

Digital Public Relations: Efforts to Manage Interactions and Build Reputation

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to understand the new dynamics in the relationship between organizations and their public in the context of digital public relations and to formulate effective strategies for digital public relations communication. The method used is a desk research approach, which is considered appropriate for the analysis and collection of online data information. The results show that digital public relations requires innovative skills in understanding interactions and encouraging active participation in responding to needs, quick response in determining effective public relations communication strategies in building a positive online reputation. The ability to create relevant quality messages, analyse data using information technology, and manage crisis communication are essential skills. Ethical behavior in establishing, maintaining, and improving positive relationships with the public is essential to building trust between the public and the institution. Optimizing the use of digital media by adhering to ethical guidelines will help institutions manage their reputation to enhance beneficial interaction relationships.

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INTRODUCTION

The Paradigm Shift In Public Relations From Traditional To Digital Has Led To Widespread Communication And Interaction Between Organizations And Their Public. The Use Of Digital Technology, Including Social Media, Websites, And Other Online Platforms, Has Significantly Changed The Practice Of Public Relations. At The Same Time, Practitioners Need To Be Equipped With The Skills To Deal With These Massive Developments. According To The Indonesian Association Of Internet Service Providers (APJII), The Country's Internet Penetration Rate Will Reach 79.5% By 2024. This Means That The Proportion Of People Connected To The Internet Has Reached 79.5% Of The Total National Population (Ahdiat, 2024).. Furthermore, The Government Has Developed A Digital Transformation Direction For 2024 In Which The Digital Economic Growth Must Reach 3.17% To 4.66% (Wantiknas.Go.Id, 2023). This Condition Allows For Many Interactions That Take Place In The Digital World.

With This Growth, Public Relations Has Undergone Significant Changes. Social Media Platforms, Online News Sources And The Rise Of Influencers Have Revolutionized The Way PR Professionals Connect And Engage With Audiences. This Means That Strong Connections Through Traditional Methods Such As Press Releases, Media Relations And Sponsorship Need To Adapt To New Technologies, Strategies And Methods To Stay Ahead Of The Curve. It Encourages New Skills, Ways Of Working And Message Distribution In Image Building. There Is Also A Change In Consumption Patterns. People Tend To Rely On Digital Platforms As Their Main Source Of Information. This Is Causing Institutions To Adapt Their Communication Strategies To Be Relevant To People's Preferences And Behaviour. According To The Indonesian Public Relations Association (Perhumas), Despite The Sophistication Of Technology, The Role Of Public Relations Cannot Be Replaced. However, The Way Of Working Can Be Changed To Provide New Innovations In The World Of Public Relations (Digital Marketing, 2023).. This Requires More Effort From Public Relations. Especially In A Situation Where The Use Of Smartphones Has Increased During This Pandemic, Which Has Become A Momentum For Public Relations To Keep Up With Access In The Digital World (Laksamana, 2020).

Another Impact Of The Advent Of Digital Is That Public Relations Is Transforming The Way In Which Relationships Are Communicated, Highlighting The Importance Of An Engaging, Unique And Integrated Multi-Platform Approach. Online Reputational Threats, Which Can Arise Quickly From The Spread Of Negative Content, Often Pose New Problems For PR Practitioners. Although The Information Conveyed Is True, The Way The Message Is Conveyed Is Now Important, And A Well-Planned Digital PR Strategy Is Required To Effectively Manage The Reputation Crisis.

In The Digital Age, Digital Public Relations (PR) Faces Several Challenges. One Of These

Problems Is The Need To Master Information Technology, Communication That Is Constantly Growing, Providing Fast Information On Demand, And Increasing Competence According To Changing Times. Therefore, The Aim Of This Article Is To Understand The New Dynamics In The Relationship Between Organizations And Their Public In The Context Of Digital PR And To Formulate Effective Strategies For Digital PR Communication.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

Public relations as a discipline and profession is inherently linked to new communication technologies, especially the Internet. Public Relations focuses on the use of digital media for public relations purposes. Digital public relations is defined as the management of communication between an organization and its public through Internet applications. Internet applications include websites, games and instant messaging services that process data and display information mediated by the internet through text, sound, graphics, images, videos or binary (executable) (December, 1996; Verčič et al., 2015). At its core, public relations is about guidance, relationships and building social capital. Therefore, digital tools and platforms are usually referred to as simply an extension of the public relations toolkit (Wolf & Archer, 2018). It offers a different role in the implementation of Public Relations and engagement with the flow of information and communication technology (Cismaru et al., 2018).

