CONSUMER MEANINGS OF EVERYDAY FOOD ON INSTAGRAM THROUGH THE LENS OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY: A REFLEXIVE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study examines how consumers construct the social meanings of everyday food on Instagram using tilapia (*Oreochromis sp.*) consumption as an empirical context. Drawing on Social Representation Theory (SRT), the study interprets how shared meanings are built, negotiated, and objectified through visual and narrative representations in digital spaces. From more than 71,000 public posts tagged with *#ikannila* (tilapia fish), *#nilamerah* (red tilapia), and *#nilahitam* (black tilapia), a purposive sample of 391 selected consumer posts (2020–2024) was analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA). Data validity was strengthened through thematic saturation and limited member checking. The analysis identified five main themes: Family, Flexibility, Taste, Locality, and Nutrition, which together form a structure of social meaning that reflects the emotional, practical, cultural, hedonic, and normative dimensions of everyday food consumption. The findings show that food functions not merely as a culinary object but as a cultural symbol that represents consumers' experiences and values. The implications of this study open opportunities for designing more resonant marketing messages as a foundation for meaning-driven marketing, using social representations of food to develop digital communication that is more authentic and participatory.

Keywords: everyday food; instagram; reflexive thematic analysis; social meaning; social representation theory.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a primary arena for the formation of meaning, trust, and social interaction in modern consumer life. In early 2025, there were approximately 5.24 billion active social media users, representing 63.9% of the global population, with an average daily usage time of 140 minutes (DataReportal, 2025a). Beyond its communicative functions, digital platforms have become cultural spaces that shape social perceptions, consumption practices, and expressions of values and identity. Individuals use social media to evaluate consumption experiences and share visual and narrative representations that construct collective meaning (Smart Insights, 2025). This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in Indonesia. With 143 million active users, or 50.2 percent of the national population, Indonesia represents one of the largest digital ecosystems in Southeast Asia (DataReportal, 2025b). Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube are not only spaces for entertainment but also spaces where consumers act as producers of meaning, constructing representations of their everyday lives. This shift marks a transition from meaning making as an institutional process to meaning making as a social practice rooted in daily experience.

Studies show that product value is shaped through symbolic interpretation, emotions, and social relations (Dessart et al., 2020; Libai et al., 2025). Various approaches have highlighted how consumers make sense of products through culture, relationships, and practices. However, few studies examine how these meanings are constructed through social media posts, particularly in the context of everyday food. This empirical gap indicates the need for direct analysis of how consumer meaning is formed through visual and narrative representations on digital platforms. To address this gap, this study adopts Social Representation Theory (SRT) as its main conceptual lens. SRT explains how social groups build shared knowledge through two core mechanisms: anchoring, which links new phenomena to familiar categories, and objectification, which transforms abstract ideas into concrete and recognizable symbols (Moscovici, 1961; Jodelet, 2008; Wagner, 2020). These mechanisms provide an appropriate framework for understanding how consumers anchor meanings to everyday food and represent them through visual and narrative forms on social media. Although SRT has been widely used in food studies, its application to everyday food within

digital visual contexts remains limited. Tilapia (*Oreochromis sp.*) is used as the empirical context because it is an everyday food consumed across social classes and strongly embedded in domestic practices. In food culture studies, food is understood as a medium that conveys relational values, identity, and social structure (Naccarato & LeBesco, 2012; Johnston & Baumann, 2014). In digital spaces, food becomes a form of self expression and visual performativity, creating digital foodscapes that shape how consumers understand everyday life (Choe, 2019; Goodman & Jaworska, 2020; Lupton, 2020). With its everyday character and connection to household routines, tilapia provides an ideal context for understanding how consumers anchor meaning to food in digital culture. Although Indonesia is one of the world's major tilapia producers (FAO, 2024), the social and cultural dimensions of tilapia consumption in digital spaces remain understudied. Preferences for farmed food are strongly influenced by social values, cultural perceptions, and identity (Reinders et al., 2016; Costa-Pierce, 2022). Thus, tilapia is not only a food commodity but also an important entry point for understanding the construction of domestic meaning within social media contexts.

