

The Role of Government Public Relations in Digital Media in Building a Positive Image of the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of government public relations in utilizing digital media to build a positive image of the Provincial Government of Central Sulawesi. In the digital era, government public relations hold a strategic responsibility to deliver accurate, transparent, and relevant information to the public. However, various obstacles such as limited human resource capacity, the spread of misinformation, and digital infrastructure disparities often reduce the effectiveness of communication. This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method, involving in-depth interviews, digital media content analysis, and observations of public relations practices in the region. The findings reveal that the use of digital media by the public relations of the Provincial Government of Central Sulawesi still faces challenges in terms of consistency in information delivery and issue management on social media. Nevertheless, there is significant potential to improve the government's image through better-planned, collaborative, and inclusive digital communication strategies. This study provides recommendations to enhance human resource capacity, expand digital infrastructure reach, and strengthen response mechanisms to negative information on social media. These efforts are expected to enable public relations to effectively build trust and foster a harmonious relationship between the government and the public.

I. Introduction

Technological advances have changed the way people access and process information, including how the government delivers its public messages. Government public relations, which previously relied heavily on traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television, now have to adapt to the use of digital media. Digital media not only provides a wider reach, but also allows two-way interaction between the government and the public. This creates opportunities for the government to be more transparent, responsive, and relevant in building a positive image in the community.

A positive image is an important asset for the government to maintain legitimacy and public trust. In the context of democracy, people tend to judge government performance through the information they receive from the media. Government public relations has a strategic role to ensure that the narrative conveyed is able to describe government programs, policies, and achievements objectively but still attractively. When public relations is effective in building a positive narrative, it can increase public participation in government programs and support social stability. Image is an image or impression of a person or society that is perceived as good and bad as the acquisition of knowledge and experience that is formed either directly or gradually towards an institution or individual. According to Bill Canton (in Ishak & Darmawan, 2017) Image is "the impression of society, feelings, images of an organization or company, impressions that are deliberately made towards an organization, person or thing,"

Government public relations must be able to utilize digital media as a tool to build a constructive dialogue with the community. This involves using social media, official websites, and interactive applications to convey information that is relevant, accurate, and transparent. Furthermore, collaboration with various stakeholders, such as mass media and community leaders, can strengthen efforts to build a positive image. With a holistic approach, government public relations not only functions as a messenger, but also as a bridge that connects people's aspirations with government policies.

The transformation of public relations media provides a great opportunity for the government to build a positive image effectively. With a strategic approach, digital media can be used to convey program successes, disseminate policy information, and involve the community in the decision-making process. However, public relations also needs to face challenges in the form of negative information, hoaxes, or criticism that spreads quickly on social media. Therefore, adaptive, transparent, and innovative public relations is the key to utilizing the potential of digital media in supporting the government's efforts to build public trust.

In the digital era, the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government faces challenges as well as opportunities to build a positive image through digital media. Public Relations has a strategic role to convey information related to policies, development programs, and government achievements transparently to the public. Digital media allows for faster, wider, and more interactive communication, making public relations the

spearhead in creating a constructive relationship between the government and the people. With the increasing internet penetration in Central Sulawesi, the use of digital platforms such as social media, official websites, and technology-based applications is an effective means to reach the community, especially the young generation who are active in cyberspace.

Although digital media has become the main platform in public communication, the public relations of the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government has not fully maximized the potential of this technology to build a positive image. Many government agencies still rely on traditional communication methods or are less consistent in managing digital content. As a result, information about development policies or programs often does not reach the community at large or is not conveyed in an engaging and relevant way. In addition, the lack of monitoring and analysis of the dynamics of public conversations on social media makes the government often slow to respond to issues that have the potential to tarnish their image.

The Communication, Informatics, Cryptography and Statistics Office of Central Sulawesi Province as the Public Relations Officer of the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government plays an important role in efforts to build a positive image of the government through digital media. By utilizing various digital platforms such as social media, official websites, and mobile applications, the Central Sulawesi Province Communication, Informatics, Encryption and Statistics Office strives to convey information about government programs and policies to the public quickly and efficiently. Digital media provides an opportunity to interact directly with the public, so that information can be conveyed more personally and responsively.

The capacity of human resources and digital infrastructure are the main obstacles in the implementation of an effective public relations role in Central Sulawesi. Most PR personnel have not been trained in adaptive digital communication strategies, such as crisis management or content creation that suits the preferences of social media users. On the other hand, uneven internet access in several areas of Central Sulawesi has caused digital information from the government to be inaccessible to the entire community. This gap results in non-inclusive communication and limits the government's efforts to strengthen a positive image in the eyes of the public.

