

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY IN MAINTAINING THE IMAGE AND REPUTATION OF GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the goals and constraints of public relations for government agencies in using social media as a digital public strategy. Meanwhile, the study used a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study method and data were obtained through in-depth interviews from personnel in the public relations department of various government institutions. The results showed that government institutions use social media as a digital public relations strategy to build positive opinions and the public trust which maintain the institution's image and reputation. In its management, several government institutions are constrained by human resources. Meanwhile, the number of personnel and the ability to present news and creative content become obstacles to the institutions, therefore, there is a need to cooperate with external parties. In addition, the content of the information is also an obstacle because not all news is published through social media. Therefore, tiered approvals and bureaucracy are conducted to prevent the information provided from becoming a community controversy. Moreover, the use of social media has a positive effect on the organization and also poses a risk to damage the image and reputation of the institution.

Keywords: *Social Media, Communication, Public Relations, Government Institution*

1. INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, advances in technology make communication easier for people without distance and time barriers. Furthermore, technological advances also make the dissemination of information faster. Meanwhile, the media is described as decentralized and two-way with technology that allows interaction between humans, computers, and the internet [1].

As one of the uses of technology, social media is used by individuals and government institutions to increase interaction between organizations, the community, and reach populations that do not consume traditional media [2]. Moreover, the emergence of new technology, especially social media, gives the police, as a government institution a space to communicate with the public directly [3]. The use of social media by government institutions is one of the innovations in maximizing technology.

Compared to the traditional way, social media has various advantages, where the message presented by news media comprises writing, sound, and visual information [4]. Furthermore, the use of social media is a communication strategy to deal with the times, build trust, and open communication facilities with the community [5]. Social media also makes public relations practical allows institutions to have a dialogue with their publics. Currently, there are more than 700,000 business accounts on Facebook that actively interact with the public [6].

Technology helps government institutions provide quick and easy services, therefore, an easily accessible communication system allows the public to become more actively involved in complaints about poor services. Cooperation between the institution and the community is going well, as this study shows that the Police is a

government institution, relies on cooperation and community support to achieve task success [7].

The application of E-Government in the adoption of social media promises that a public institution will be more responsive and transparent, promote cooperation between the community and the government and provide information to the public that can be accessed directly [8]. In addition, the use of social media also encourages individual involvement in building companies branding and also personal branding [9]. Several state institutions in Indonesia have actively used social media in providing information to the public. Here are some examples of institutions that have actively used social media:



Figure 1.1 : @kemhanri

The Indonesian Ministry of Defense through the Instagram account @kemhanri currently has 239K followers. In figure 1.1 the Indonesian Ministry of Defense through social media Instagram shares posts about discussion activities related to the development of important state

defense to build the country's deterrent power. Where the official head of education and training for the State Defense Education and Training Agency of the Ministry of Defense became a resource person at the event

Similar to the Ministry of Defense, the Supreme Audit Agency of the Republic of Indonesia is also active in the use of social media. Currently the @bpkriofficial Instagram account has 38.6K followers. As an embodiment of organizational transparency and accountability, the Supreme Audit Agency posts information related to its 2020 performance report via Instagram.



Figure 1.2 : @bpkriofficial

Apart from the Indonesian Ministry of Defense and the Indonesian Supreme Audit Agency, Indonesian Police law enforcement agencies are also active in using social media. The Indonesian Police Instagram account

@divisihumaspolri currently has 960K followers. @divisihumaspolri every day posts some news about information for the public and activities carried out by the organization as well as those carried out by the Indonesian Ministry of Defense and the Indonesian Supreme Audit Agency. The post on the Instagram account @divisihumaspolri in Figure 1.3 shows the activities of the Police's efforts to synergize with students in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic



Figure 1.3 : @divisihumaspolri

Based on the explanation above, the current organizational communication strategy is inseparable from the emergence of new technology, especially social media. However, several studies have not specifically described the goals and constraints of government institutions in managing social media as a digital public relations strategy.

Therefore, this study aims to determine the goals and the constraints of public relations for government institutions in using social media as a digital strategy.

2. LITERATUR REVIEW

2.1 Social Media for Non-Profit Organization

Social media is currently used extensively by the public as a medium of information and building relationships with one another. In the era of new media and social networks, individuals and organizations' participation in the use of social media is becoming common [10]. Meanwhile, the nature of social media that makes public relations practical and allows organizations to interact with the public includes the use of Facebook, where more than 700,000 business accounts actively interact [11].

