

# SOCIOLOGY APPROACH IN FOOD SOUVENIR INNOVATION: THE CUSTOMER-PRODUCERS RELATION ON ONLINE MARKETING COMMUNICATION

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**SOCIOLOGY APPROACH IN FOOD SOUVENIR INNOVATION:  
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**ABSTRACT**

Limited customer and producer relations research develops various food souvenir products through online marketing communication. This research focused on the actions of food providers in developing food souvenir innovation as a result of interaction with customers through the online marketing communication medium. This research differs from previous research on media interaction and focuses on consumer response as the driving force for the innovation process on food. This study used qualitative research that analyzed one online souvenir food shop as the study case. The interviews and observations data are grouped based on a theory with a narrow interpretation or deductive approach. The data is presented in the form of interview quotes, sample images of data sources, and limited understanding according to the appearance of the data. The study found that customer and producer relations in online marketing communication did not encourage innovation for food souvenirs. The interaction between food providers and Instagram followers was more accurately described as an interaction in the form of product purchases. The actions of food providers in developing new products result from relations between actors and other selling actors in the form of reactions to similar food development trends. Creating fresh foods as the result of innovative action follows the trend of similar products in the development of Bogor's online food souvenir market.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Online marketing communication media influenced culinary tourism's attraction development (Purnomo, 2022b). Previous studies have focused on local food as culinary tourism's attraction because it offers an authentic experience of the place visited (Piramaagam et al., 2020; Sthapit et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2019). The focus of food tourism studies on local food is challenged by the development of various popular foods (Purnomo, 2020). The development of the number of popular foods and their vendors that go beyond the development of local food denoted that visitors did not attach importance to authentic experiences in culinary tourism through local food (Purnomo, 2021). Food providers have captured this phenomenon by choosing more popular food than local food in restaurants and souvenirs (Purnomo, 2020, 2021). The content of online marketing communication media denoted the interest in popular food than local food (Purnomo, 2022b, 2022a).

The variety of food souvenir products in the food market has increased. Previous research proposed four categories of food souvenirs, namely traditional culture, new commercial culture, local food, and ordinary food (Yuan et al., 2022). Food souvenirs are purchased to be eaten outside the place of purchase (Yuan et al., 2022). The same study found that the online marketing of new culture commercial food souvenirs was higher than that of local food souvenirs. Consumers pay more attention to the strength of the brand-new culture of commercial food souvenirs than the locality of the product, especially in the local online market. However, consumers were interested in something other than typical food souvenirs. Consumers pay attention to the strength of product locality, especially in the national online market. However, the customer's willingness to choose food with a strong local character (traditional culture and local food souvenirs) can be reduced in the national online market (Abendroth, 2011; Yuan et al., 2022). This finding indicated the potential for a new culture of commercial or popular food in the local online food souvenir market.

New culture commercial food souvenirs did not denote the local character of a place (Charters & Spielmann, 2014). New foods develop due to innovation by food providers (Feuls, 2018). This type of food can be in the form of cakes such as Bandung Makuta cake in Bandung, taro layer cake in Bogor, Manti cake in Medan, or Abon Gulung cake in Manokwari (Aditi & Hendriarto, 2021; Aswar et al., 2020; Chan et al., 2017; Ridho et al., 2019). The reputation of food brands is a concern for consumers in the new culture of commercial food souvenirs (Yuan et al., 2022). However, online marketing of food products can also rely on viral marketing or word of touch (Al-Majali, 2020; Kang & Moon, 2017; Kelly et al., 2015). The temporary recognition of a product can replace the brand's strength because of the power of online marketing, especially among youth (Jaichuen et al., 2019; Truman & Elliott, 2019). This condition requires the aggressiveness of entrepreneurs to build the product's popularity. "There is always something new" is the key to marketing souvenir food (Purnomo, 2020). Innovation in online marketing communication was growth along with product innovation (Blanc et al., 2022).