Based on the above background, the author is interested in conducting research on the role of government public relations in utilizing digital media to build and maintain a positive image of the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government in the midst of the challenges of the digital era.

This research is inspired by previous research, namely the Role of Public Relations in Shaping the Government Image (Lubis and Elsyah, 2012) The results of the study show that the role of Public Relations of the Riau Provincial Secretariat based on Regional Regulation Number 2 of 2005 has not been implemented optimally because the achievement of information tends to be one-way. The factors that hinder the Public Relations of the Riau Provincial Secretariat in forming a positive image of the Riau Provincial Government include human resources, political factors, the existing organizational structure in the Riau Provincial Government, and the inadequate

infrastructure to support public relations activities.

The next research is the *Digital Campaign* of City Government Public Relations Through Branding 'Bangga Surabaya' in Forming a Positive Image (Indrajayani, 2019) The results of the study show that the processing of information on a number of these channels makes the Digital Public Relations of the Surabaya City Government apply the role of *journalist in resident*. The positive image received by the community aims to foster trust and increase participation, so the community is expected to be involved with the government to make the city development program a success, expand the publication of good news about the city of Surabaya and help the government deal with the crisis.

II. Research Method

This type of research is a descriptive qualitative research with a case study approach, involving data collection through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The types of data used in this study are Primary Data and Secondary Data, Data Collection Techniques carried out by purposive sampling techniques, through in-depth interviews, Document Studies and Content Analysis. The informants in this study are Sudaryano Lamangkona, Head of the Central Sulawesi Provincial Communication, Informatics, Cryptography and Statistics Office, Abbas A. Rahim, Chairman of the Central Sulawesi Information Commission and Moh. Sukma Ananda, member of the public relations team of the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government.

III. Results and Discussion

The essence of the purpose of public relations in the world of government is to create various government programs that can form, improve and maintain a positive image and good reputation in order to obtain favorable public opinion, as well as the support and sympathy of the people or the public. The image of Public Relations is deliberately created in the world of government in the form of events, campaigns and programs (Ardianto in Lubis, 2012).

In maintaining a positive image of an organization, according to Datuela (2013) a public relations person must have a strategy in carrying out each of his duties. This is in line with Herdiana & Khoiruddin (2016:13) that to maintain a good image, an organization's public relations must have good communication, as well as good service so that the harmony between the organization and the public can last for a long time. More broadly, Nada, Rembang, & Reiner (2017:59) explained that public relations as a communication technician means that a public relations officer acts as a journalist and writes news that will later be published on the website of a government agency. Public relations has been equipped with writing techniques, so public relations are required to play a more active role in utilizing websites for news writing platforms. Adhrianti (2016:124) in his journal also mentioned that public relations has done its role well if it has consistency, belief, motivation, to continue to use social media to support public relations tasks in order to strengthen the image of the institution.

The existence of social media and online platforms in this digital era has significantly changed the landscape of public communication. This poses new challenges for public relations practitioners in building a positive image and increasing public participation in public policy. The public relations model on digital media is becoming increasingly important because it allows organizations or governments to interact directly with the public, disseminate information quickly, and expand the reach of their messages.

Building a positive image of the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government through digital media is a key strategy in the current information era. This approach leverages a variety of digital platforms to create a powerful narrative, reach a wider audience, and facilitate more dynamic interactions with the community. Through digital media, the government can present information in real-time, transparent, and interactive, which in turn can increase public trust and public participation. The following is a statement by Sudaryano Lamangkona, Head of the Central Sulawesi Province Communication, Informatics, Encryption and Statistics Office. :

Communication in digital media can help build a positive image of the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government by allowing them to better connect with the community directly and transparently. Through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, governments can convey information quickly, clearly, and easily understand, as well as provide updates on ongoing policies, programs, and activities. This can increase public trust in the government, as they feel more involved and get accurate information directly without going through intermediaries that can cause distortions”

In this increasingly advanced digital era, the role of social media has become inevitable in public communication strategies, especially for regional heads in the context of local government (Alim & Rahmawati, 2021). Social media offers a strong platform to interact directly with citizens, convey information, and build a positive leadership image (Ardhito et al., 2020).

One of the key aspects of this strategy is the effective use of social media. The Central Sulawesi Provincial Government actively manages official accounts on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Through these platforms, the government not only disseminates information about policies and programs, but also shares success stories, highlights of important events, and educational content about regional potential. The use of engaging visual content such as infographics, short videos, and high-quality photos helps in conveying messages more effectively and capturing the attention of digital audiences.