Instagram was chosen as the empirical arena because of its strong visual character and aesthetic and performative patterns of social interaction. Users employ photos, videos, captions, and hashtags to construct and circulate meaning (Highfield & Leaver, 2016). The platform influences how consumers perceive value, shape identity, and participate in digital visual culture (Kusuma et al., 2024; Poirier et al., 2024). However, food communication in public digital spaces, including the aquaculture sector, is still dominated by technical narratives such as quality and nutrition (Baraibar-Diez et al., 2023), which often fail to capture the social meanings constructed by consumers through everyday representations. With this background, this study aims to understand how consumers construct the meaning of everyday food on Instagram through the lens of SRT. Using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), the study identifies patterns of representation, symbolic associations, and meaning structures that appear in visual and narrative posts. Focusing on tilapia as the empirical context, this research provides deep insights into how everyday food meanings are formed, circulated, and stabilized within Indonesia's digital culture. The findings contribute to digital consumption studies, food culture scholarship, and social representation literature by demonstrating how SRT explains consumer meaning making within social media ecosystems.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Representation Theory (SRT) is used in this study to understand how social meanings are constructed, maintained, and circulated in everyday life. Introduced by Moscovici (1961), SRT views knowledge as a social construction that emerges through discourse, interaction, and collective practices, which differs from traditional social psychology approaches that emphasize individual processes (Moscovici, 1984; Jodelet, 2008; Howarth, 2011). Social representations function as shared systems of meaning that enable social groups to interpret reality and organize experience. Within the SRT framework, anchoring refers to the process of linking new phenomena to familiar social categories, while objectification transforms abstract ideas into concrete and easily recognizable symbolic forms. In the context of this study, tilapia is often anchored to domestic categories such as 'home-cooked food', 'family menu', or 'everyday simple dishes'. Meanwhile, images of dining tables, plates of fried tilapia, or household kitchens serve as forms of objectification that visually represent values of togetherness, warmth, or authenticity.

In food studies, SRT has been used to explain how food embodies social identity, cultural values, and moral norms that are reproduced through consumption practices (Lo Monaco & Bonetto, 2019; van Bussel et al., 2022). SRT-based studies on food show that food judgments are not only sensory but also tied to emotional closeness, identity construction, and health norms (Genova & Allegretti, 2024). From a social representation perspective, food becomes a symbolic medium that communicates moral values, cultural preferences, and social relationships that influence consumption behavior (László & Wahlen, 2024; Golob et al., 2024). In the context of social media, meaning is constructed not only through discourse but also through multimodal interactions involving text, images, affect, and user responses. Papacharissi (2014) demonstrates that comments, visuals, and emotions form a networked and performative ecology of meaning. Applied to this study, SRT enables analysis of how consumers construct associations of meaning around tilapia and how these meanings are materialized through photos, captions, and hashtags. Through recurring representational patterns and social circulation on Instagram, consumers construct semiotic figures that reflect collective cultural values and shared understandings of everyday food consumption practices.

METHOD

Research Approach

This study employs an exploratory qualitative approach within an interpretivist–constructivist paradigm to examine how social meanings are formed and expressed through digital symbols. Reality is understood as a collective construction that emerges through linguistic and media interactions (Berger and Luckmann, 1996), with the researcher taking a reflexive role as a co-conceptualizer who acknowledges subjectivity as part of the knowledge-building process (Finlay, 2002; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tracy, 2019). Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021) is used to interpret visual and narrative meaning patterns through a reflexive interpretive process. Conceptually, the study is grounded in Social Representation Theory (Moscovici, 1984; Jodelet, 2008), particularly the mechanisms of anchoring and objectification (Marková, 2017; Moliner & Piermatteo, 2025), which explain how meaning becomes shared knowledge and is formed through interactions within social media environments (Höijer, 2011; Howarth, 2011). A netnographic approach (Kozinets, 2019; Forberg & Schilt, 2023) is applied to examine posts, captions, and hashtags as expressions of values and social representations (Lupton, 2020), treating text, images, and affect as digital social actions that are performative in nature (Pink et al., 2016; Highfield & Leaver, 2016).