Limited customer and producer relations research develops various food souvenir products through online marketing communication. Previous research has focused on the existing new culture of commercial food souvenirs (Yuan et al., 2022) or the entrepreneur side in building the market (Al-Majali, 2020; Kang & Moon, 2017; Kelly et al., 2015). Online marketing communication media has now developed into an online sales medium. The use of social media for marketing is in line with consumer interest in internet-based marketing communications (Ancillai et al., 2019; Bălceanu, 2019). 21.26% of internet users in Indonesia use the internet for online shopping (Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers, 2022). The use of social media can facilitate the development of marketing concepts that have developed into concepts that emphasize product personalization and communication between sellers and buyers (Hughes & Fill, 2007; Kartajaya et al., 2017). Social media as a free medium

opens opportunities for every segment of producer capital (Harun & Tajudeen, 2020; Khan, 2018; Lee et al., 2021; Soedarsono et al., 2020), marketing of tourism products (Dewa & Safitri, 2021; Oktaviani & Fatchiya, 2019; SA & Pujiyanto, 2021), even for non-commercial institutions such as universities and libraries (Motta & Barbosa, 2018; Rachman et al., 2018).

The development of the new culture of commercial food souvenirs or popular food indicated the innovation of food providers in the food souvenir industry. The sociological approach suggests that innovation by entrepreneurs is a social practice (Howaldt et al., 2015). As a social practice, innovation is driven by various dynamic social forces and processes (Corradi et al., 2008; Howaldt et al., 2015).

Previous research examined creating new foods from an idea-building perspective (Petruzzelli & Savino, 2014; Stierand et al., 2014). Feuls (2018) offers a relational approach to studying the innovation process of food. Innovations are integrated into social practice through diverse forms of imitation. Relational is understood as sets of exercises in which actors (human and nonhuman) are formed in co-emergence in open and continuous processes (Mele & Russo-Spena, 2017). This approach offers an innovative process observed from actors' actions and the relations between actors. Food as an object, food vendors and consumers as actors, and technology supporting online marketing can be observed in producing new food because of their interaction (Corradi et al., 2008). This research focused on the actions of food providers in developing food souvenir innovation as a result of interaction with customers through the online marketing communication medium. This research differs from previous research on media interaction and focuses on consumer response as the driving force for the innovation process on food.

One of the popular social media is Instagram. Instagram users globally reached third after Facebook and YouTube (Chafney, 2020). Instagram has been recognized as one of the media to advertise products for MSMEs in Indonesia (Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers, 2022). Instagram has advantages compared to Facebook because Instagram is more attractive to young people than Facebook. Instagram is a more effective marketing medium than Facebook and YouTube (Pramessti et al., 2020). The use of Instagram introduced famous profiles that became marketing agents (Giles & Edwards, 2018; Jin et al., 2019).

This study aims to elaborate on customer and producer relations on Instagram as online marketing communication is the driving force for the innovative process of souvenir food production. Instagram social media is a medium of interaction between food providers and consumers. The research focuses on interaction practices between food providers and their Instagram followers, an innovating process in the form of action by food providers as a result of the relationship between food providers and their Instagram followers, and the food as the result of innovating action. The previous studies proposed the three focuses to understand the innovation process of food (Corradi et al., 2008; Feuls, 2018; Mele & Russo-Spena, 2017). This research can help understand the development of new food creations in the online food souvenir market.

## 2. METHODS

This study used qualitative research that was analyzed from the participant's perspective (Creswell, 2014). The study elaborated on one online souvenir food shop as the study case. The case study was used to obtain an in-depth understanding of a concept in the case setting or context (Creswell, 2007). The three main concepts in the research are interaction practices between food providers and their Instagram followers and the innovating process in the form of actions by food providers as a result of the relationship between food providers and their Instagram followers, and the food as the result of innovating action. That concepts were the guide in elaborating the case (Creswell, 2014).