There are four main things that are driving change in public relations: First, globalization. Increased market reach, openness and direct communication. Second, the number of government-owned organizations whose professionalism and profit objectives are being achieved through modern management and marketing techniques. Third, the presence of the Internet opens communication channels between the organization and its environment. Fourth, the existence of an open market and media support has led to various issues outside of politics, such as environmental, health, cultural and other issues (Rosidin & Hamid, 2020). Digital public relations (PR) practices are part of public relations activities adapted from the use of information and communication technology for companies. Many companies at national and multinational levels have started to implement digital public relations in their companies. (Pienrasmi, 2015; Syafaat & Wahyudin, 2020; Hidayat et al., 2020).

The implementation of digital public relations is the right tool to publish messages to the audience (Meliala et al., 2020). Public relations is a deliberate effort to build/maintain a positive image and business reputation in a social context and an important factor in determining the success of an organization by developing and nurturing its corporate reputation (Sharma et al., 2013; Anani-Bossman, 2021; Moussa, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a desk research approach. This method is effective for analyzing data and gathering information. This method is also known as secondary research and involves the collection and analysis of existing data and resources (managementstudyguide.com, 2024). Data for desk research can be collected from internal sources within an organization, external sources such as government-published data, and online sources including customer feedback and information available on the internet (managementstudyguide.com, 2024). The collected data will then be selected according to the appropriate research needs with the topic of digital public relations. Furthermore, the steps for effective data analysis in desk research are as follows: first, check the data carefully by reading, second, compare data from different sources. Third, check the consistency of the data thoroughly. Fourth, write a report.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Digital public relations vs traditional public relations: how to build professionalism and skills

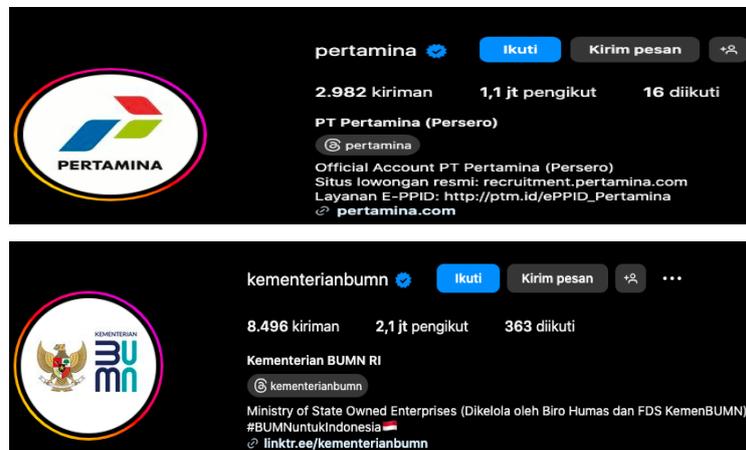
Massive developments in the digital era encourage different abilities in facing the challenges of building a reputation as public relations practitioners. In implementing Digital Public Relations, a Public Relations practitioner is required to have digital skills. By having knowledge, Public Relations practitioners are expected to be able to utilize the features available on the relevant online platforms to maximize their institution's strategic plans, both in the process of creating, monitoring, and evaluating Digital Public Relations products (Alexander, 2016;Moreno et al., 2015;Permatasari et al., 2021). These conditions enable digital public relations to not only focus on communication and writing skills but also on data monitoring skills, data analysis, and information interaction. This encourages professional abilities and measurable actions in various situations to build a reputation.

Aspects of the skills needed to build professionalism and public relations capabilities in the digital era. First, the ability to compose public communication messages. The integrity and credibility of information now seem to be something important when information develops rapidly and everyone becomes a communicator and communicant in the dissemination of information. Public communication skills in digital public relations are an important part of the strategy to increase information awareness. Managing communication with media in the digital era is different from the traditional era. Traditionally, PR uses press releases, television, print, radio, shows, and events to influence the public image. Meanwhile, digital public relations uses traditional channels and online platforms. This makes digital communication part of a public relations strategy. The difference is that almost all digital media require public relations to respond and speak directly to their target audience through digital marketing such as SEO, content marketing, influencer marketing, and social media

(Digitalmarketinginstitute.com, 2024). Public communication skills in digital public relations can help companies/institutions build strong relationships with journalists, influencers, and digital media users. Apart from that, rhetorical skills in public communication can also help in influencing and persuading audiences online, which is an important aspect of digital public relations strategy (V. K. M. Putri, 2022).

Second, is online platform management. Traditional Public Relations involves a network of journalists to be featured in newspapers, magazines, radio, and television publications to build a reputation. This condition requires closeness in conveying communication. Meanwhile, in digital public relations, we often find a higher number of readers or viewers in the online content (Digitalmarketinginstitute.com, 2024). These conditions require public relations practitioners to build their own media to accommodate the information needs obtained. Public relations is required to be able to target media types in building interactions. Online platforms have a very important role in public relations practice in the digital era. With the advent of digital, public relations is required to utilize online media to support and maximize its performance (Satira & Hidriani, 2021). This makes it easy for public relations practitioners to communicate, obtain information, maintain positive relationships, and build reputation.