Data Criteria

This study applies selection criteria based on relevance, interpretive richness, and social representativeness, in which qualitative research prioritizes the quality of meaning over the quantity of data (Flick, 2018; Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024). The inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed in accordance with constructivist principles (Patton, 2014; Flick, 2018) to preserve the integrity of social meaning that emerges organically (Townsend & Wallace, 2016; Kozinets & Gambetti, 2020). The inclusion criteria in this study consist of non-commercial posts created by individuals so that meanings emerge naturally (Bargoni et al., 2023), posts that display authentic consumption experiences through photos, videos, or captions, and posts that contain symbolic or social dimensions reflecting values of togetherness, locality, or processes of anchoring and objectification (Moscovici, 1984; Wagner & Hayes, 2005). Only public posts were included, in accordance with digital research ethics (Townsend & Wallace, 2016), within the period of 2020 to 2024 to capture post-pandemic dynamics (Lok et al., 2025), and selected based on sufficient visual and narrative quality for interpretive analysis (Grewal et al., 2022). The exclusion criteria in this study include posts that are promotional or contain paid endorsements, posts that include hate speech, violence, or unethical content, and reposts without additional narrative or reflection. Posts that present only the product without social context, narrative, or symbolic meaning were also excluded and not included as research data.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to select posts based on theoretical relevance and contextual coherence, prioritizing information-rich cases over statistical representativeness (Patton, 2014; Flick, 2018). This approach aims to capture data that aligns with the social construction of meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2021) and, consistent with Social Representation Theory, reflects the diversity of symbols used by consumers in negotiating meaning (Pink et al., 2016).

Data Analysis

The data analysis process followed the phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2021), with SRT serving as the conceptual lens guiding the entire procedure. In the familiarization phase, the researcher reread captions, repeatedly examined visuals, and wrote reflexive memos to capture values, emotions, and social symbols, treating captions as small stories (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Riessman, 2008) and visuals as forms of social discourse (Highfield & Leaver, 2016). In the coding phase, textual and visual units were assigned descriptive and interpretive codes to identify symbolic patterns (Saldaña, 2016). The theme development and review phase was conducted inductively by reassessing thematic coherence across the entire dataset and enhancing credibility through peer debriefing (Nowell et al., 2017). In the defining phase, each theme was formulated by clarifying its social meaning, representational function, and the visual and narrative relationships that shape it. The final phase organized the findings into reflexivethematic narratives (thick description) (Geertz, 1973) to illustrate how digital communities construct and circulate social meanings dynamically on Instagram.

Data Validity and Credibility

This study ensured data validity and credibility through three main strategies. First, limited member checking, which involved reflexive confirmation with a small number of Instagram users to strengthen the resonance of the findings without aiming for absolute verification (Carlson, 2010; Birt et al., 2016). Second, interpretive triangulation, which consisted of discussions between the researcher and supervisors to broaden perspectives and minimize confirmation bias (Patton, 2014). Third, methodological reflexivity, which included reflexive documentation of the researcher's emotional influences and positionality as part of an interpretive audit trail, particularly during moments when social tension or dissonance emerged (Finlay, 2002; Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Research Ethics