The digital content marketing strategy is also applied to build a positive narrative about Central Sulawesi. This includes the publication of blog articles, e-books, and newsletters that discuss various aspects of regional development, investment potential, and the uniqueness of local culture. Thematic digital campaigns, such as tourism promotion or environmental awareness movements, are organized regularly to increase public engagement and awareness. The use of data analytics technology allows governments to measure the effectiveness of their digital strategies, understand public

sentiment, and tailor communication approaches according to the needs and preferences of the audience. With a comprehensive and innovative approach in the use of digital media, the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government strives to build an image as a modern, responsive, and community service-oriented government.

However, the Central Sulawesi Provincial Communication, Informatics, Cryptography and Statistics Office as well as the Public Relations of the Provincial Government face challenges because they do not have a definitive communication strategy. Without a clear strategy, communication efforts through digital media often run without a planned direction. As a result, the message you want to convey may be inconsistent and less effective in reaching your intended audience. This condition also makes it difficult to evaluate the success and impact of communication activities that have been carried out.

To overcome this problem, it is important for the Central Sulawesi Provincial Communication, Informatics, Cryptography and Statistics Office to immediately develop a comprehensive digital communication strategy. This strategy should include audience analysis, determination of communication goals, key messages to be conveyed, and selection of the right digital platform. With a planned strategy, the Central Sulawesi Provincial Communication, Informatics, Cryptography and Statistics Office can ensure that every published content has a clear purpose and its success can be measured. It will also help in optimizing the use of resources and improving the effectiveness of communication.

The management of media-owned public communication media is carried out by determining the editorial team, standard operating procedures, public information to be published and updating the content of the media and evaluating the management media of online media (website) and social media (facebook account, twitter, Instagram and youtube) which is carried out by sending content and ensuring that the content is received and disseminated through predetermined media, So a special team or a separate team is needed. This is because social media has specificity compared to other media. which is transforming as one of the most familiar sources of information with the public.

For this purpose, it is necessary to form a team dedicated to managing the institution's social media accounts. The social media team is an inseparable part of the editorial board so that it is integrated with all public communication media management activities of the Central Sulawesi Provincial Office of Communication, Informatics, Cryptography and Statistics. The following is Sudaryano Lamangkona's statement:

"Social media is a means to provide information related to the results and achievements of programs and activities that have been implemented by the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government. But, if we don't have the vision and enthusiasm to disseminate information in accordance with our main duties, what can the public know?"

The statement discusses the role of social media in the dissemination of government information and the importance of vision and enthusiasm in carrying out the task. Social media is a very effective platform to disseminate information about the

results and achievements of programs and activities that have been carried out by the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government.

Technically, this team was formed with competent personnel, so that the Central Sulawesi Province Communication, Informatics, Cryptography and Statistics Office can produce more interesting and relevant content for the community, as well as increase positive interaction between the government and citizens. Thus, even though it currently does not have a definitive communication strategy, the Central Sulawesi Provincial Communication, Informatics, Cryptography and Statistical Office can continue to develop and improve its digital communication efforts to build a positive image of the government in the eyes of the public. The following is an interview with Moh. Sukma Ananda, member of the public relations team of the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government:

"The mechanism for dividing the reporting work team at the Communication and Informatics Office usually consists of three main teams, namely: The Release Team is in charge of making and compiling press release scripts from the results of the reporting, and focuses on making written information that will be published through various media. The Vidcon team prepares devices, ensures the network, and supports the smooth running of online activities, while the Video coverage team, plays a role in recording activities in the field, taking documentation in the form of videos and photos, and packaging them into content that is ready to be published"

One of the ideas of the Central Sulawesi Provincial Communication, Informatics, Cryptography and Statistics Office in implementing digital public relations is InfokuST (Central Sulawesi Special Information) which is a large forum with sub-systems that support each other in large in supporting government public relations, especially audiovisual in digital media in transmitting and disseminating the policies of the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government The following is Sudaryano Lamangkona's explanation :

"InfokuST (Central Sulawesi Special Information) is a digital platform designed to support the public relations of the Central Sulawesi Provincial government. As a large platform with mutually supportive sub-systems, InfokuST focuses on audiovisual in digital media to transmit and disseminate government policies to the public effectively and efficiently, by having a variety of mutually supportive sub-systems, including audiovisual information systems, social media platforms and government websites. All of these sub-systems work together to effectively disseminate information, increasing community engagement."

