



The Role of Indonesian Diaspora in Shaping Japan's Representations on Social Media

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Abstract. This research explores how Indonesian diaspora in Japan construct representations of Japan through Instagram. The research aims to understand their motivations for creating content, the forms of representation they produce, and how social media functions as a space for informal support and connection among migrants. Using qualitative methods, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observation of social media content. The findings show that members of the Indonesian diaspora who are also content creators often begin with the intention to share personal experiences and help others. In some cases, this motivation develops into monetization, as creators recognize the value of their knowledge and respond to audience demand. The representations of Japan in their content are shaped by every experience, including work, cultural adaptation and social challenges. Social media also allows migrants to exchange information, offer emotional support, and build a sense of community. This research concludes that the representations created by Indonesian diaspora are diverse and layered, influenced by personal motivations, digital interactions, and the broader context of migration.

Keywords: Indonesian diaspora, social media, representations of Japan.

1 Introduction

Over the past few years, Japan has been making noticeable efforts to attract more foreign workers and international students, especially from Southeast Asia. This initiative reflects the country's response to demographic challenges, particularly labor shortages caused by an aging population and a declining birthrate. Among the countries in the region, Indonesia has emerged as one of the essential partners for Japan in establishing cooperation in labor and educational mobility. This interest originates from Indonesia's substantial youthful demographic, which is considered to be an important asset for human capital, mainly since this demographic guarantees a continuous flow of emerging talent to sustain Indonesia's future workforce while supporting sustainable national growth. This demographic advantage corresponds to Japan's necessity to deal with its aging population and labor shortages, building a relationship that benefits both sides where Indonesia's younger generation play a role in strengthening Japan's workforce while having opportunities for valuable employment and educational opportunities.

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The governments of Japan and Indonesia have facilitated this mobility by establishing cooperative agreements and initiatives, such as the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP), the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW), and various academic scholarship opportunities, focused on easing migration procedures while encouraging mutual benefits. These efforts aim to ease migration processes while promoting mutual benefits.

Currently, Indonesian people aiming to migrate increasingly search for information and advice on social media, making those platforms a source of information in addition to official guides and promotional materials provided by the government and Sending Organization (LPK). This shift reflects a broader trend in Southeast Asia, where social media has become deeply embedded in daily life. Indonesia, in particular, stands out as the region's most active digital society. According to recent data from Statista (2025), Indonesia ranks fourth globally in terms of Instagram users and holds the top position in Southeast Asia, with over 103 million active accounts. As shown in Figure 1, this widespread use of Instagram underlined its role as one key mediums for visual storytelling and peer-to-peer information exchange.

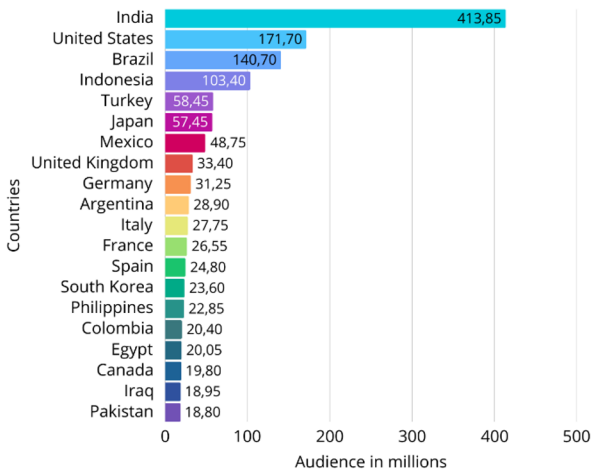


Fig. 1. Chart of leading countries based on Instagram audience size as of February 2025 by Statista

One of the most influential sources of content for prospective migrants is the Indonesian diaspora residing in Japan. These individuals regularly regularly share information, personal insights, and experiences about the country, posting content on social media platforms such as Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, YouTube, etc. The personal quality of diaspora content is especially appealing because it offers authentic, relatable perspectives, and accessible insights on living in Japan. Furthermore, it contributes to shaping the image of Japan through narratives and mediated representations created by the Indonesian diaspora. These portrayals may also have a significant impact on the audience's consideration of migration to Japan.

Through platforms such as Instagram, these creators construct narratives that reflect not only their personal realities but also broader representations of Japan as lived and

perceived by migrant communities. Their content often highlights aspects of Japanese work culture, social norms, and routines, offering audiences an intimate, nuanced view of life in Japan from the perspective of those who experience it firsthand.