Image: Managing social media accounts



Source: Social Media Instagram, 2024

Managing digital media platforms can encourage trust, plan the right messages and build closeness between institutions and digital users. Understanding digital media is key for public relations practitioners in improving the image of institutions. The integration of digital media in public relations activities plays a significant role in supporting public relations practices in the digital era.

Third, analytical data capabilities. Digital public relations requires analytical data capabilities to help PR practitioners make better decisions based on data rather than relying solely on intuition. The ability to read and analyze data effectively can avoid public relations problems. Capabilities such

as statistical skills, content personalization, trend analysis, visualization, and social media interaction analysis, are important skills in driving effective decision-making. The ability to analyze data is also needed in multi-step digital public relations, which involves analyzing data that is generally in the form of numbers. In the future, public relations practitioners will be familiar with digital data technology such as SEO, big data, artificial intelligence, and machine learning which can help improve public relations performance. For example, by understanding and implementing SEO (Search Engine Optimization) practices you can increase online visibility, so you can measure and evaluate the performance of digital campaigns effectively.

In the digital era with so much information, the professional aspect of public relations in maintaining integrity is important. This includes, Firstly, standards of behavior in communicating and interacting in digital activities. This aspect becomes a reference standard in providing information and responding to information on various digital platforms. Some public relations practitioners use a language style approach that is preferred by young people, while others use formal language in responding. Each approach has advantages in building a reputation. This really depends on the context of the message conveyed. Second, digital content quality standards. Values in content that include accuracy, transparency, and relevance/trend are very important in building a reputation. Accuracy of information is the beginning of digital users trusting the information conveyed, while transparency is able to display clear content in the information. The relevant/trend pushes any information needed according to platform users.

The Importance of Collaboration: How to Implement a Digital Public Relations Strategy

The massive influence of information in the digital era has given rise to several key opinion leaders (KOL) in forming interaction networks. These conditions enable their role in encouraging various trusted information needs. KOL in the company's PR strategy acts as an extension of the company's hand in passing on company crisis information to the public, especially when the public is distrustful of the company (Yuanita, 2021). Necessary aspects of collaboration with influencers and stakeholders through other digital platforms to build, and maintain good communication and cooperation. Collaborative actions with various parties, building communication strategies, and optimal media relations can restore public trust (Siregar & Haeirina, 2021).

Collaboration aspects need to be considered in implementing digital public relations (PR) strategies between organizations in public relations. First, PR practitioners need to carry out transformation by increasing digital competence. This condition helps campaign performance and interaction with the public which involves good use of digital technology to ensure collaboration is carried out in accordance with the needs and characteristics of each organization. Adaptation using

digital public relations practices can meet society's information needs (Mboeik et al., 2020;Widianto, 2024). Second, set measurable goals. Specific goals are able to determine the right target content. For example, in marketing public relations, digital public relations strategies, such as increasing brand awareness and generating leads. This condition allows the interaction that is built to be able to obtain profitable interactions in the organization. This condition really depends on the message being constructed. Content as part of a message in the digital era that is interesting and can attract the audience's attention has positive content, can build virtual relationships, and get support from the audience in the form of increasing followers, likes, comments, shares, and messages (Maeskina & Hidayat, 2022).

Third, understand the behavior of digital audiences. This determines interesting content and develops high-quality content according to the audience. Active interaction on digital media can be used as a promotional medium that can increase engagement (Chitra & Oktavianti, 2019). Generally, applications include original, unique infographics and storytelling. Third, strengthen relationships with various parties such as journalists, influencers and other content creators to get high-quality interactions and get media coverage. Fourth, Integrate digital Public Relations. Segregated audiences, encouraging public relations practitioners to spread messages across multiple, complementary channels can result in a random group of followers rather than a cohesive community. This step can maximize the reach of a larger audience. This condition really depends on the uniqueness of the content which is truly unique and offers a new perspective. This is important with the abundance of information encouraging the emergence of a digital space that is already biased towards content.

The challenge of digital public relations: How to Manage Crisis communications from information uncertainty

Information bias that arises from data overload often creates uncertainty about the veracity of the information. In this situation, public relations is responsible for building an online reputation in the media. The Public Relations division in an organization is very important in constructing media relations between the institution and existing mass media institutions (Setiawan et al., 2019). Crisis identification is carried out by monitoring news coverage through the mass media, crisis analysis, and providing explanations to the media in a transparent manner (Widhara, 2023) which are generally carried out by public relations practitioners. In managing crisis communications from information uncertainty, there are several strategies that can be implemented in the digital era.

