments was that participants like health-related content that increases threat perception regarding the health issue being discussed. Participants stated that they like knowing the risks and “dangers” associated with habits and lifestyles, particularly those that are regarded as prevalent among adolescents and youth, such as substance use, gadget use, pornography consumption, etc. The following quote, participant drawing, and content sample illustrate this theme.

**“Aku sih suka kalo tahu bahaya-nya, gitu Kak... Jadinya lebih was-was. Apalagi tentang kebiasaan buruk remaja.”**

(“I like knowing about the dangers of doing something, so that I can be more conscious. Especially about teenagers’ bad habits.”)

- Male participant during FGDs

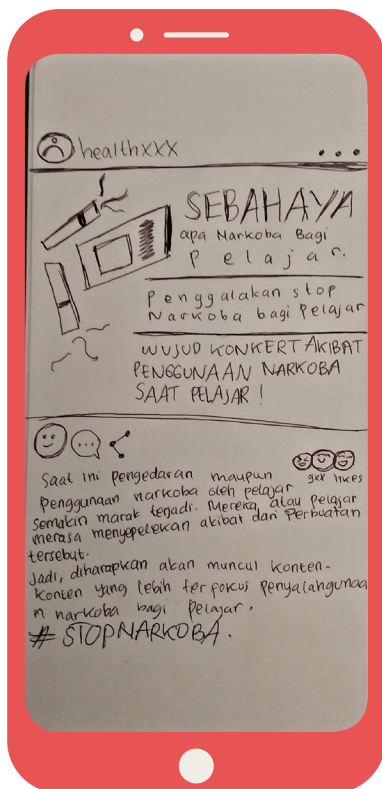


Figure 3.5: Participant's content drawing, a post on Instagram regarding the negative impacts and “dangers” of substance use

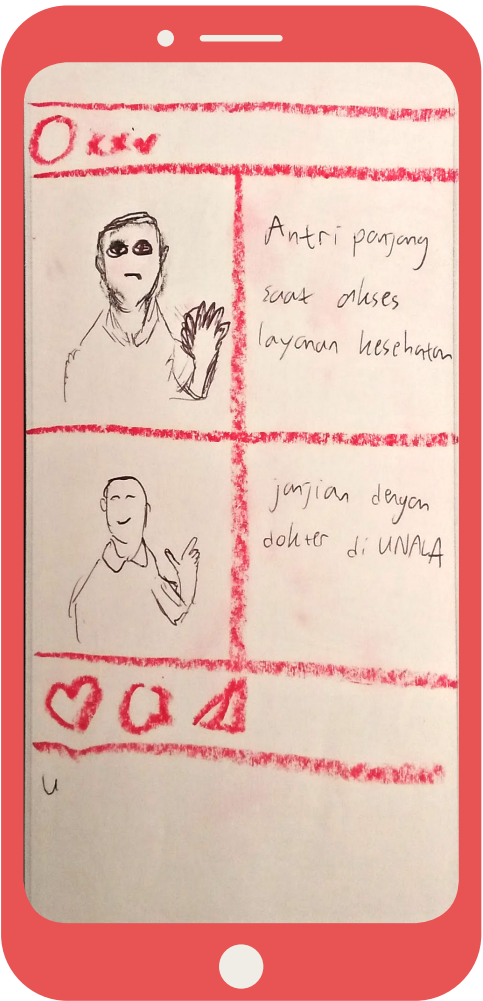


Figure 3.6: Content sample from @infia\_health, frequently identified as a favorite health-related account, regarding the risks associated with excessive typing on smartphones or computers

3.4.4 Contains elements of humor

During FGDs and interviews, participants frequently stated that they like content that has elements of humor that can entertain the participants. Participants particularly enjoy internet “memes” (humorous images, videos, pieces of text, etc., that are copied and spread rapidly by internet users, often

with variations that the users themselves edit), comic strips, as well as humorous “tweets” (posts on the social media platform Twitter). Content that features said humorous elements were also frequently observed among participants’ drawings and content samples from the social media observation. This theme can be seen in the following illustrative examples.