Both profit and non-profit organizations make use of social media in their organizational activities. Moreover, it is for non-profit organizations to establish relationships with the community, and collaborate with other organizations [12]. The American Red Cross is a successful non-profit organization in the use of social media. This organization shows that the practice of public relations through social media is effective and indispensable in this digital era by communicating with young people through social media. Moreover, Two-way communication is established through social media, especially Twitter and Facebook [13].

2.2 Public Relations

Public relation is a method of using persuasive communication to influence the public [14]. Meanwhile, the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) defined it as the planned and continuous effort to create and maintain goodwill as well as mutual understanding between an organization and its entire audiences [15].

The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) stated that reputation is the result of what you do, say, and what others say about you. Based on this understanding, it is concluded that the role of public relations is to maintain the public reputation as expected by the organization.

Public relations in the organization function as internal relations, publicity, advertising, press agencies, public affairs, issues management, and

investor relations [16]. Meanwhile, internal relations means the way of building and maintaining internal relationships within the organization while publicity disseminates information to external parties, including the media because of its news value. Advertising means Information is used by public relations to reach a wider audience while Press agency means the production of news and event information that is newsworthy to attract the mass media and get public attention. Furthermore, public affairs mean building relationships with government and local communities to influence public policy. Therefore, Public Relations functions as issue management which anticipates, identifies, evaluates, and responds to public policy issues that affect the organization's relationship with the public. Furthermore, it also acts as investor relations where incorporate, serves to build and maintain beneficial together with mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders.

In addition, public relations aim to foster good relations with the public through two-way communication, which consists of performance objectives and support of customer market objectives. The performance objective is to present the organization's image to the public, through activities to build and enrich the identity and image of the organization. Meanwhile, the support of customer market objective aims to identify problems related to communication activities that are conducted by the organization [17].

2.3 Social Media for Public Relations

Based on its function, public relations is a tool for internal relations, publicity, advertising, press agencies, public affairs, issue management, and investor relations [18], to communicate with the public in various ways. With the latest development, public relations in organizations use new media to communicate, especially social media.

Technological developments make organizations develop challenges in communicating with their audience online. Meanwhile, several studies on the interaction of the organization with its audience through social media are increasingly being carried out. A previous study on people's interaction through organizational blogs showed that the communication between the public and the

organization was able to build trust, satisfaction and commitment, and mutual control [19].

2.4 Image

The image of an organization is the way members believe other views of the organization [20]. Meanwhile, Jefkins stated that it is an impression, picture, or the right impression (according to reality) on the figure of various personnel existence policies or services of an organization or company [21]. Furthermore, Frandsen, stated that image is a debatable concept in various disciplines from organizational communication, marketing, and public relations study Therefore, an organizational image is the impression of the organization between external stakeholders and members as an interpreted and desired external image [22].

In a publication on public relations for management success, stated that image is divided into five categories [23] as follows:

- 1) Mirror Image
This image is attached to members and leaders of an organization which creates a response from external parties. It is often inaccurate due to insufficient information received by outsiders.
- 2) Current Image
This is formed from external parties' opinions regarding the organization based on information obtained by the public.
- 3) Multiple Image
It is caused by members with different behaviors that are not in line with the goals and culture of the organization.
- 4) Corporate Image
The image of the company/organization is seen as a whole and not from a single product or service component.
- 5) Wish Image
This is the image expected by the management of the organization and is applied to something relatively new that has not given full information to the public.

2.5 Corporate Reputation

In addition to communicating and interacting with the public, social media is also used for managing the organization's reputation [24]. Reputation is the manifestation of a person's experience with the products or services made by an organization or company. To achieve

organizational reputation, there are two important things, namely the identity and image of the organization [25].

A previous study stated that the involvement of social media activities is positively related to the company's reputation. Moreover, technological developments have led consumers to engage in online discussions on social media such as Twitter and Facebook. This gives 87% of The Fortune Global 100's companies opportunities to have at least one social media platform between Twitter and Facebook [26].

Social media have a positive effect on the company's reputation, however, it also poses a risk of reputational damage [27]. This risk increases when there is a gap between reputation and reality, a change in consumer expectations, and an organization is unable to manage environmental changes [28].