This phenomenon shows that the Indonesian diaspora are not merely passive consumers of information but also agents of socialization who actively construct and shape representations of “Japan” from their perspectives and share them with their audiences. The digital narratives created by the Indonesian diaspora do more than simply reflect their experiences. They actively shape how Japan is portrayed and influence how the country is perceived by Indonesian audiences. These narratives are a way of creating meaning, with social media acting as a critical platform for their production, negotiation, and exchange. Through these interactions, the diaspora’s depiction of Japan emerges as a constructed reality, fluidly shaped by non-state actors, which subsequently influences perceptions and cultural imagination among the Indonesian audience.

2 Literature Review and Analytical Framework

2.1 Literature Review

In recent years, the intersection of migration, media, and digital storytelling has drawn growing attention from scholars across disciplines. Social media platforms have become main spaces where migrants share their everyday experiences, shape their identities, and connect with both their countries of origin and their new environments. As digital technologies evolve, these platforms not only offer connectivity, but also provide room for personal expression, cultural negotiation, and community-building. For many diaspora communities, social media serves as a bridge that sustains transnational relationships while allowing them to take part in the cultural conversations of their host societies.

Leurs and Ponzanesi (2024), in the introduction to *Doing Digital Migration*, emphasize that digital migration is not merely about staying connected and it also involves the everyday practices of migrants who use social media to express their lived realities. They describe how digital platforms have become extensions of migrant life, offering visibility and voice in ways that traditional media often overlook. This editorial framing sets the tone for understanding how digital storytelling and self-representation are central to contemporary migration experiences. In a similar vein, Wang (2022) examines how international migrants in Japan—particularly Chinese migrants—use digital media to navigate cultural differences and stay connected with their home countries, offering a localized lens for understanding Indonesian diaspora creators.

Framing theory, discussed in the next section, has also evolved in response to these digital transformations. López-Rabadán (2022) highlights how the rise of social media has transformed the way framing works. Instead of being limited to traditional media, framing now takes place across digital platforms where individuals and political figures actively shape narratives and influence public conversations. This shift reinforces the importance of framing theory in understanding user-generated content and the increasingly hybrid nature of today’s media landscape.

Representation plays a central role in these digital practices. Hall et al. (2013) emphasize that cultural representations are constructed through language, imagery, and discourse, shaping how audiences perceive both themselves and others. This perspective aligns with Smoliarova et al. (2021), who show that transnational migrants contribute to the image of host countries through mass self-communication, particularly via social media. Building on this, Jaramillo-Dent et al. (2024) explore how migrant creators on TikTok engage in “platformed belonging”, using content creation as a means of cultural negotiation and community formation.

This research applies framing theory to examine how Indonesian diaspora content creators represent Japan on Instagram. The theoretical framework is elaborated in the Analytical Framework section, where framing is used to unpack how creators construct meaning and guide audience interpretation through their content. Together, these works offer a foundation for understanding the role of digital media in shaping diasporic narratives and cultural representation. They emphasize the importance of migrant agency, the power of everyday storytelling, and the influence of social media in constructing transnational imaginaries.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Framing theory offers a lens to understand how reality is constructed, presented, and emphasized through the media. In this research, it is used to examine how Indonesian diaspora content creators shape representations of working life and daily life in Japan through the content they share on social media. Originally introduced by Erving Goffman (1974) in his analysis of social interaction, framing refers to the interpretive frameworks individuals use to make sense of situations around them. Goffman argued that frames help people organize their experiences and assign meaning to what they encounter. Building on this foundation, Robert Entman (1993) adapted the concept to media and communication studies, proposing that framing involves selecting and highlighting certain aspects of reality in media messages. He identified four key functions of framing: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies.

In the context of diaspora representation, framing theory helps explain how Indonesian content creators construct and communicate their lived experiences in Japan. Through framing, they do more than share facts—they shape how audiences interpret and emotionally respond to those experiences. Applying this theory enables a deeper analysis of the narrative structures embedded in social media content, and provides insight into how these representations influence perceptions among Indonesian audiences, including their imagination of migration and decisions related to moving to Japan.

To use Entman’s framework in this research, each of the four framing functions is examined in relation to the content shared by Indonesian diaspora content creators:

1. **Defining Problems:** Creators highlight aspects of Japanese life as issues worth sharing, reflecting what they perceive as meaningful or problematic.