***“Kontennya lucu, jokes-nya fresh-fresh gitu...”***

(“The content is funny, their jokes are fresh...”)

- Female participant during interviews, when asked why she likes a particular Instagram account

Figure 3.7: Participant’s content drawing, a post on Instagram using a well-known meme originating from the music video of the popular hip-hop artist Drake

3.4.5 Contains practical and directly applicable tips

Participants stated that they appreciate content that contains practical tips that they can directly apply. Some examples

of practical tips that came up a few times during FGDs and interviews is how participants can do self-screening for health conditions and how to identify the early stages of a disease. This theme can be seen in the following illustrative examples.

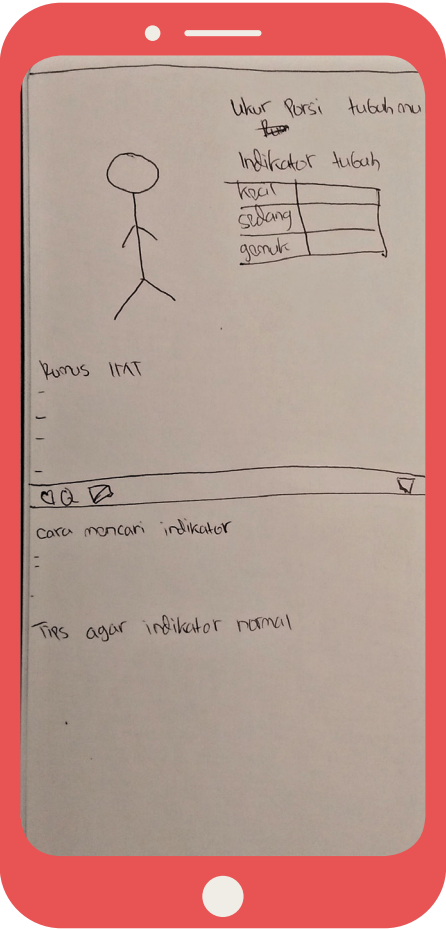


Figure 3.8: Participant’s content drawing, a post on Instagram regarding Body Mass Index (BMI), how to calculate one’s own BMI, and tips about how to maintain a healthy BMI

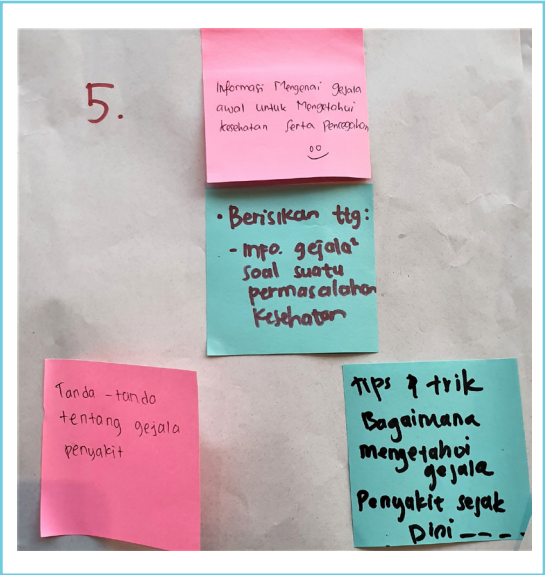


Figure 3.9: Participants’ answers during FGDs regarding how to do self-screening for diseases as preferred health content

**3.4.6 Engages digital influencers who are knowledgeable on the topic being discussed**

Engaging digital influencers in health content was also identified quite frequently, particularly during FGDs, interviews and social media observation. Participants stated that digital influencers do make an impact on their behaviors and attitudes, even those related to health. However, participants also stated that in order for health-related content with influencers

to be effective, the participants must deem the influencer as having sufficient knowledge on the topic being discussed. An example of such influencers would be Clarin Hayes (@clahayes), a YouTube content creator, and Ayman Alatas (@aymanalatas), a digital influencer, both of whom graduated university with a Bachelor's degree in Medicine. Both Clarin Hayes and Ayman Alatas were also frequently identified as influencers whose content the participants enjoy. The following are illustrative examples.