3. RESEACH METHOD

In this study, a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study method was used. The data collection was carried out by in-depth interviews to explore qualitative data which involved personnel from the public relations section of several government institutions as informants. This qualitative approach was chosen because it requires the drawing of conclusions based on the informants' perspectives. The data were collected in form of words or sentences from participants which were described and analyzed systematically [29]

Informants that were selected to meet the sampling criteria include the members of government institutions that carry out public relations functions. These informants know the use of social media as an institution's digital strategy in establishing relationships with the community. Furthermore, this study considered the easier way to access informants which makes data and information to be easily obtained. There were four informants from the Public Relations Division of the Indonesian National Police, one from the Public Relations Bureau of the Ministry of Defense, and one from the Public Relations and International Cooperation Bureau of the Indonesian Financial Audit Agency.

The Indonesian National Police is a state institution tasked with maintaining security and

public order, enforcing the law, providing protection, security, and services to the community as part of domestic security. Meanwhile, the Public Relations Division of Indonesia has received a good impression from the public and has succeeded in increasing the legitimacy and reputation of the Indonesian National Police organization [30].

Meanwhile, the Indonesian Ministry of Defense is an element of the government in the defense sector. In 2021, the Indonesian Political Indicators Survey Institute released the results of a public trust survey of state institutions and the Indonesian National Army has the highest trust, which is 89.9 percent. Furthermore, the Indonesian Supreme Audit Agency is an institution tasked with the examination of the management and responsibility of state finances that requires a public relations communication strategy in establishing relationships with stakeholders [31].

4. RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Purpose of Using Social Media in Government Institutions

The six informants have a similar opinion on the use of social media digital strategies by government institutions. Meanwhile, the informants considered social media as a tool to bring the organization closer to the community. In addition, it is used as an organizational bridge to interact with the public, provide information, and receive complaints of violations, criticisms, suggestions, and requests for information by the public.

"Currently, the National Police Traffic Corps has started the process of electrolyzing the ticketing process via E-TLE. Also, 12 provinces are already using E-TLE and the Public Relations Division is to publish the E-TLE system to the public through various media, such as social media. The package information related to E-TLE is package attractively for the public to know and understand the process."

Source: Head of the Bureau of Data and Information Management, Public Relations Division of Indonesian National Police

“Presently, the Indonesian National Police continues to provide interesting and updated information. People are more interested in creative and good visuals news, therefore, the PR Division strengthens the function of creative content. With interesting content, it is expected that the public has more interest in police activities. As the term 'does not know does not love', the more people are interested in the content posted on social media, the more people know and consequently, trust in the police will emerge.”

Source: Head of Public Information Bureau, Public Relations Division of the Indonesian National Police

“Social media is one of the strategies to communicate with the public as it provides information and allows feedback for criticism. We want to build the image of the police in the community through uploading police duties and showing the human side. Hence, people feel safe and trust the police.”

Source: Head of Sub-Division of Public Information Bureau, Public Relations Division of the Indonesian National Police

“There are social media that are managed centrally and regionally, such as Instagram, where each Regional Police has its account. This is to provide exposure to the public about police activities, such as services and procedures. In addition, it provides a place to accommodate the aspirations of the community”.

Source: Data and Information Management Bureau Staff, Public Relations Division of the Indonesian National Police

“As stated in the performance agreement, the Public Relations Bureau is capable of increasing the positive aspirations of the Ministry of Defense/Indonesian National Army in the community. One of these efforts includes the use of existing media, such as social media and national media. We use Instagram, to publish news about the Ministry of Defense/Indonesian National Army and receive the public opinion through the uploaded posts.”

Source: Head of Public Relations Bureau of the Ministry of Defense

“The existence of social media is currently being used by the Public Relations Bureau such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and Tik Tok. This aims to provide information and introduce The Audit Board of the Republic of Indonesia to the public, due to people's ignorance on the difference between The Audit Board of the Republic of Indonesia and the Ministry of Finance and the Corruption Eradication Commission.”

Source: Public Relations Bureau Staff of the Supreme Audit Agency

One of the informants stated that social media is used by organizations to provide information to the public, however, this is not entirely bidirectional. In the comments column of social media, the public writes complaints, criticisms, suggestions, and submissions of information, while the organization gives no response. This is because the organization has its system of managing complaints, criticisms, suggestions, and submission of information.

“Social media is used to provide information and accommodate public criticism as well as suggestions. However, there is no response to criticism, suggestions, or requests for information via social media because a special procedure is required for the service”

Source: Staff of the Public Relations Bureau of the Supreme Audit Agency

This study found that the three institutions studied made social media as a means to provide fast and easy information services. Besides that, social media is also used as a means to maintain public trust and that is to restore public trust that has fallen.