2. Diagnosing Causes: through captions and storytelling, they often suggest underlying causes, such as social expectations or cultural barriers.
3. Making Moral Judgements: the tone of posts implies moral evaluations that shape audience interpretations.
4. Suggesting Remedies: Some content creators offer advice, coping strategies, or alternative perspectives, guiding followers in navigating similar experiences or understanding Japan more deeply.

3 Research Method

This research adopts a qualitative approach and is designed as a case study, aiming to explore a specific phenomenon in depth within its real-life context. Things to consider in case study research are determining the scope of the subject to be studied so that the case must be specific and limited by time and certain activities (Babbie, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The focus of the study lies in exploring the current conditions and lived experiences of Indonesian diaspora content creators in Japan and how they represent aspects of life in Japan through social media, particularly Instagram. By exploring this case, the research seeks to understand not only individual narratives constructed by these creators, but also the broader social and cultural meanings embedded in their digital portrayals of Japan.

This research draws upon two primary sources of data that together offer a layered understanding of how Indonesian diaspora represent life in Japan through social media. The first source consists of in-depth interviews that explore how these individuals portray their working lives and everyday experiences.

Table 1. Informants' Data: Indonesian Diaspora Content Creators

Name and username of social media account	City of residence	Length of stay in Japan	Content themes	Active period as a content creator	Number of followers (per August 31, 2025)
▪ Name: Sonia ▪ Instagram: @artsniaa	Tokyo	10 years	▪ Tips about working in Japan ▪ Work culture and education in Japan	2021—now	Instagram: 25.6K

			▪ Social relationships ▪ Self-development		
▪ Name: Firman ▪ Instagram: @firmandevy	Kagawa	12 years	▪ Tips about working and internship in Japan ▪ Lifestyle and daily life in Japan	2024—now	Instagram: 14K

As presented in Table 1, the informants selected for this research are Indonesian migrant workers residing in Japan who actively produce or share content that portrays their everyday lives and professional experiences within the Japanese context, with a particular focus on Instagram as a platform for visual storytelling. In addition to their migrant status and active engagement on social media, these individuals self-identify as content creators, with follower counts ranging from 10,000 to 50,000. They have also lived in Japan for over five years, allowing them to offer sustained and nuanced perspectives shaped by long-term immersion in Japanese society. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian, and the interview data presented in this study are excerpts from the interviews that have been translated from Indonesian into English. The second source of data is the social media content itself. Contents shared by these diaspora creators on platforms such as Instagram serve as digital traces that reveal how personal narratives are crafted, shared, and responded to within online communities.

In conducting data collection, this research employed a netnographic approach. Within the netnographic method, there are three types of data: investigative data, interactive data, and fieldnotes or immersive data (Kozinets et al., 2014).

Interactive data were gathered through semi-structured interviews in a conversational format. This approach allowed informants to speak openly about what motivated them and how they chose to portray Japan in their content. Follow-up questions were used to explore their perspectives more deeply and clarify key ideas. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, guided by the researcher's intention to engage with Indonesian diaspora content creators who are closely involved in producing and distributing Japan-related representations on social media. Before initiating contact, the researcher carried out a six-month observation period (December 2024–June 2025), focusing on creators of varying ages, genders, and residency statuses in Japan who actively posted content on Instagram. This preliminary phase helped the researcher understand the types of content being shared and identify creators who aligned with the research's criteria. The final selection narrowed in on Indonesian diaspora creators with

migrant worker status in Japan, whose consistently reflected their work life and everyday experiences. Informants were contacted via WhatsApp (using contact details listed on their social media profiles), direct messages (DMs), or through gatekeepers—individuals with access to the creators. Upon initial contact, the researcher introduced themselves, explained the purpose of the research, requested consent, and arranged interview schedules based on the informants' availability. Remote interviews were conducted via Zoom due to geographic constraints. All interviews were recorded, and transcripts were created from the audio or video files. The researchers then analyzed the transcripts to identify recurring themes and patterns. As part of the ethical considerations, the informants also granted permission or informed consent for their identity and social media account names to be displayed in the data presented in this research.