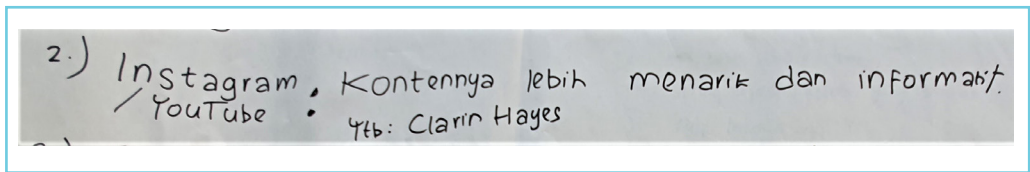


Figure 3.10: Participants' answers during FGDs, mentioning Clarin Hayes as their favorite digital influencer because she is deemed trustworthy and competent

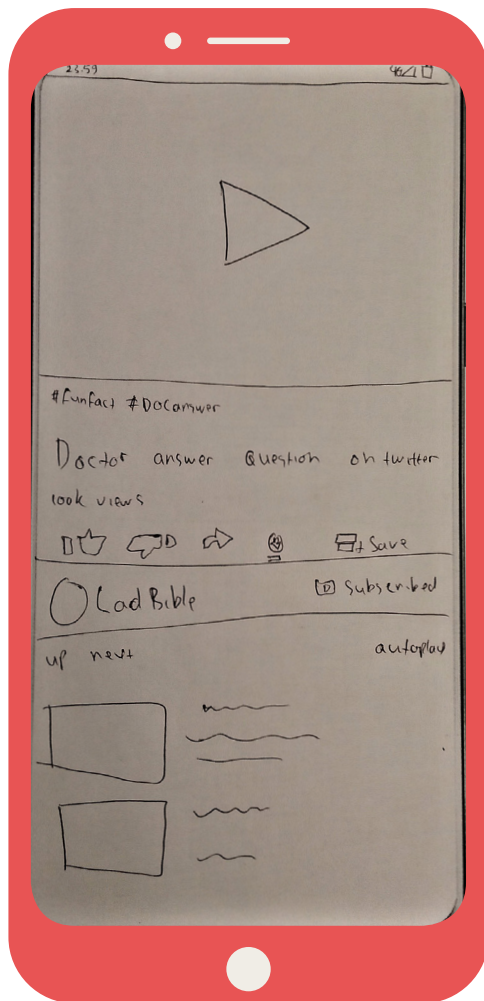


Figure 3.11: Content sample from @aymanalatas

### 3.4.7 Engages experts such as doctors and other health professionals in a lively manner

When asked about what kind of health content participants prefer, content with doctors and other health professionals was mentioned frequently, particularly

during individual interviews. However, it was also stated that when health professionals are featured in health content, it should be done in a lively, interactive manner such as in a short video, instead of just names and pictures. The following are illustrative examples.



***“Aku suka sih kalau ada dokter atau bidan yang difitur, tapi jangan cuman foto doang, mungkin bikin video gitu... Supaya lebih interaktif dan supaya bisa lihat bahwa dokternya friendly.”***

(“I do like it when doctors or midwives are featured, but it shouldn’t only be a picture, it can also be a video... So that it’s more interactive and that way we can see that the doctors are friendly.”)

- Female participant during interviews

Figure 3.12: Participant’s content drawing, a video on YouTube of a doctor answering questions posted on Twitter



## 3.5 Preferred visual design of content

### 3.5.1 Content with visuals that are well-designed

The most frequently identified theme in this study is that participants like content that is visually appealing and attractive. This is particularly evident in their answers regarding why they like a particular account's content; participants stated that the accounts' content has visual designs that are pleasing to look at. Feedback regarding visual designs that are not appealing and attractive are also the most frequently identified feedback to the sample social media content. This is illustrated in the following examples.