The research data were interviews with a food vendor and their Instagram followers,

observations of the interaction process between food vendors and followers, and Instagram features as document data. Interviews were conducted with open-ended questions with participants or someone who participated in an activity (Creswell, 2003). The selection of participants refers to interaction on Instagram (comments and chats) and food vendor information. Interviews were conducted with two food vendor owners and twenty Instagram followers. The selection of participants depends on the context of the case (Jatipermata & Purnomo, 2022). The information saturation determines the number of participants. An open-ended question was asked to the participants for one to two hours. Non-participant observation is carried out by researchers or self-observation approaches (Ciesielska et al., 2018; Lipowski et al., 2018). Researchers observed Instagram display and interaction through Instagram's comment feature. Observation results were confirmed through interviews (Lipowski et al., 2018).

Table 1 Guidelines for data collection

No.	Concepts	Information Obtained	Data Collection Techniques
1	Interaction practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of food offered by food producers on Instagram</li> <li>• The food desired by Instagram followers in the direct message and comment column</li> <li>• The process of interaction between food producers and Instagram followers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview The owner of online shop @nonanina.cakery Bogor and Instagram followers</li> <li>• Observation of information posted on Instagram display</li> <li>• Observation on the comment column</li> </ul>
2	Innovating process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The decision to make changes or not change</li> <li>• Reasons for change or not changing</li> <li>• The role of interaction on Instagram to make changes or not change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview with The owner of online shop @nonanina.cakery Bogor</li> <li>• Observation of information posted on Instagram display</li> <li>• Observation on the comment column</li> </ul>
3	The results of innovative action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New types of food offered by food producers on Instagram</li> <li>• Instagram followers respond to new types/forms of food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview The owner of online shop @nonanina.cakery Bogor and Instagram followers</li> <li>• Observation of information posted on Instagram display</li> </ul>

Source: Processed from Feuls (2018), Mele & Russo-Spena (2017), Corradi, Gherardi, & Verzelloni (2008)

Researchers processed data by recording observations and interviews, grouping observations and interviews on research concepts, compiling interview quotes, presenting data, and confirming data. Data is confirmed by data triangulation: interviews, observations, and Instagram as document data. Data triangulation can be a standard method in qualitative research (Natow, 2020). Interview and observation data were written in the datasheet manually. Data grouped based on Table 1. The data is grouped based on a theory with a narrow interpretation or deductive approach (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). Data saturation was analyzed by the similar information gathered from a different participant. The presentation of the data

is done narratively. The data is presented in the form of interview quotes, sample images of data sources, and limited interpretation according to the appearance of the data. This method can convey the reader closer to the data and support the validity and reliability of the data (Reay et al., 2019).

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### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Results

##### 3.1.1. Interaction practices

Food vendors in this research case are Instagram @nonanina.cakery, the online shop account of Nona Nina Cakery. The online shop is chosen to elaborate the customer-seller interaction through online communication marketing media. There were 32 thousand Instagram followers on September 10, 2022. Nona Nina Cakery was founded in 2020 by two sisters. At first, they only marketed cakes directly to neighbors, friends, and relatives, so only the closest people around the house ordered. They sell almost all bakery products, such as bread, milk and fruit pie, brownies, and cookies. The cookies are occasionally before religious holidays. March 2021, they sell products through Instagram. Nona Nina Cakery did not have a shop that sold the product directly. The production site is located in Sukahati, Cibinong District, Bogor Regency. They have managed to sell more than 500 products in a month by 2022.

The store owners consider Instagram their main store, although they also do promotions on Facebook and Tiktok. They also sell products through online platforms such as Tokopedia, Shopee, and Grab food. Observations on the online selling platform of Nona Nina Cakery indicated that the customer trust rating is above 4.9 or very high. Shopee is an online selling platform with the highest sales compared to other platforms. Nona Nina Cakery's product sales at Shopee reached more than 3.4 thousand. This sales figure still needs to be added to food souvenirs with well-known brands in Bogor, such as Lapis Talas cake Sangkuriang, which sold more than 20 thousand.