In addition to interview data, investigative insights were drawn from the visual and narrative content shared by the informants on social media. To complement the interviews, the researcher systematically observed informants' activity on Instagram and examining posts, captions, and engagement patterns. Instagram was selected as the primary platform for content analysis due to its visual nature, popularity among younger users, and its ability to foster interest-based communities and algorithmically shaped cultural expression. Data collection involved capturing screenshots via mobile and desktop devices, as well as downloading content using third-party applications. These materials were then archived in folders labelled by account name and further categorized by theme. This approach enabled the researcher to identify recurring visual and narrative patterns, offering a richer context for understanding how Indonesian diaspora content creators represent and narrate Japan to their audiences.

This study employs netnography as its primary analytical approach to explore how Indonesian diaspora content creators in Japan construct representations of Japan through social media. Given the digital nature of the data which sourced primarily from platforms like Instagram, netnography offers a fitting lens through which to observe and interpret online cultural expressions and interactions within diasporic communities. As a qualitative method adapted from ethnography, it allows the researcher to engage with digital traces immersive and context-sensitive. Complementing this, the research also applies the data analysis framework developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three key stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the first stage, interview transcript and digital artifacts are selectively distilled to foreground insights most relevant to research focus. These condensed data are then visually organized to provide clarity, enable pattern recognition, and support thematic interpretation. The final stage involves drawing conclusions and systematically verifying them to ensure analytical rigor and consistency, allowing the findings to be both credible and accountable within the broader narrative of digital representation.

4 Analysis

4.1 Results

This section presents the core findings derived from a thematic analysis of interview data and digital content produced by members of the Indonesian diaspora in Japan. Through a close reading of recurring patterns, five overarching themes emerged, each reflecting distinct dimensions of migrant experience, identity negotiation, and digital expression. These themes do not stand in isolation; rather, they intersect and overlap, revealing the complex ways in which individuals navigate structural constraints, cultural expectations, and community dynamics. The results are organized thematically to provide a clear and grounded account of the narratives that surfaced across the data. Each theme is introduced with descriptive detail and supported by illustrative excerpts, laying the empirical foundation for the theoretical analysis that follows in the discussion section. Before exploring the thematic dimensions of migrant narratives, it is also important to understand the motivations that led informants to produce digital content.

Motivations for Content Creation. Across interviews and online materials, informants consistently described their initial drive as a desire to share personal experiences and offer guidance to fellow Indonesians navigating life in Japan. This motivation was often rooted in empathy and a sense of communal responsibility. Over time, some informants noted a shift toward more strategic content creation, influenced by audience engagement, monetization opportunities, and the recognition of their role as informal cultural mediators. These motivations shaped not only the topics they chose to highlight—such as work, identity, and cultural adaptation—but also the tone and framing of their narratives.

Perceptions of Japan's Work Environment. Informants frequently discussed their experiences within Japan's labor system, highlighting both opportunities and challenges. While some content portrayed employment in Japan as a pathway to personal and professional advancement, they also described rigid workplace norms, language barriers, and limited flexibility. Informants revealed a tension between the idealized image of Japan as a land of opportunity and the everyday realities of navigating its structured and hierarchical work culture. Digital narratives often reinforced or contested these perceptions, shaping how migrants understand and represent their labor experiences.

Among the various challenges discussed, language emerged as a particularly salient issue. When asked what aspects of life in Japan they wished to highlight to their audience, several informants pointed to the critical role of language, particularly Japanese, as a key factor shaping access, inclusion, and opportunity. This theme, referred to here as Language as Gatekeeper, reflects how linguistic proficiency is not only a tool for communication but also a structural requirement in navigating both professional and social environments in Japan.

The interview data reveals a recurring concern among diaspora workers regarding the oversimplified portrayal of Japan's labor market in digital spaces. One informant recount how many social media posts suggest that English proficiency alone is sufficient for securing employment in Japan. However, they emphasize that such narratives often omit crucial context—namely, the educational and technical backgrounds of those who succeed using English. For example, they mention peers who are graduates of top Indonesian universities (UI, ITB, UGM) and work as engineers or technicians in prestigious Japanese companies. These individuals, according to the informant, possess highly specialized skills that allow them to operate in English-speaking environments. In contrast, the informant describes their own experience navigating the workplace with Japanese language proficiency, noting that most roles require communication across departments where English is not commonly understood. They state, “You’re the one working here, so you should be the one who speaks Japanese,” reflecting a broader cultural expectation of linguistic assimilation. During their first year in Japan, the language barrier led to serious misunderstandings and even instances of physical aggression, underscoring the real-world consequences of inadequate language preparation.