Based on the explanation of the informant above, it can be known that the sub-system of InfokuST is as follows:

1. InfokuST Newsroom which is a media center for public relations on social media;
2. InfokuST TV which specializes in audiovisual news packaging;
3. Megalist (an acronym for MEGALIT CENTRAL SULAWESI or can also be interpreted as BIG LIST) which specializes in podcast format, in conveying the achievements and

development of work programs in the Regional Apparatus Organization within the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government on digital media.

- a. COMMUNICATION, a Digital Production House that targets MSME profile features to be published.

In addition to the 4 sub-systems above, an audiovisual-based Public Information Channel called "Central Sulawesi Doors" is currently being initiated and developed. This channel is planned to be a channel that catalyzes all the products of the 4 platforms above in several event segments that transmit information about activity programs that have been, are and will be carried out by the Regional Apparatus, which can be accessed through social media platforms managed by the IKP Division of the Central Sulawesi Provincial Office of Communication, Informatics, Cryptography and Statistics. This is closely related to the transmission of information regarding the positive image of Central Sulawesi Province in digital TV media.

In addition, the breakthrough made by the Central Sulawesi Provincial Communication, Informatics, Cryptography and Statistics Office in building a positive image of the Government in digital media is "The Governor of Central Sulawesi Greets the Village" which uses the online conference media Zoom and in the relay via YouTube to conduct virtual face-to-face meetings between regional leaders and village heads, so that the aspirations of the community are representative and conveyed directly to the Governor. The following is Sudaryano Lamangkona's statement:

"If we associate it with efforts to build a positive image, it lies in the impression created by this program. Through the use of digital technology, the Central Sulawesi government can show its commitment to serving all levels of society, including in remote areas. The program also emphasizes that the government is open to dialogue and public input, which can increase public trust and support. In addition, documentation and publication of this activity on social media can expand the reach of positive messages, strengthen the perception that the provincial government cares, is responsive, and proactive in getting closer to the people"

Based on the researcher's observations, the use of digital media, which was initially used during COVID-19, turned out to have benefits and became a measuring tool that the narrative of Government programs conveyed through social media can be accepted by the public who become a target for "audiences who are exposed to information related to local government programs and policies" as communicators.

The application of digital media in public relations of the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government plays an important role in building public awareness. With the increasing use of the internet and smartphones, social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have become the main channels for governments to convey information, programs, and policies to the public. Through engaging and interactive content, governments can not only reach a wider audience but also create direct engagement, which is essential for improving public understanding of the issues at hand.

With its wide reach and ability to reach various levels of society, social media is a

strategic tool in increasing government transparency. Information disseminated through social media can help the public understand the development and efforts of the government in developing the region, as well as appreciate the achievements that have been achieved, and emphasize the importance of government information disclosure to the public, which is an important aspect of good governance.; Recognizing the important role of social media as a modern communication tool between the government and the community. The following is an excerpt of an interview with Abbas A. Rahim, Chairman of the Central Sulawesi Information Commission:

"The duties and functions of public relations are carried out so that public relations in the current era is not the same as public relations in the past, so the communication of the current local government, I think it is quite communicative because what is especially in what case, in what terms is information disclosure, I think the local government has carried out what is the order of the law"

However, challenges remain in creating effective awareness. While digital media allows for two-way communication, not all segments of society have the same access, especially in remote areas. The varying levels of digital literacy also affect people's ability to absorb and understand the information conveyed. Therefore, the government needs to ensure that the content created is easy to understand and accessible to all levels of society. This includes the use of simple language and attractive visuals, as well as conducting training for the public on how to use digital media to get the right information. The preparation of communication strategies has a high urgency in relation to building a positive image of the government in digital media. In today's digital era, information moves very quickly and is easily accessible to the public. Without a clear communication strategy, the government can lose control of the evolving narrative, leading to miscommunication or the spread of inaccurate information. A good communication strategy will help the government in conveying a consistent and accurate message to the public, so that a positive image can be formed and maintained.

A definitive communication strategy also allows the government to set clear communication goals. With measurable goals, the government can evaluate the effectiveness of any campaign or initiative carried out in digital media. This evaluation is important to understand what works and what needs to be improved, so that the government can continue to improve the quality of its communication. Without a clear goal, communication efforts can become unfocused and not deliver the expected results. Communication strategies help in the identification of the right target audience. Digital media provides access to various demographics and segments of society. With a good strategy, the government can adjust the message and delivery method to be more relevant to the intended audience. Messages conveyed in a way that suits the preferences of the audience will be more effective and have a greater impact in shaping a positive public opinion towards the government.

In addition to developing strategies, increasing the capacity and skills of human resources in the field of digital communication is also very important. Training on social media management, digital content creation, and data analysis will help the staff of the

Central Sulawesi Provincial Communication, Informatics, Cryptography and Statistics Office to be more proficient in managing digital communication.