Table 2 Online shop Nona Nina Cakery

No	Online Shop	Trust Rating	Top Seller Product	Interaction Rating
1	Tokopedia	5,0	Soft cookies mini personal bites	NA
2	Shopee	4,9	Soft cookies classic	65%
3	Grab food	5	Red velvet mini-size	NA

Source: tokopedia, shopee, Grab food Nona Nina Cakery's account. Accessed September 10, 2022, 21.00

Store owners provide product information on Instagram. There are four products featured in 94 posts on Instagram. Five posts were about brownies, 33 about cookies, six were about package promos, and 44 about decorative cakes. The response of followers on Instagram accounts in the comments column ranges from 0-16. The shop owner said the response in direct messages ranged from 10-20 chats daily. Researchers could not check because the owner did not permit to open Instagram direct messages. Instagram followers' comments showed little of the order or type of product they wanted. Instagram followers commented more on the manufacturing process and funny captions from posts, praising products, asking for prices, sizes, and designs, and sending orders.

1

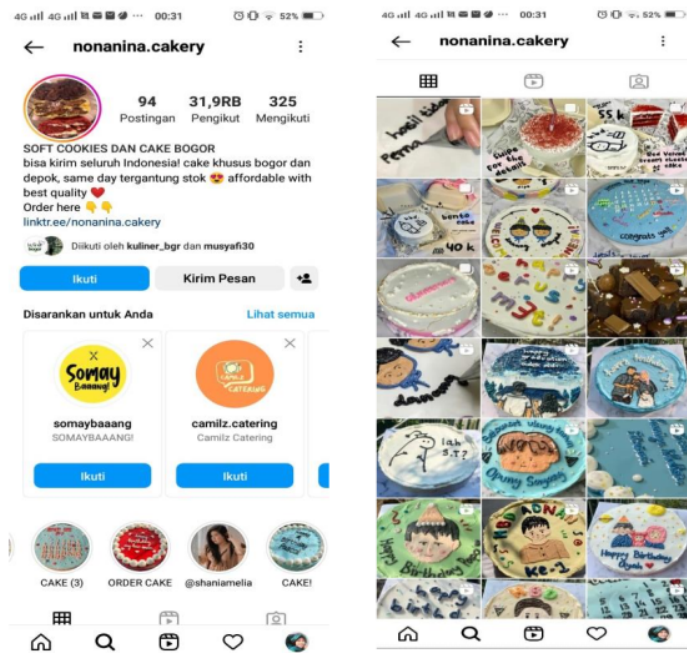


Figure 1 Instagram feature

Source: @nonanina.cakery, Accessed September 11, 2022, 22.22

Observations indicated that the response of shop owners on Instagram accounts is limited. The shop owner responded little to followers' Instagram comments and did not respond to price questions in the comments column. According to account owners, they react to product prices via direct messages and WhatsApp. However, the shop owner also did not respond to other comments related to the post. The response to the Shopee sales platform also reached less than 65%. This response needed to match the account owner's perception of the importance of promotion on social media.

"We have to be diligent posting and building engagement with followers on Instagram and Tiktok. Occasionally endorse influencer or paid promote to big accounts. We also regularly run Facebook and Instagram ads to market cakes. Shopee also puts ads for cookies and brownies." (Interview with Participant 2, May 24, 2022)

Observations indicated that the account owner had made 12 endorsements. They endorse national artists and famous YouTubers in Indonesia, such as Melaney Ricardo, Tasya Farasya, and Fitri Tropika. Endorsement is done to promote the product.

A quick response from the shop owner to the response from the customer is possible. The nature of the product that can not last long makes shop owners only make products to order. However, the shop owner's quick response to the response in the Instagram comments did not occur.

"Because our products are not durable food, the system is made by order. Baking every day can be stocked for the next 2-3 days. The process from us is a maximum of 2-3 days and then proceeds to the expedition. Nevertheless, orders are sent on the same day as much as possible." (Interview with Participant 1, May 25, 2022).

In conclusion, the interaction process between shop owners and Instagram followers

did not occur in the comments column. Instagram followers did not submit comments regarding product requests in the comments column and Instagram direct messages.

### 3.1.2. *Innovating process*

The Instagram feature indicated that decorative cakes were the newest product of Nona Nina Cakery. The account owner confirms the results of these observations.