This study follows the ethical principles of qualitative digital research, emphasizing contextual integrity, representational fairness, and reflexive practice in analyzing publicly accessible Instagram data (Markham & Buchanan, 2021; Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024). Only public posts were used, in accordance with the AoIR (2020) guidelines, and all user identities were anonymized and quotations were paraphrased to maintain contextual integrity (Nissenbaum, 2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data were obtained from public Instagram posts under the hashtags *#ikannila* (tilapia fish), *#nilamerah* (red tilapia), and *#nilahitam* (black tilapia). From approximately 71,000 posts, 1,722 non-commercial posts were screened, and 391 posts met the criteria for analysis using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA). The analysis generated five main themes derived from a total of 830 coded units, forming a coherent constellation of social meanings. These findings were strengthened by limited member checking, which showed 84 percent alignment, as well as the achievement of thematic saturation in the final 20 percent of the data. As shown in Figure 1, affective and domestic meanings were more dominant than functional or commercial meanings, indicating that the consumption of tilapia extends beyond economic exchange. This practice encompasses emotional bonds, togetherness, taste preferences, and expressions of local pride.
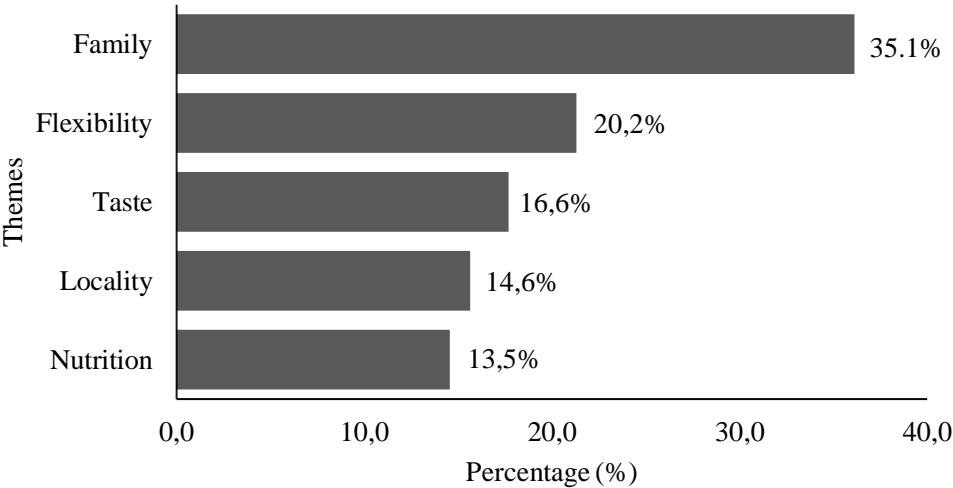

Figure 1. Percentage occurrence of consumer meaning themes related to tilapia on Instagram
(n = 391 posts, total coded theme occurrences = 830).

Structure of Meaning

Social media's visual and participatory affordances allow users to articulate and aesthetically organize meanings through photographs, captions, and symbolic communication (Highfield & Leaver, 2016; Krämer & Conrad, 2017; Vieira & Joia, 2024). These meanings reflect the digital structure of social representation, shaped by the values, emotions, and norms of online communities (Papacharissi, 2010). The five themes thus illustrate how tilapia becomes a social symbol encompassing social, emotional, practical, hedonic, identity, and normative dimensions (Table 1).

Table 1. Thematic structure of consumer meanings of tilapia on Instagram.

Theme	Consumer Meaning	Function
Family	A symbol of warmth, togetherness, and everyday household routines.	Affective
Flexibility	A practical and versatile food ingredient that can be easily prepared in various recipes.	Practical
Taste	Sensory enjoyment and satisfaction are represented as comfort food.	Hedonic
Locality	A marker of regional culinary identity and pride in local culture.	Identity
Nutrition	A healthy and nutritious food associated with healthy lifestyles and moral consumption.	Normative

The five themes of abstraction were based on the clustering of the repeating lexicon. Sets of words and phrases that come back in consumer posts are grouped and sequenced together. These lexicon clusters build up the social meaning that tilapia is anchored on, and are based on everyday social values and lived experiences (Table 2).

Table 2. Key lexical clusters that shape consumer meanings of tilapia on Instagram.

Key Lexical Clusters	Abstracted Theme
Home-cooked dishes; daily menu; everyday consumption; household routines; family meals; togetherness; full of love; Family's favorite dish; special moments at home; cooking together; family gatherings.	Family
Easy to cook; practical; versatile; various preparations; menu variations; multiple recipes; fried, grilled, or steamed; paired with chili sauce; creative cooking; recipe adaptation; diverse Indonesian spices.	Flexibility
Taste: delicious, savory, crispy, spicy, and fresh; appetizing; rich flavor; traditional seasoning; local spices; comfort food; tasty but straightforward; authentic flavor.	Taste
Local cuisine; regional food culture; local pride; traditional recipes; local wisdom; cultural expression; regional symbol; local culinary tourism.	Locality
Source of protein; nutritious; healthy lifestyle; diet-friendly; safe for children; easy to digest; healthy side dish; food security; balanced nutrition.	Nutrition