4.2 Constraints in Managing Social Media

Several informants interviewed regarding the obstacles faced by government agencies in managing social media had different opinions. One of the informants stated that the lack of personnel was an obstacle in managing social media.

“Barriers in managing social media, especially Instagram, are constrained by members, which is not a problem at the center because of sufficient

personnel. The regional police lack personnel, therefore, the content posted is not optimal."

Source: Staff at the Bureau of Data and Information Management, Public Relations Division of the Indonesian National Police

"Currently, PR has no problems with facilities and infrastructure because the tools are complete and there is a studio, however, it has constraints on human resources. Therefore, cooperation between the internal police and external parties was established. In the future, there will recruitment of expert members in the field of broadcasting."

Source: Head of Section at the Public Information Bureau, Public Relations Division of the Indonesian National Police

In the next construction, there were similarities of opinion between the two informants from representatives of two government institutions. The Head of Section at the Public Relations Bureau of the Ministry of Defense and the Public Relations Bureau of the State Audit Agency staff stated that the management of social media has not faced any significant obstacles. All management duties and responsibilities are carried out by staff, however, the long approval by going through a tiered bureaucratic process becomes an obstacle.

"There are no obstacles because all social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, podcasts, Instagram can be managed smoothly."

Source: Head of Section at the Ministry of Defense's Public Relations Bureau

"It seems that there are no obstacles. We have enough human resources in managing Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Tik Tok accounts. Every staff has a responsibility to manage, however, the problem is the content of the information. Not all information is directly shared or published, some have to pass through a long selection and bureaucracy. This requires approval from the head of the sub-section, the head of the division, the head of the bureau, and the Secretary-General as well as the Deputy Head of the Supreme Audit Agency. Therefore, the information provided is carried out in stages to avoid a polemic in the community."

Source: Staff of Public Relations Bureau of the Supreme Audit Agency

Some of the results above showed that the informants recognized the importance of government institutions in developing ways of communicating through new media, especially social media. The increase in the variety of social media is also a challenge in which non-profit organizations are needed to respond to the changing times. Meanwhile, government institutions studied to understand the significance and influence of social media on knowledge, trust, image, and the reputation of the organizations. This makes social media a digital public relations strategy in maintaining the image and reputation of the institution.

Government institutions have recognized the importance of social media as a tool to provide information. This showed that all organizations have studied using various social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Podcasts, and the new media, Tik Tok to disseminate information. Meanwhile, communication through social media is carried out in two-way, where each organization provides information more quickly and receives all feedback positively or negatively as comments from the public. Therefore, the existence of social media in government institutions is used to establish better relationships with the public, media, and other stakeholders.

Furthermore, government institutions have made social media a digital strategy in maintaining the organization's image and reputation. The Indonesian National Police have succeeded in giving a positive impression on the public and increasing the legitimacy and reputation of its organization [32]. In terms of management, the institutions are still experiencing problems due to limited human resources, while the ability to provide news and creative content also cause government institutions to cooperate with external parties. Meanwhile, the institution has realized that the existence of social media gives a positive reputation, and also increases the risk of an organization's reputation becoming negative. This is anticipated through the rigorous approval process, which is carried out in stages. Moreover, the bureaucratic process of information approval has a good impact, while it becomes an obstacle in the provision of information.

5. CONCLUSION

The results showed that the goal of Indonesian government institutions in managing social media as a digital public relations strategy is to maintain the image and reputation of the organization. The public relations activities are carried out to establish relationships with the community and cooperation to achieve organizational success. Organizational public relations is a place for distribution of all information owned by the institution. Government organizations establish relationships with the community through partnership activities, holding discussions, and public exposure to institutional activities. Social media is one of the tools used by public relations to provide information to the public.

Therefore, it is concluded that the current government institutions have utilized new media, especially social media in the digital public relations strategy. In this study, the three institutions have actively used social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Podcasts, YouTube, and Tik Tok as channels to provide information to the public. Social media are consistently managed to connect with the community and form a positive public opinion towards the government institutions. In terms of management, several government institutions are still constrained by human resources. The number of personnel and the ability to present news and create creative content are obstacles that make the institutions cooperate with external parties. Furthermore, the content is also an obstacle because not all information is published through social media. Therefore, tiered approvals and bureaucracy are carried out to prevent the information provided from becoming a polemic in the community.

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