



Public Relations Strategy in Improving the Image of East Java Regional Development Planning Agency: A Review of Its Digitalization Strategy

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT:

Keywords:

Brand Image,
Digitalization Strategy,
Public Relations Strategy,
Social Media Strategy

Article History:

Received: April 1, 2024
Revised: May 29, 2024
Accepted: July 11, 2024
Available online: August 30, 2024

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This study analyzes the strategies used in digitalization to improve the image of East Java Regional Development Planning Agency. This study used qualitative research methods. The data were collected using interviews and observation. The subjects of this study were multimedia division employees with public relations roles and relevant experience. The indicators used in this research are fact-finding, planning, action and communication, and evaluation. The results show that public relations at East Java Regional Development Planning Agency is more active in using digital media, such as Instagram and websites to improve the agency's image. The strategies implemented by prioritizing aspects of information disclosure according to facts packaged using post designs that are attractive, contemporary and have philosophical value are actually quite effective. However, regarding engagement statistics, Instagram is considered less effective in attracting people's activity, and the same goes for the website. However, a comprehensive evaluation can help the Public Relations of East Java Regional Development Planning Agency improve, reorganize, and innovate in creating more optimal strategies to maintain a positive reputation, improve the image, and strengthen public trust in East Java Regional Development Planning Agency.

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INTRODUCTION

Public Relations is essential for both commercial and non-commercial organizations (Syahputra et al., 2018; Judge, 2019; Mahmud et al., 2019). Meanwhile, public relations is an activity that aims to gain goodwill, trust, mutual understanding, and a good image from the public (Effendy, 1989). Public relations is vital for organizations to build trust, goodwill, mutual understanding, and a positive public image to ensure accurate and precise communication of information to both internal and external audiences in a clear and accessible manner (Syahputra et al., 2018). This is especially needed by government institutions, namely organizations that carry out state duties and are closely related to the needs of society. Thus, public relations directly convey information to the public, is a crucial thing that needs to be paid attention to by government institutions, including East Java Regional Development Planning Agency.

The Regional Development Planning Agency (Regional Development Planning Agency) is headed by Chief, who reports to the Governor through the Regional Secretary. Focused on research and regional development planning, Regional Development Planning Agency, as a government institution, must convey essential information to the public. This organization has used digital media as part of its public relations efforts, leveraging platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and its official website to share information. These platforms, accessible via the Internet, ensure that many online users can easily access the content.

Social media is crucial for East Java Regional Development Planning Agency as an effective tool for public information dissemination (Cahyani, 2020). Its design enables expanded social interaction without space and time constraints, leveraging Internet and web technologies (Novianti et al., 2020). This means you can quickly disseminate and receive information through social media and reach a broad community. Social media also makes it easier for the public to express protests, complaints, or suggestions to government institutions (Iriantara, 2019). Therefore, East Java Regional Development Planning Agency utilizes social media and websites to advance digitalization in public relations, ensuring accessible information for the entire community.

Despite the ease of information dissemination, Regional Development Planning Agency faces challenges in the social media era, where an overwhelming flow of information often leaves people unable to distinguish credible news from hoaxes (Fitriarti, 2019). This has the potential to be misused by spreading fake news (Hoax) related to Regional Development Planning Agency. The existence of fake news indeed not only endangers Regional

Development Planning Agency but also dangerous for the society. An example of fake news and fraud spread regarding Regional Development Planning Agency is that irresponsible parties spread the provision of financial assistance to several parties in the name of East Java Regional Development Planning Agency. To address these challenges, Regional Development Planning Agency must promptly respond to reports of misinformation by issuing rebuttal statements. East Java Regional Development Planning Agency uses its Instagram account to refute fake news, such as clarifying that it never promised financial assistance to certain parties. This ensures public trust and preserves Regional Development Planning Agency's positive image.

Looking at the community satisfaction index with Regional Development Planning Agency's performance based on a survey in January - September 2023, it received a B (Good) rating with a score of 85.51, which means that the service and image of East Java *Regional Development Planning Agency* in the eyes of the community is good, but must continue to be improved while maintaining services and relationships, Good with society. Thus, this study aims to determine the role of East Java Regional Development Planning Agency's public relations in improving the government's image by using digital media and its strategies. East Java Regional Development Planning Agency is the place for this research because it has implemented digital media in its public relations duties, which is relevant to the study.

This study is crucial in the digital era, where the rapid spread of information often leads to public acceptance of fake news, potentially harming the image of the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda). Maintaining a positive public image is essential for credibility as a government institution. This study explores the digitalization strategies used by public relations team to preserve its reputation and counter hoax-related issues. The findings provide valuable insights for stakeholders, particularly public relations departments in government institutions, on using digital media to improve institutional image. In addition, this study helps readers understand digital strategies to improve the reputation of government institutions, especially the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency

METHOD

This study used descriptive qualitative research methods to interpret phenomena that occur and involves various existing methods from natural or actual conditions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The descriptive qualitative method analyses, summarises, and describes

conditions from various information obtained through interviews or field observations of the problem to be studied (Wirartha & Hardjono, 2006).