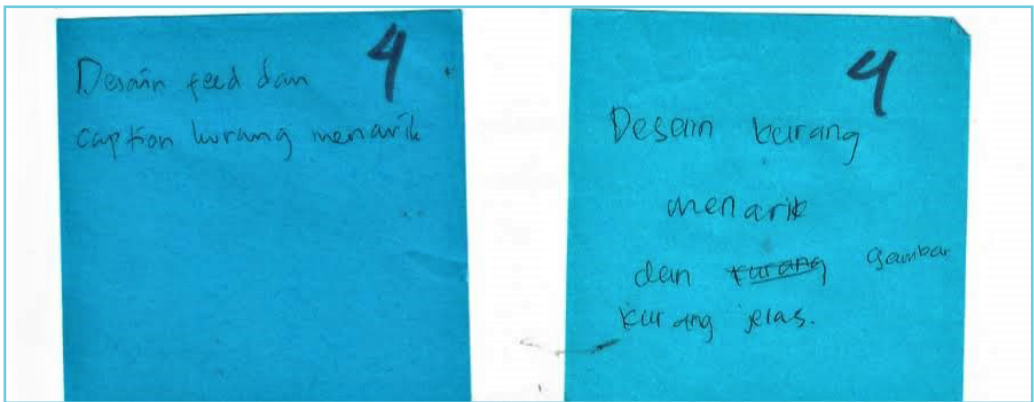


Figure 3.13: Participants' feedback to UNALA's content about how the content's visual design is lacking

### 3.5.2 Content with visual design that is branding-consistent

Participants explained that the design elements (such as font, icons, colors, illustrations, etc) of an account's content should be consistent with the branding of the account, so that there is a coherent visual theme that can be identified in all of the account's content. This was frequently identified as the reason why some of the participants like a particular account's content, as illustrated by the following quote.

***"Kalau aku sih suka akun ini karena feed dan kontennya pake warna dan tema yang diseragamin, jadinya enak dan rapih dilihat."***

("I like this account because their feed and content use the same colors and theme, so it's nice to see and it looks put-together.")

-Female participant during interviews, when asked why she likes a particular Instagram account

### 3.5.3 Content with minimal text and visuals that dominate the design space

Participants also stated that they enjoy seeing content that is dominated by pictures, icons and/or illustrations with minimal text. They explained that they do not like looking at a lot of text in the design space, and that having visuals dominate the design space makes the content more eye-catching. The following example illustrates this theme.

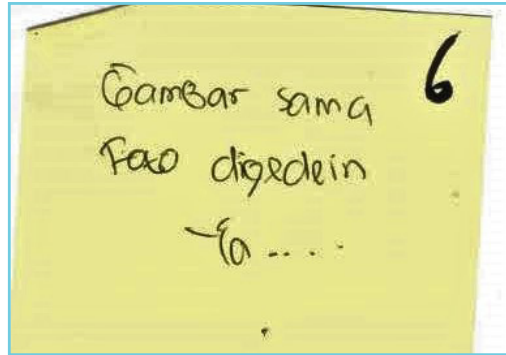


Figure 3.14: Participants' feedback to UNALA's content about how the illustration and photo should be made bigger in the design space

## 3.6 Preferred copy and writing of content

### 3.6.1 Brief and direct

Regarding copy and writing, the most frequently identified theme is that participants prefer content with copy that is brief and direct. Some participants even went on to say that the less amount of text, the better. The following is an illustrative example.

***"Menurutku XXX bagus karena pengemasannya sederhana, gampang dicerna. Kata-katanya juga nggak banyak dan langsung to-the-point gitu, nggak bertele-tele."***

("In my opinion, XXX is good because they present their information in a simple, easily understandable way. They don't use a lot of words, they're to-the-point, and they don't beat around the bush.")

-Male participant during interviews, when asked why he likes a particular Instagram account

3.6.2 Copy with playful, casual, and conversational language/style

Participants showed that they prefer content that has a style of language that is conversational, casual, and playful, reflecting how young people usually interact with each other. This includes incorporating youth slang, phrases or sayings that are on trend, jokes, emojis, etc. The following examples illustrate this theme.