Additionally, the informant expresses frustration with viral claims about Japan's labor shortage, such as “Japan needs thousands of Indonesian workers,” which they argue lack specificity and credible sourcing. They advocate for more grounded approaches to job-seeking, encouraging followers to research fields of interest before investing in paid training. Their content strategy—using ephemeral formats like Instagram Stories and exclusive accounts—suggests a cautious approach to discussing sensitive topics publicly.

A particularly prominent issue raised by one informant was the prevalence of black companies—a term used in Japan to describe exploitative workplaces. Having worked at three such companies before deciding to resign, the informant realized that the environment was harmful both physically and mentally. These experiences became the foundation of their digital content, which aimed to educate prospective migrant workers about the realities of working in Japan. In the interview, they explained that their content is often misunderstood as complaining, when in fact it serves an educational purpose:

“So, when people see my content and say, ‘Oh, this person keeps talking about problems—always about black companies,’ they might not relate. They think I’m just complaining. But I’m not. This is reality. Like, ‘Guys, the world isn’t as pretty as we imagine.’”

This quote illustrates how digital storytelling is used to challenge the romanticized image of life abroad, often portrayed through idealized snapshots like “Instagrammable” moments in Japan. The informant also emphasized the structural issues in Japan's labor system, which tends to recruit large numbers of low-wage workers under extreme working conditions:

“The system is designed to attract as many workers as possible who are willing to accept low pay and insane working hours.”



Fig. 2. Content about tips for recognizing black company in Japan

Drawing from their own experiences, the informant frequently creates content specifically focused on identifying and avoiding black companies—sharing common warning signs, tips for recognizing exploitative contracts, and advice on how to exit such workplaces safely. An example of this content is shown in Figure 2, illustrating how personal narratives are transformed into practical guidance for others navigating Japan’s labor landscape.

Strategies for Navigating Daily Life. Migrants shared various strategies for adapting to life in Japan, ranging from learning cultural norms to managing bureaucratic procedures. Many described a sense of being “in-between”—not fully integrated into Japanese society, yet no longer entirely rooted in their country of origin. This liminal position influenced their sense of belonging and identity. Online platforms played a significant role in this process, serving as informal support systems where migrants exchanged practical advice and emotional encouragement. These findings suggest that adaptation is not a one-time event but an ongoing negotiation shaped by both external structures and personal agency.

An informant described their content creation approach as intentionally broad, covering a range of everyday topics such as lifestyle tips, bureaucratic procedures, and cultural etiquette. Their motivation was not only personal but also rooted in a desire to make essential information more accessible to fellow migrants. As they explained:

“I create content on various themes because I genuinely enjoy it. I want everything to be gathered in one place—why not? It’s like reading a book or magazine back in the day, where all kinds of information were available. That’s what I’m aiming for.”

This statement reflects a curatorial mindset that blends practicality with cultural sensitivity. By offering tutorials on daily tasks—such as registering at the city hall or navigating public transport—alongside content on Japanese social norms, the informant helps others adapt to both the logistical and interpersonal dimensions of life in Japan.

Content related to etiquette, such as how to behave in public spaces or communicate respectfully in formal settings, plays a key role in this strategy. These posts often decode unspoken cultural expectations, helping migrants avoid misunderstandings and build confidence in social interactions. The informant's platform thus functions as an informal guidebook, shaped by lived experience and designed to support others in navigating the complexities of everyday life abroad. One example of this content strategy includes a post about how to enjoy public parks in Japan with courtesy and mindfulness.

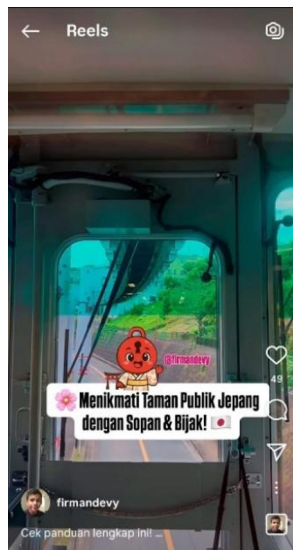


Fig. 3. Content about related to etiquette

The informant outlined specific practices such as cleaning up after oneself, respecting quiet zones, and following local guidelines for shared spaces. Rather than offering abstract reflections, the post presented clear behavioral expectations rooted in everyday social norms. By sharing these rules, the informant provided practical advice while also fostering a deeper awareness of Japanese cultural values. An example of this content, focusing on etiquette and culturally appropriate behavior, is shown in Figure 3, illustrating how routine experiences are translated into culturally sensitive guidance for fellow migrants.