"The basics are soft cookies and brownies. There are three soft cookie variants: classic, red velvet, and double choco. Then we improve so there are regular and mini-size soft cookies. In the last few months, we have also started making decorative cakes based on soft cookies and brownies." (Interview with Participant 1, May 26, 2022).

Observations on the responses of Instagram followers did not denote a request for product changes. The shop owner made product changes in the first two stages of changing from a variety of bakery products, such as bread, milk pies, fruit pies, brownies, and cookies, to brownies and cookies. The second change is the addition of decorative cake products. The account owner conveys that product changes occur due to customer demand and the ability to provide orders. Initially, they marketed their products on Instagram and got a positive response about cookies and brownies. Therefore, these two products become their flagship product. Observations on product sales on the online selling platform Tokopedia, Shopee, and Grab food found that the purchase of cookie products was the highest. The increase in sales on online platforms causes them to have a strategy for providing products. Their employees when the research was conducted, there were four people. The provision of other products is reduced to focus on the highest-selling product.

Another innovation in cookies and brownies products made by shop owners is adding flavor variants, packaging, sizes, and product presentation. The shop owner presents the red velvet variant as the newest variant. They also serve regular and mini-size options. Mini-size packaging used cartoon cups with ribbons and attractive box decorations. The presentation of brownies was updated by serving pieces of brownies with melted and chocolate bars toppings.

They mention developing decorative cake products because they obtained input from Instagram followers. At first, their Instagram followers asked about decorative cookie products, then continued by asking for decorative cakes. Researchers did not find this kind of response in the comments column. According to the account owner, requests for decorative cakes were submitted by Instagram followers in direct messages and on WhatsApp.

"Decorative cakes products are currently trending. Nowadays people often give gifts for birthdays, graduations, or special occasions with media decorative cakes. Therefore we provide decorative cakes according to the order. The decorative form is really adjusted to the wishes of consumers." (Interview with Participant 1, May 26, 2022).

The interview data denoted that shop owner still needed to fully develop new products referring to the response of Instagram followers. Observations on the online selling platform Tokopedia, Shopee, and Grab food did not find decorative cake products. Observations on product sales in the three online selling platforms only sell cookies and brownies. The account owner should have mentioned other product orders on the three online platforms. It is concluded that the trend factor of decorative cakes and the number of orders is the main driver for food providers in building new products. The absence of response regarding the variants of taste, packaging, size, and presentation of cookies and brownies products indicated the same thing. The decision on the innovating process by updating the product did not refer to the response of Instagram followers but rather the trend and number of sales.



### 3.1.3. *The Results of Innovating Action*

This study found that Instagram account owners produce new types and food offered on Instagram. The shop owner, Nona Nina Cakery, was chosen to carry out three forms of innovation: product elimination, adding product types, and adding value to old products. These three forms of innovation are driven by the customer's purchase reaction as the primary cause. Adding value to new products and products is in line with the development trend of food souvenirs in Bogor. Purnomo's research (2020) found that Bogor's various popular food types, such as cookies and cakes, were increasing. New product innovations were not only in product types but also in size, packaging, and presentation. Food producers did not make significant changes in product changes but in size variants, packaging, and serving. Various topping updates on similar products have become the choice of many food producers in Bogor.

Instagram followers' responses to innovations made by food producers cannot be observed from comments on Instagram. The reaction in the Shopee and Tokopedia sales platforms can be observed from the trust rating given by the customer. Ratings of 5 and 4.9 indicate very high ratings. An Instagram follower customer said they enjoyed the way the account owner promoted their products on Instagram. The choice to buy products is made not only because of information on Instagram. They did a check on the online sales platform link.

"First, I learned about Nona Nina Cakery's product from a friend. Then I looked for information on Instagram. The product display on Instagram is attractive. How to promote their products by presenting reels, the manufacturing process and the way they are delivered are interesting. After looking at Instagram, I checked the online sales link on Shopee. It turns out that their trust rating is 4.9. The price is also affordable. After buying, I think the cookies actually taste good. Then I followed their Instagram. I never comment on their Instagram. Then I saw that they also sell decorative cakes. I asked the price in the comments, and they answered it via direct messages. Their decorative cakes are designed to order. The price is reasonable. So I subscribed to them." (Interview with Participant 3, May 27, 2022).