If implemented in the context of a positive image of the Government, public relations has the goal of implementing all government work programs which are expected to form, improve and maintain a positive image and good reputation in order to obtain a positive public view, as well as get public support and sympathy, as well as how effective communication can strengthen a positive image through the right public relations strategy. The end result is a more comprehensive understanding of the importance of effective communication in building and maintaining a positive image of the organization. Research by Yananingtyas and Irwansyah (2020) found that the image of government institutions, especially the DKI Jakarta Provincial Government, is to improve the relationship between the community and government institutions by containing answers that are in accordance with community complaints without having to use answer templates and complaints. In addition, Public Relations must be able to manage relations with the media well because the role of the media is very large in the formation of the government's image, as explained by Kusumastuti (in Annisa, 2024) that government public relations is formed not for political purposes, but to publicize the policies made. Public Relations must provide information regularly about policies, plans, work results, and provide understanding and understanding of everything that has an impact on people's lives, the existence of this understanding and understanding which will later affect the image of the government, especially in the digital era.

Each government agency has a certain way to improve the image of government institutions. Government institutions must continue to follow the development of technology that has existed in the community. Thus, public engagement with government institutions increases, ultimately useful for improving the image of each government institution. Government institutions want the image that arises from the community to be a positive image. A positive image and good reputation in the eyes of the public can be obtained if government institutions continue to improve how to systematically provide information and assistance to the community, so that the success of government public relations in digital media is not only measured by the number of followers or interactions, but also by the impact produced. If the government is able to build effective communication, provide transparent information, and involve the public in the decision-making process, then this will create a strong foundation for social and economic development. Thus, public relations in digital media is a vital tool to create a harmonious relationship between the government and the community, which ultimately supports sustainable development.

The government's positive image cannot be separated from the interest/interest/interest that is divided from interesting communication narratives, the use of digital production houses in building creative content, not just ceremonial content. This measurement can be in the form of a qualitative scale, by taking into account the variables of netizens' interest based on content analysis.

The importance of audience awareness in the public relations of the Central Sulawesi Provincial government through digital media cannot be underestimated,

considering that digital media is the main channel of communication with the community. To increase public awareness, the government needs to implement a proactive and integrated communication strategy. This includes the development of informative and engaging content, as well as the optimization of the use of various digital platforms. Governments should leverage social media, websites, and mobile apps to reach audiences in a way that suits their preferences. Content must be tailored to the characteristics of each platform, so that the message can be conveyed clearly and effectively.

In addition, community participation in the communication process must be encouraged. Governments can develop mechanisms to gather feedback from audiences, which will provide valuable insights into how messages are being received. Online discussion forums, polls, and question-and-answer sessions can be effective methods for public engagement. By involving the community in dialogue, the government not only strengthens their awareness but also builds a sense of ownership and trust in the policies implemented. This involvement is considered important to create a more transparent and communicative relationship. Based on the researcher's observations, Digital Public Relations in... The positive image of the Government cannot be separated from the following key factors: Adaptive; Disruptive; *Mind Control* and *Duplicating Habit*.

Several studies analyzed by researchers related to government public relations in digital media and considering the conditions, content analysis and research results, especially in the Central Sulawesi Provincial Office of Communication, Informatics, Cryptography and Statistics as the Public Relations of the Provincial Government, the researcher formulated an opinion where the success of the role of government public relations in digital media in supporting a positive image of the government can be measured and/or meet the variables determined by the strategy Appropriate and relevant communication with the flow of information management by utilizing digital media through the ability of human resources (skills) in creating communication narratives or copywriting and interesting graphic and audiovisual content, not just ceremonial content, will help improve the positive image of the Government.

IV. Kesimpulan

The public relations model on digital media implemented by the Central Sulawesi Provincial Communication, Informatics, Cryptography, and Statistics Office plays a strategic role in building a positive image of the government and increasing public participation in public policy. By utilizing digital platforms, the agency can disseminate transparent and accurate information, strengthen direct interaction with residents, and respond quickly to feedback. Planned and sustainable digital campaigns not only improve public perception of the government, but also encourage active participation of the public in the decision-making process. The effective use of digital media allows agencies to reach a wider audience, convey messages efficiently, and rally public support for various government initiatives and programs, thereby creating a

stronger relationship between the government and the community. Through optimizing the use of digital media, the government can build a positive image and increase public trust in their institutions. In the increasingly evolving digital era, government public relations must continue to adapt and innovate to face new challenges, ensuring that the messages conveyed are relevant and have an impact on all elements of society

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