Challenging Japan's National Image. A recurring theme involved informants critically reflecting on Japan's global reputation as modern, orderly, and culturally refined. While acknowledging certain strengths, they also pointed to contradictions such as social rigidity, exclusionary practices, and outdated norms. These critiques were often

expressed through digital content that offered alternative perspectives grounded in lived experience. Rather than accepting dominant narratives, migrants used their platforms to question and reframe Japan's national image, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the host society.

One common form of content under this theme involves presenting both the positive and negative aspects of life in Japan. Rather than reinforcing a singular narrative, informants often shared nuanced reflections that acknowledged Japan's strengths while also highlighting its challenges. This balanced approach is evident in the following interview excerpt:

"Sometimes we can't generalize our experiences to others. If we keep showing only the bad sides, when will people get to see the good ones? I never think of Japan as being entirely good or entirely bad—we look at it from different perspectives. So, through my writing, I leave it to the audience to interpret Japan and its image. There are no limits for me to show only positive or only negative content. I try to be balanced."

This quote illustrates how informants use their platforms to resist binary portrayals of Japan. By offering a range of perspectives, they encourage audiences to engage critically with dominant narratives and form their own interpretations. Such content contributes to a more layered and authentic representation of the host society, shaped by lived experience rather than idealization or rejection.

Migration as a Pathway to Personal Growth. Migration was frequently framed as a transformative journey, with informants emphasizing personal growth, skill acquisition, and emotional empowerment. These narratives often emerged in contrast to earlier struggles, such as language barriers or cultural dislocation. Digital storytelling played a key role in this theme, allowing individuals to document their progress, share motivational content, and inspire others. Empowerment was not only about professional success but also about reclaiming agency, building confidence, and redefining one's sense of purpose. The theme underscores how migration can be both a challenge and a catalyst for self-development.



Fig. 4. Content about recap of migration journey

This theme is illustrated in the content of one informant who shared a personal recap of their migration journey—from studying in Japan to entering the workforce. Their posts reflect various phases of adaptation, including emotional struggles, skill development, and shifting aspirations. Rather than targeting newcomers, the informant focused on creating content for those already working in Japan, offering grounded insights drawn from lived experience. As they explained in the interview, “There’s already a lot of content about starting from zero... But content that reflects real field experiences is rare—because many people simply don’t have that experience.” An example of this migration journey recap is shown in Figure 4, highlighting how digital storytelling can serve as both a personal archive and a practical resource for others navigating similar transitions.

Digital Communities and Informal Solidarities. The final theme focuses on the role of digital spaces in fostering community and solidarity among migrants. An informant described how online groups, comment sections, and private messages became vital sources of information, emotional support, and shared experience. These informal networks often filled gaps left by formal institutions, especially during moments of uncertainty or crisis. The findings underscore the importance of digital connectivity in building trust, resilience, and a sense of collective identity among dispersed individuals.

This theme was evident in how one informant used Instagram as a starting point to support fellow migrants. Initially offering guidance through private messages, they later responded to growing needs by organizing group discussions and webinars on other platforms. As they explained, “At first it was private, but I realized that in cases like this, private support wasn’t enough... In a group, people don’t have to wait, and they

can learn from each other's experiences." These initiatives were sparked by interactions on Instagram—such as direct messages from followers facing workplace abuse or visa confusion—and then expanded into structured support systems elsewhere.