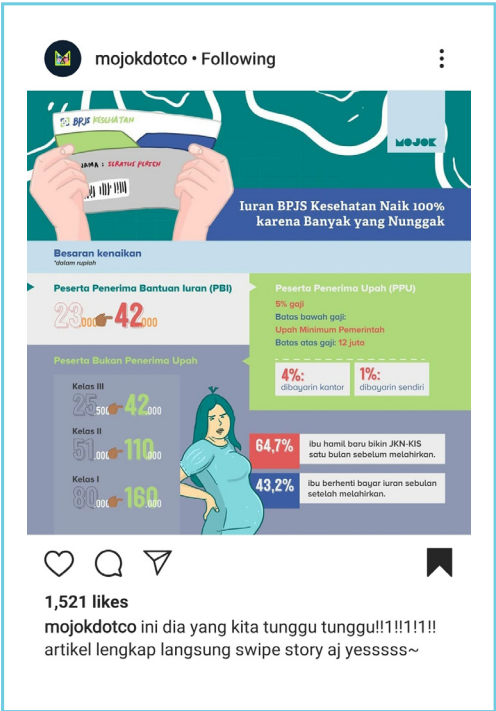


Figure 3.15: Content sample from @mojokdotco, an account frequently named by the participants as their favorite, which uses youth-style language in nearly all their copy

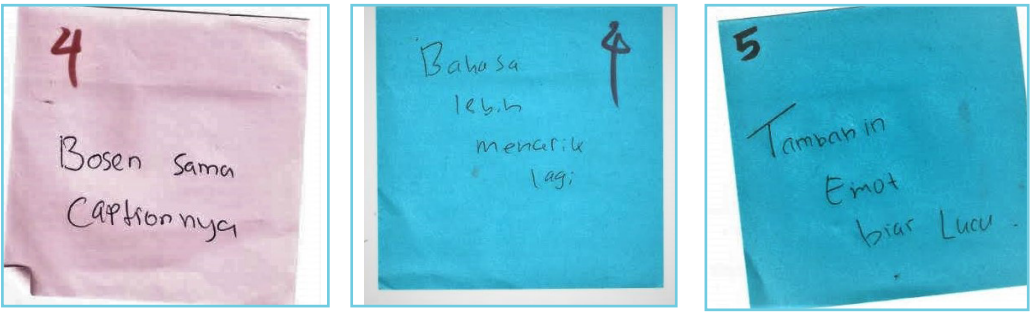


Figure 3.16: Participants’ feedback to UNALA content about how the post’s caption is too monotonous and boring, and a suggestion to add emojis



The following table summarizes the themes identified in this study.

Table 3.1

Category		Themes
Health information-seeking	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Young people stumble on their health-related information in social media platforms</li></ul>
Format	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Infographics, short videos and comics are the most preferred format</li></ul>
Platform	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Instagram and YouTube are the most preferred social media platforms for health-related content</li></ul>
Substance	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Related to recent events, trending topics, and “viral” things</li><li>● Related to strange health cases</li><li>● Content that increases threat/risk perception related to habits and lifestyles</li><li>● Contains elements of humor</li><li>● Contains practical and directly applicable tips</li><li>● Engages digital influencers who are knowledgeable on the topic being discussed</li><li>● Engages experts such as doctors and other health professionals in a lively manner</li></ul>
Visual design	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Content with visuals that are well-designed</li><li>● Content with visual design that is branding-consistent</li><li>● Content with minimal text and visuals that dominate the design space</li></ul>
Copy	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Brief and direct</li><li>● Copy with playful, casual, and conversational language/style</li></ul>

# Discussion





An illustration of a woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a purple patterned shirt, shouting into a blue megaphone. She is surrounded by various social media and communication icons: a thumbs-up icon, a laughing face in a speech bubble, a stethoscope in a pink circle, a heart in a pink circle, a megaphone in a blue circle, a heart in a pink circle, a thumbs-up icon, a heart in a pink circle, and a face mask in a pink circle. In the background, a smartphone screen displays a social media post with the text '1,989 likes', 'Lorem ipsum doRyour\_name.. mom', 'View all time nts', and 'Add a comment..'. The phone also shows a profile picture of a person with orange hair and the name 'Lorem ipsum'.