First, is information transparency. The ability to be honest and open is often implemented in a limited way by public relations practitioners. This includes company interests and anticipates wildly

developing information. Ensuring information is clear, accurate, and measurable has become a difficult task in the digital era. This effort requires measurable analytical sources that rely on data rather than intuition. Public relations has an important role as a mediator in disseminating information to make it easier for the public to access the information provided. Digitalization as a form of public relations adapts by utilizing new media to convey information in order to realize transparency in the public information (Anggraini & Maulida, 2023).

Second, planning an appropriate crisis response. Identification of potential risks will direct the communication that will be delivered and the steps that will be taken, including determining the message to be conveyed, using media channels, and the communicator who conveys it. Public relations practitioners who speculate on an event will reduce the quality of information. Moreover, in the digital era, every crisis will easily go viral on social media and have a negative impact on companies/institutions. A good crisis communication strategy for maintaining an image is important (Vebriyanto & Puspitawhardani, 2023). Public relations must be responsive and have high awareness in carrying out early detection of potential crises, designing response plans, and carrying out transparent, credible, and accountable communications in order to maintain public trust and the organization's reputation (Utari et al., 2023). Third, carry out an evaluation. Overcoming communication crises and managing crises better requires a thorough evaluation of both those that have already been taken and those that are still in the process of being taken. This is important to avoid the same mistakes and determine content planning that avoids information bias later. This evaluation makes it possible to form a crisis team, putting forward clear, accurate, and up-to-date messages to the public. Be honest and convey empathy to the public. Maximizing mass media channels with message strategies aimed at showing concern can be a supporting factor in overcoming crisis communication (Mistar & Dewi, 2017).

The Ethics Of Digital Public Relations: How To Respond To Interactions In Online Reputation

The ability of public relations practitioners to communicate openly and accurately places ethics in information management. Including the ability to manage crises and respond to sensitive issues for institutions. This effort is to ensure that integrity is maintained in carrying out public relations duties in the digital era. Digital public relations requires a strong understanding of ethics. This includes aspects such as; First, ensuring accuracy and fairness in conveying information. The process of forming a positive image requires a moral foundation for public relations practitioners in carrying out reputation-building activities. Public Relations ethical actions in crisis management adhere to a professional code of ethics and behavioral guidelines to be able to behave or act professionally in decision-making, and what procedures are carried out objectively and can be accounted for (Indrayani,

2017). Accuracy and fairness will demonstrate trustworthiness and consideration of caution in access to communication and an attitude of respect and consideration of possible information that arises. Second, Respect privacy. Identifying multi-directional communication and multi-platform digital media in building interactions requires each user to responsibly respect every privacy that arises. In marketing public relations activities, the audience often has absolute power, making it possible for public relations practitioners to respect individual privacy and rights in the digital space. Paying attention to information according to the audience's needs is important.

Third, Prioritize transparency and accountability. Information transparency is an important factor in increasing public trust (Sofyani & Tahar, 2021). (Toha & Anoh, 2023) (Sulistiyowati, 2021; Sofyani & Tahar, 2021; Anggraini & Maulida, 2023). Fact bias often gives rise to arguments that threaten online reputations. This means that transparency is an important aspect that must be prioritized for public relations. Meanwhile, it is important to prioritize transparency and accountability in various information conveyed to the audience. Taking responsibility for communications and their potential impact is a fundamental ethical principle in digital public relations.

Ethical considerations in public relations in the digital era are very important. Increasing ethical capacity has a positive impact on reputation and image (Fadhilah et al., 2024). Public relations must be careful in using digital media in a correct, safe, and ethical way. This includes understanding what to prioritize and what to avoid when using digital media platforms. The use of social media and other digital tools in public relations requires a strong understanding of ethical principles to ensure responsible and effective communication. A Public Relations code of ethics is needed to solve problems to avoid misunderstandings in conveying information (Putri & Ambarwati, 2023). This condition places the importance of understanding the ethics of using digital media in a public relations context. In digital integration, a deep understanding of ethical considerations is important for Public Relations practitioners as ethical guidelines to ensure the appropriate and responsible use of digital platforms for Public Relations activities.

CONCLUSIONS

Digital Public Relations changes the form of practice that uses digital technology to build institutional reputation. The development of communication in the digital era requires Public Relations practitioners to be able to adapt by utilizing new media to establish communication and reach all audiences. Changing traditional public relations practices to digital public relations requires the ability and understanding of data analysis to support performance. The challenge of mastering information technology and understanding digital interactions is a challenge in building an online reputation. Efforts to maintain trust and improve the image to the public require ethical guidelines in building

consistency, transparency, and credibility in online reputation. Digital platforms are changing the way people interact online. This allows online reputation management to change quickly. These conditions require skills in monitoring digital interactions and responding quickly to comments that could damage your reputation. This condition places the importance of being able to manage crisis communication. Developing a public relations strategy that prioritizes data, overcomes capability gaps, respects privacy, and is innovative are skills that digital public relations practitioners must have.

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