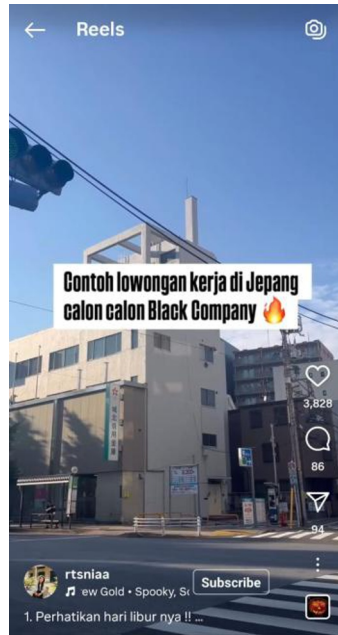


Fig. 5. Content that warns the audience to be cautious of job offers from black company

Instagram also served as a space for advocacy and awareness. The informant regularly posted content warning others about exploitative job offers, which led to both solidarity and backlash. Recruiters criticized them for discouraging applicants, yet the informant stood by their mission to inform and protect. An example of this cautionary content is shown in Figure 5, illustrating how Instagram functions as a digital front porch: a place where migrants first connect, share concerns, and mobilize toward collective action—even if deeper engagement happens beyond the app.

4.2 Discussions

Using Entman's (1993) four framing functions, we can critically analyze how digital narratives shape perceptions of Japan's labor market among migrant communities. These functions—problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation—reveal how informants challenge dominant portrayals and offer alternative frames rooted in personal experience.

On the topic of perceptions of Japan's work environment, informants used Instagram to debunk the dominant narrative that portrays Japan as a country with a labor shortage and abundant job opportunities. Drawing from personal experience, they redefine the

problem not as a mere shortage of workers, but as a mismatch between migrants' expectations and the actual demands of the job market. They point out that language barriers and technical skill requirements are often major obstacles—factors that are rarely disclosed in much digital content. In their causal interpretation, the informant attributes the spread of misleading narratives to content creators who fail to disclose their privileged backgrounds, such as higher education or specialized expertise. By omitting these details, such creators inadvertently suggest that English proficiency alone is sufficient for success. From a moral standpoint, the informant frames this practice as “misleading,” arguing that it can lead prospective migrants to make unrealistic and potentially harmful decisions. As a treatment recommendation, they propose a more pragmatic approach, such as learning Japanese, exploring job sectors independently through free resources, and avoiding premature investment in paid training. In doing so, they reconstruct the migration narrative as a process that demands preparation, not just courage.

Furthermore, the informant uses Instagram to reframe the experience of working in black companies—a term commonly used in Japan to describe employers with poor labor conditions, excessive hours, and minimal regard for employee well-being. Drawing from their own experience of working in three such companies, the informant defines the problem not as an isolated case, but as a recurring risk that many migrants face. Their content aims to raise awareness by identifying common warning signs and offering practical tools to detect exploitative employers. For example, they share information about specific websites and apps that allow users to check company reputations, alongside posts detailing behavioral red flags. In their causal interpretation, the informant emphasizes how a lack of accessible, experience-based information contributes to the persistence of these issues. Morally, they reject the notion that discussing negative experiences is equivalent to complaining, asserting instead that “this is reality” and that migrants deserve to be informed. As a treatment recommendation, they encourage followers to be proactive: verify company backgrounds, consult peer networks, and prioritize mental and legal safety. Through this framing, the informant positions digital storytelling as a form of collective protection and empowerment.

In the theme of daily life adaptation, the informant uses Instagram to show that living in Japan involves more than just learning the language. It also requires understanding everyday habits and social rules. They define the problem as a lack of clear, practical information for migrants who are trying to adjust. Many newcomers don't know how to deal with basic tasks like registering at city hall or using public transport, and they often feel unsure about how to behave in public spaces. The informant explains that this confusion happens because there's little support and not enough shared experience available online. Instead of blaming individuals, they emphasize the need for better peer-to-peer guidance. From a moral point of view, the informant sees sharing this kind of content as a way to help others feel more confident and avoid mistakes. Their posts about etiquette, such as how to enjoy public parks respectfully, are meant to teach small but important things that make a big difference in daily life. As a recommendation, they offer clear steps and examples. Their platform becomes a kind of informal guidebook. Through this framing, they show that adapting to life in Japan is not just about surviving. It is also about learning, connecting, and growing together.