Another Instagram follower said:

"I have bought more than ten times. You could say I am a customer, but I never give feedback on products on Instagram. I only buy existing products. At first, I bought it on Shopee. I often buy through Grab food because my house is near their location." (Interview with Participant 4, May 28, 2022).

Responses from customers indicated that Instagram was not an adequate medium of interaction for account owners and their followers. Instagram followers did not provide input for product updates or respond to product updates made by account owners. Instagram followers also did not make Instagram their primary buying medium. They used online sales platforms as buying medium. Instagram was a store where the product was displayed and promoted. Instagram followers use Instagram as a means of obtaining information about existing products.

## 3.2. Discussion

This study found that cookies and cake products as a form of new culture commercial food souvenirs have gained a place in local online marketing as previous research (Yuan et al., 2022). The power of local brands that do not have brand strength cannot compete with well-known brands but have enough to get the attention of buyers. Product novelty and similar

trends make cookies and cake products attractive to buyers.

Marketing using communication and online marketing media has gained a place in the market for selling food souvenirs as in other products (Ancillai et al., 2019; Bălteanu, 2019). Marketing using online communication media opens up opportunities for small investors, such as in the case of previous studies (Harun & Tajudeen, 2020; Lee et al., 2021). The number of sales indicated that online marketing of food products could help unknown market products. Endorsement and marketing through social media can build purchases through buyer sharing with other buyers or word of touch (Al-Majali, 2020; Kang & Moon, 2017; Kelly et al., 2015). Young shoppers have also demonstrated relevance to previous research (Jaichuen et al., 2019; Truman & Elliott, 2019). The product uniqueness causes Nona Nina Cakery's products cannot to be called ordinary food even though they can be purchased anywhere or do not offer **13** local character of a place (Charters & Spielmann, 2014). However, this study questions **the effectiveness of Instagram as a single marketing communication media** like previous **research** (Pramesti et al., 2020). This study found that Instagram only performs as a product display while other media support marketing media and marketing communications.

This study found that the owner of Nona Nina Cakery understood that in the food souvenir market, they must always present something new (Purnomo, 2020). However, food resulting from the innovative process cannot be called entirely new food. Innovations carried out by food providers can be called imitations of existing products (Feuls, 2018). This study did not find sufficient evidence that interactions with customers developed food souvenir innovation in the online market through online marketing communication. Feuls (2018) proposed relational approach requires continuous interaction between food vendors and Instagram followers on Instagram as a medium of exchange. The act of producing new food from food providers was not fully developed because of their interaction (Corradi et al., 2008). The innovating process of food providers is an actor's action as a result of relations between actors and other selling actors in the form of a similar food development trend. Intense interaction with Instagram followers did not occur. Interaction with customers is more accurately described as interaction with customers in the form of product purchases. This study found that the various forces and dynamic social processes driving innovation (Gherardi, 2012; Howaldt et al., 2015) are the trend of food souvenirs and the purchase of Instagram followers.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study found that consumer response through marketing communication media was not in the form of suggestions and inputs to contemporize the product. Media marketing communication is a medium for product promotion and has yet to become a direct medium for interaction practices in building a food innovation process. The interaction between food providers and Instagram followers is more accurately described as an interaction in the form of product purchases. The actions of food providers in developing new products result from relations between actors and other selling actors in the form of reactions to similar food development trends. This study found the development of fresh foods as the result of innovative action following the trend of similar products in Bogor's online food souvenir market. This study suggests adding a broad development factor for food souvenirs in the relationship between food providers and Instagram followers. Innovations from food providers obtain a positive response even though it is based on something other than the encouragement of Instagram followers. The trend factor for similar products recreates a role in building a positive reaction to food innovation from food providers.

The limitation of this study is that it needs a comprehensive analysis of the role of trends in similar products. This study recommends further research to broadly elaborate on

the online and offline food souvenir market interaction in developing food souvenir innovation.

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