The Family theme is the most prominent, representing 35.1% of the dataset. Posts frequently depict dining tables, home-cooked meals, and expressions of gratitude such as "*Alhamdulillah, eating together with family*". Anchoring occurs through emotional and domestic associations with tilapia, while objectification appears through visual cues like steaming rice, wooden plates, and children eating enthusiastically. These findings align with Litterbach et al. (2025), who show that *#familymeals* on Instagram centers on performed familial warmth, a form of authenticity (Goffman, 1959). In SRT, the Family operates as a core representation (Abric, 2001), organizing affective dimensions of love, care, responsibility, and togetherness (Howarth, 2011; Lo Monaco & Bonetto, 2019). Consistent with Baumann et al. (2022), home-cooked food marks the symbolic boundary between 'family food' (warm, moral, emotional) and 'foreign food' (commercial, impersonal). Here, tilapia signifies the moral-emotional meaning of home and serves as a symbol of family identity in digital spaces.

The Flexibility theme (20.2%) highlights tilapia as a quick, adaptable option within everyday food repertoires. Questions such as "*better fried or steamed in banana leaves?*" signal household efficiency and the adaptability of urban lifestyles. 'Cooking process visualization,' 'meal preparation,' and 'recipe sharing' reflect the objectification of social efficiency into shared digital practice. These patterns align with Poplawska (2023), who associates everyday adaptability with managing time and economic pressure, and with Seyfi et al. (2025), who frame practical choices in social media as moral acts. Flexibility is therefore not purely functional; it is ethical and gendered, linked to portrayals of women's domestic foodwork (Cairns & Johnston, 2015). In this sense, tilapia represents both an accessible meal and an ethical adaptive burden situated within culturally valued norms of care, balance, and resourcefulness.

The Taste theme (16.6%) highlights consumption defined by sensory pleasure. Captions such as *"crispy on the outside, tender on the inside"* accompany close-ups of texture and warm lighting, which—consistent with Krishna & Schwarz (2014) and Rao & Huang (2025) enhance embodied pleasure and invite viewers to imaginatively 'taste' the food through photography. Within Social Representation Theory (SRT), taste serves a collective hedonic function: it is not merely a food attribute but a conduit for social interaction, happiness, and collective well-being

(Spence, 2020). Viewing food thus becomes symbolic consumption that enables vicarious sensory experience, deepening emotional engagement and audience immersion (Andersen et al., 2021; Sharma & Peng, 2023). The pleasure generated by these multimodal representations is inherently social, transforming individual indulgence into a shared emotional moment within online networks.

The Locality theme (14.6%) connects tilapia to regional identity and local culinary pride. Captions such as *"Sundanese-style pecak nila"* or *"Batak Toba's signature arsik"* anchor the dish in cultural memory, while symbols like banana leaves, clay plates, and yellow *arsik* seasoning objectify this identity in visual form. Social media depictions of local food reinforce authenticity and cultural sustainability (Zhang et al., 2019; Widjanarko et al., 2024). Within globalization, these practices reflect digital cultural negotiation, where local traditions interact with digital aesthetics (Feldman & Goodman, 2021; Farhat et al. 2024). Consistent with Holt's (2004) cultural branding theory, local tilapia becomes more than a dish: it acts as a cultural signifier of belonging, nostalgia, and resistance, with digital performance serving as a means for asserting and transforming local identity. The Nutrition theme (13.5%) frames tilapia as a symbol of healthy living and moral responsibility, captions such as *"high protein for kids"* situate nutrition within family care and public health norms. Klassen et al. (2018) show that social media helps construct new norms in which healthy eating becomes a social and moral act, positioning nutritious consumption as an obligation to family and community. Lupton & Feldman (2020) argue that digital food cultures cultivate responsibilisation: the ethical management of one's body and eating habits. Within Social Representation Theory (SRT), nutrition reflects the normative function of social hierarchy and moral regulation in everyday consumption (Marková, 2017; Jovchelovitch, 2019; Guerrón Montero, 2023). Here, tilapia carries moral meanings of care embedded in digital food culture, linking health, virtue, and social obligation beyond its nutritional value.