The study also revealed characteristics of content that young people find engaging. Formats such as infographics, short videos and comics were preferred for health content. This finding is also reflected in previous studies, such as Dowshen et al. (2015), Bottorf et al. (2014), Norman and Yip (2012), and Whittaker et al. (2008). These formats make the information being presented more attractive and easily understandable. In terms of the actual substance of the content, the themes identified in this study point to

the importance of making health content relevant for young people. Health content can be made relevant through linking the content to recent events, trending topics, “viral” things, and strange real-life health cases. This finding echoes studies done by Fergie, Hunt and Hilton (2013), Byers, Sears and Foster (2013), Whittaker et al. (2008) and Bottorf et al. (2014). These “entry points” make the health information more relatable to the lives of young people. This type of content was identified by multiple studies to be essential components in ensuring the effectiveness of health interventions (Byers, Sears & Foster, 2013; Simon & Daneback, 2013; Whittaker et al., 2008). Our study suggests that young people enjoy health content that engages digital influencers and health professionals who fulfill certain criteria—that is, if the influencers are knowledgeable and the health experts are featured in a lively manner. These conditions can be understood given young

people’s concerns regarding the credibility and reliability of health information found online (Fergie, Hunt & Hilton, 2013; Simon & Daneback, 2013) and, at the same time, balancing their preference for engaging and relatable content.

Increasing threat perception has also been identified as part of the best practices of youth-targeted Social and Behavioral Change Communications (The Health Communication Capacity Collaborative, 2014), which as shown in this study can be done through highlighting the risks associated with certain health choices and real-life cautionary tales. Veinot et al. (2011, p. 144), in their study regarding utilizing online social networks to promote youth sexual health, found similar results and explained that “cautionary tales may also help to make abstract information about sexuality and HIV/STIs personally and situationally relevant”. Utilizing humor to simultaneously educate and

“

**YOUNG PEOPLE IN THIS STUDY DID NOT ACTIVELY SEEK HEALTH INFORMATION, RATHER HEALTH INFORMATION REACHES THEM BECAUSE THEY STUMBLE UPON IT ON THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA FEED”**





of their social media-based interventions—which encompasses platforms, formats, substance, visual design, and copy—particularly given the highly dynamic nature of young people’s social media world and the need to keep health content relevant to the lives of youth. An essential part of this is to ensure an active and meaningful participation of young people as co-creators throughout the entire process of content development, which is often overlooked or not prioritized (Dowshen et al., 2015). Young people’s opinions and inputs are indispensable and can provide key insights that program designers would otherwise miss. This also warrants investments in resources that ensure program designers are adequately capacitated and equipped with tools to not only create content that fulfills youth’s preferences, but also to monitor and keep up with changing trends (Norman & Yip, 2012; Bottorf et al., 2014).

The insights gathered in this study add to a limited but growing body of literature that explores the health-related social media use and preferences of youth. The practical use of the results of these studies provides strong grounds for similar studies to be conducted in the future, particularly for other groups of young people, since the experiences and opinions of different youth groups are likely to differ. This study also shows the value of utilizing youth-led, participatory data collection methodologies. These methods can be considered client-centered since they

are designed and implemented by youth for youth, and give flexibility to the youth participants to express themselves through different modalities. In particular for social media content research, participatory methodologies draw on young people’s creativity and capacity as program co-creators. Future research exploring youth’s experiences, both online and offline, may benefit from utilizing such methodologies. However, it should be noted that due to the fast-paced, ever-changing online world of young people, “the results of a study, although always providing valuable insight, can rapidly become less relevant to contemporary realities by the time it has been published” (Fergie, Hunt & Hilton, p. 593)—thus, research should still be supplemented by ongoing trend scanning and capturing by program designers.

The results of the study revealed that YFS programs such as UNALA would benefit from paying attention to content in social media platforms to improve its demand generation. UNALA should also put in place youth engagement platforms and systems for trend scanning to optimize demand generation using social media platforms. In addition, as part of efforts to build a more robust evidence base for YFS demand generation strategies, future studies should also investigate the short and long-term effectiveness of social media-based demand generation interventions with content that has been designed according to young people’s preferences.



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