In the theme of challenging Japan's national image, informants use Instagram to offer more complex and personal views of the host society. Through their content, they define the problem as the oversimplified portrayal of Japan as a modern, orderly, and culturally refined country. While they acknowledge these qualities, they also highlight contradictions that are often left out of mainstream narratives. This framing invites audiences to question the idealized image and consider the everyday realities experienced by migrants. In terms of causal interpretation, informants suggest that these one-sided portrayals persist because of selective storytelling, especially in digital spaces that favor aesthetic or aspirational content. By sharing lived experiences, they offer alternative explanations that show how Japan's reputation does not always match the realities on the ground. Their reflections reveal that social harmony can come with pressure to conform, and that politeness may mask deeper forms of exclusion. From a moral perspective, informants emphasize the importance of honesty and balance. Rather than promoting only positive or negative views, they frame their content as a way to respect the complexity of life in Japan. As one informant explained, they aim to present both sides and let the audience interpret for themselves. This approach reflects a moral stance that values transparency, critical thinking, and emotional nuance. Finally, in terms of treatment recommendation, one informant encourages others to stay open-minded and avoid generalizations. Their content does not push a single conclusion but instead invites dialogue and reflection. By resisting binary portrayals, they help build a more realistic and empathetic understanding of Japan—one that includes both admiration and critique, shaped by personal experience rather than distant assumptions.

In the theme of migration as personal growth, the informant uses Instagram to frame their journey not just as a move across borders, but as a process of transformation. They define the problem as the lack of realistic, experience-based content for migrants who are already living and working in Japan. While many online posts focus on how to start from zero, the informant points out that few creators share what it's like to grow through real challenges—such as emotional struggles, workplace adaptation, and shifting goals. This framing highlights a gap in digital narratives, where lived experience is often missing. In their causal interpretation, the informant suggests that this gap exists because many people simply haven't gone through the full cycle of migration—from arrival to long-term adjustment. As a result, much of the advice online remains theoretical or surface-level. By sharing their own story, the informant offers grounded insights that reflect the realities of working life in Japan, including the ups and downs that shape personal development. From a moral perspective, the informant sees storytelling as a way to empower others—not by offering perfect solutions, but by showing that growth is possible through persistence and reflection. Their content avoids idealizing success and instead focuses on building confidence, reclaiming agency, and redefining purpose. This approach encourages followers to see migration not only as a challenge, but also as a chance to evolve. As a treatment recommendation, the informant promotes learning through experience. They share reflections, lessons, and practical advice aimed at those already in the field, helping others navigate their own transitions with more clarity. Through this framing, migration becomes more than a logistical move—it becomes a personal journey of growth, shaped by resilience and shared knowledge.

In the theme of digital communities and informal solidarities, the informant uses Instagram to frame online spaces as crucial for building support networks among migrants. They define the problem as the lack of accessible and responsive help from formal institutions, especially during moments of uncertainty such as workplace abuse or visa confusion. In this framing, digital platforms become essential tools for filling those gaps, offering migrants a space to connect, ask questions, and share experiences. In terms of causal interpretation, the informant shows that these informal networks often emerge from direct interactions—such as private messages from followers seeking help—which later evolve into group discussions and webinars. This shift from one-on-one support to collective learning reflects the growing need for shared knowledge and community-based solutions. The informant emphasizes that digital solidarity is not planned by institutions, but built organically through everyday engagement. From a moral perspective, the informant frames their advocacy work as a form of care. Even when facing criticism from recruiters who accused them of discouraging applicants, they stood by their decision to warn others about exploitative job offers. Their content reflects a commitment to protecting fellow migrants and promoting transparency, even when it invites backlash. As a treatment recommendation, the informant encourages others to use digital platforms not only for self-expression but also for learning and supporting. Furthermore, Instagram becomes more than a social media app—it serves as a starting point for building trust, resilience, and shared identity. Through this framing, digital storytelling is positioned as a powerful tool for informal solidarity, helping migrants support one another in ways that formal systems often fail to provide.

5 Conclusion

This study shows that Indonesian diaspora in Japan use Instagram not only to share personal experiences, but also to shape how Japan is seen by others. Their content reflects both admiration and criticism, highlighting everyday realities such as work challenges, cultural differences, and social pressure. The representations they create are influenced by their lived experiences and the way they interact with their audience online. The findings also reveal that content creation often begins with a desire to share information and later develops into more structured efforts, including monetization. Social media becomes a space where migrants exchange information, offer emotional support, and build informal communities. These digital interactions help fill gaps left by formal institutions, especially during times of uncertainty. Overall, the study concludes that representations of Japan by Indonesian diaspora are not fixed or one-dimensional. They are shaped by personal motivations, audience engagement, and the broader context of migration. Through digital storytelling, these creators negotiate identity, share knowledge, and foster solidarity, showing how media platforms can play a meaningful role in migrant life.

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