Visual Objectification of Meaning

As reflected in Table 3, these visual categorizations show how users frame tilapia as an aesthetic object that communicates social and emotional meanings.

Table 3. Visual categories of consumer Instagram posts featuring tilapia (n = 391 posts).

Category	Count	Percentage	Context	Examples
Prepared dishes	255	63.9%	Tilapia presented as a ready-to-eat meal.	Fried, *pecak*, curry, grilled, steamed, etc.
Upstream value chain	71	18.2%	Depictions of tilapia before entering the kitchen, either alive, raw, or during harvest.	In ponds, buckets, or harvesting scenes, etc.
Cooking process	54	13.8%	The process of preparing tilapia, from cleaning to cooking.	Cleaning, seasoning, frying, etc.
Consumption	11	2.8%	Eating activities and the accompanying social moments.	Children eating, family gatherings, shared meals, etc.

The findings show that food images on social media function as more than meal documentation. As Manovich (2017) notes, food visualization is networked self-expression, enabling users to display lifestyles, values, and emotions. Guerrón Montero & Gross (2023) argue that food photography mediates social identity through performative consumption, projecting normality, happiness, and cultural belonging. Tilapia thus becomes a cultural performance that communicates identity, emotion, and social aspiration. Digital foodscapes transform everyday meals into complex narratives of belonging and morality. Within Social Representation Theory (SRT), this reflects visual objectification (Moscovici, 1998), where abstract ideas (warmth, happiness) are made tangible through dining tables, steamed rice, or orderly kitchens. Meaning emerges through visual familiarity that is reproduced across networks (Lupton, 2020). Digital visual culture integrates emotion, aesthetics, and performativity (Feldman & Goodman, 2021). Food images perform identity (Butler & Pecot, 2022) within a Goffman (1959) front stage that blends spontaneity with platform-driven convention. Instagram's 'natural yet beautiful' style reflects curated authenticity (Zuo et al., 2025). Tilapia visuals thus illustrate how users adopt and express social value, emotion, and identity, making digital food representation a form of social commentary.

Interrelation of Meaning

The five social representation themes identified in this study do not stand as isolated categories; instead, they intersect to form a unified digital meaning landscape. As shown in Table 4, only a small portion of posts display a

single dominant theme, while the majority combine two or more themes simultaneously. This indicates that consumers often embed multiple layers of meaning within a single post. The predominance of multi-themed posts (whether expressed as duplets or triplets) demonstrates that social representations in digital contexts are integrative, combining emotional, social, and symbolic elements. These interwoven meanings reveal that digital meaning-making is not a linear act of signification but a dynamic negotiation shaped by relational, cultural, and participatory dimensions of digital culture. Across the dataset, the most recurrent meaning combinations, such as Family + Taste + Flexibility show how preparing and enjoying tilapia becomes an enactment of familial togetherness. Other frequent combinations (e.g., Family + Taste + Locality, Family + Flexibility + Locality) highlight how domestic practicality, sensory pleasure, and regional identity intersect in everyday food practices. Only very few posts extend to four themes, all anchored in Family, while none include all five, suggesting that consumers typically draw on two or three interlinked meanings at once.

Table 4. Distribution of thematic combinations in consumer Instagram posts related to tilapia (n = 391).

Category	Count	Percentage
Monotheme	84	21.5%
Family	56	66.7%
Flexibility	4	4.8%
Taste	3	3.6%
Locality	12	14.3%
Nutrition	9	10.7%
Multitheme	307	78.5%
Duplet	177	57.7%
Family – Flexibility	34	19.2%
Family – Taste	27	15.3%
Family – Locality	22	12.4%
Family – Nutrition	50	28.2%
Flexibility – Taste	14	7.9%
Flexibility – Locality	9	5.1%
Flexibility – Nutrition	9	5.1%
Taste – Locality	10	5.6%
Taste – Nutrition	0	0.0%
Locality – Nutrition	2	2.0%
Triplet	128	41.7%
Family – Flexibility – Locality	17	13.3%
Family – Flexibility – Nutrition	19	14.8%
Family – Taste – Flexibility	35	27.3%
Family – Taste – Locality	19	14.8%
Family – Taste – Nutrition	6	4.7%
Family – Locality – Nutrition	5	3.9%
Flexibility – Locality – Nutrition	5	3.9%
Taste – Flexibility – Locality	16	12.5%
Taste – Flexibility – Nutrition	4	3.1%
Taste – Locality – Nutrition	2	1.6%
Quadruplet	2	0.7%
Family – Taste – Flexibility – Locality	2	100.0%
Family – Taste – Flexibility – Nutrition	0	0.0%
Family – Taste – Locality – Nutrition	0	0.0%
Family – Flexibility – Locality – Nutrition	0	0.0%
Taste – Flexibility – Locality – Nutrition	0	0.0%
Quintuplet	0	0.0%
Family – Taste – Flexibility – Locality – Nutrition	0	0.0%

Note. This table presents the combinations of one-theme (monotheme) and multitheme structures, including two- (duplet), three- (triplet), four- (quadruplet), and five-theme (quintuplet) configurations derived from the five identified themes.

As shown in Table 5, the co-occurrence matrix reveals strong relationships among several dimensions of social meaning, particularly between the pairs Family and Flexibility, Family and Taste, and Taste and Locality. This pattern indicates that the meanings associated with tilapia consumption are shaped through dominant clusters that combine domestic warmth, practicality, and sensory enjoyment. The linkage between Taste and Locality highlights the role of regional culinary identity in shaping consumption experiences, while the relationship between Family and Nutrition reflects how health is understood within the framework of family responsibility. Overall, social meanings do not stand alone but emerge as an interconnected thematic network.

Table 5. Co-occurrence matrix of social meaning themes in consumer Instagram posts featuring tilapia.

	Family	Flexibility	Taste	Locality	Nutrition
Family	291	107	89	65	80
Flexibility	107	168	71	49	37
Taste	89	71	138	49	12
Locality	65	49	49	121	14
Nutrition	80	37	12	14	112

Color legend (co-occurrence intensity with numeric ranges)

Low (0 – 20)	Moderate–Low (21 – 45)	Medium (46 – 70)	Moderate–High (71 – 90)	High (91 – 107)

Note. The matrix is based on 573 unique theme co-occurrence pairs identified in the dataset. This total derives from 177 duplet posts (1 pair each = 177), 128 triplet posts (3 pairs each = 384), and two quadruplet posts (6 pairs each = 12), summing to 573. Each off-diagonal cell in the matrix reflects the frequency distribution of these 573 pairs.

These patterned 'bundled repertoires' (Joffe, 2003; Howarth, 2011) integrate affective, functional, cultural, and moral values, supporting negotiation between tensions such as modernity and tradition, leisure and responsibility, or individuality and family cohesion. This reflects the dialogical nature of social representations (Marková, 2017), where multiple meaning positions coexist and interact within digital cultural communities.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the meanings of everyday food on Instagram are shaped through complex social processes in which visual representations, digital interactions, and cultural values all play active roles in constructing consumer meaning structures. The five main themes identified, namely Family, Flexibility, Taste, Locality, and Nutrition, emerge as meaning configurations that reflect the emotional, practical, sensory, cultural, and normative dimensions of digital food consumption. These themes intersect and express the ambivalence that characterizes everyday food practices within domestic life. Although identified through the context of tilapia consumption, these five themes have broader relevance for various types of everyday food. They may serve as general patterns for understanding how consumers make sense of food in digital spaces, although their specific manifestations depend on product context, local cultural practices, and the dynamics of the communities shaping them. Thus, this study highlights that social representations of food provide an important foundation for developing communication strategies that are more authentic, resonant, and meaning-oriented in digital marketing.

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