The data consisted of primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected using observation, documentation and in-depth interviews conducted at East Java Regional Planning and Development Agency. Secondary data was collected through a literature review relating to the role of public relations and the use of digital media in government institutions. The object studied is the role of public relations and its strategy in improving the image of the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency by utilizing digital media. According to (Pakaradena et al., 2019) the role of public relations includes four functions: fact gathering, planning, action and communication, and evaluation (Priambodo & Rosy, 2023).

Table 1. Indicators of the Role of Public Relations

Variable	Indicators
Public Relations Strategy	Fact Finding
	Planning
	Action and Communication
	Evaluation

The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's framework, which involves four steps: data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Sugiyono, 2019). The triangulation method is needed to validate the information by comparing interview data from several informants and observation results (Susanto et al., 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Digitalization of Public Relations in East Java Regional Development Planning Agency

In the era of globalization, advancements in information and communication technology improve efficiency, accelerate information transfer, expand outreach, and promote transparency, including within government operations (Firdaus et al., 2021). In the era of autonomy, strategies are essential for achieving good governance. E-Government, a facet of digital government, involves delivering services through ICT systems and utilizing the internet within the governmental framework (Ilham, 2021). The government needs the application of information technology to support work. Therefore, there is a need for a computerized government system or e-government; apart from that, there is a need to increase superior human resources and education in the technology field. This is because technology can be run optimally when managed by experts in the field. To support e-government, the government, especially the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency, has prepared and used digital

media to improve Regional Development Planning Agency's services and image. The following is the statement made by the informant:

"At Regional Development Planning Agency, we are active on Instagram and the website. Apart from that, it is also on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube...."[I01]

"Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube also make podcasts and websites..."[I02]

"...if there are many media, namely Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, websites."[I03]

The informant's statement shows that the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency uses social media, particularly Instagram and its website, to enhance its services and image. While both platforms serve different purposes, the website offers detailed features, including an agency profile, news, publications, policies, and comprehensive service standards. Miyanto & Rahayu (2017) showed that the implementation of the Website provides benefits for the public to search for information and makes it easier for the public to give criticism and suggestions.

Meanwhile, information management on Instagram media contains activity information or daily activity publications. Daily activity publications can be in meetings and soft news. The features on Instagram allow people to communicate by exchanging messages or providing comments in the form of questions, criticism, or suggestions. Research (Al Rahma et al., 2022) also revealed that Instagram can give space for interaction between account owners and their followers by utilizing existing features such as the tag, share, reply, comment, and direct message features.

Content Creation Planning Strategy

Public Relations at East Java Regional Development Planning Agency has several planning strategies for creating content by using social media to improve the image of East Java Regional Development Planning Agency. At the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) conference entitled "Perfecting PR Strategy" in London in 2007, Ruth Yearley, Planning Director of the Ketchum London Public Relations Consulting Bureau, stated that "A strategy is an intellectual explanation that helps the team and all parties involved in a public relations program understand what needs to be achieved and how to achieve it" (Prayudi, 2012). The content creation planning strategy must pay attention to the quality and relevance

of information. Therefore, researchers obtained data from the interview statements submitted by informants.

"We brand the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency as an office that is open, not monotonous, and follows trends..." (I01)

"We always upload work programs like what has been carried out by the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency as a form of transparency to the public..." (I02)

"We make interesting innovations in every content we create..." (I03)

The East Java Regional Development Planning Agency prioritizes openness towards the community so that the public knows how the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency is performing and minimizes the public's negative views of the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency. This strategy aims to communicate precise and accurate information to the public and can create a positive image for the agency. Public relations brand the image of the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency office by utilizing social media via websites and Instagram. Public Relations at the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency ensures engaging content through innovative, contemporary designs with philosophical value. Their strategic planning is grounded in informed decisions, combining communication science and creative artistry (Smith, 2017).

Implementation of Public Relations Strategy

The implementation stage consists of three elements: action strategies, communication strategies, and program implementation plans (Pakaradena et al., 2019). The first element is the action strategy, which describes the activities of East Java Regional Development Planning Agency Public Relations. As explained by the informant, public relations plans to use digital media to improve East Java Regional Development Planning Agency's image.

".....we usually also advertise several agenda posts on national TV or online news. We also collaborate with the mass media..." (I01)

".....publishing content on Instagram related to work programs" (I02)

".....we always provide innovation in every video and image with designs that follow trends" (I03)

Then the second element is related to communication strategy, where communication is crucial for East Java Regional Development Planning Agency to maintain its good image.

Communication strategy planning is based on goals and planning, in which each option is carefully considered. Decision-making is based on the foundations carried out by the organization (Nurrahayu & Chatamalah, 2020). In this case, East Java Regional Development Planning Agency Public Relations uses social media to convey information to the public. It is known that disseminating information via social media is undoubtedly very beneficial for the community. In addition to narrative-based information, objective evidence of East Java Regional Development Planning Agency's performance is provided through documentation. This approach, explained in the interview, helps maintain and improve the agency's public image via social media.

".....manage social media well by uploading posts regularly, providing facts and fighting hoaxes." (I01)

".....uploading content related to progress in infrastructure development, tourism and government achievements..." (I02)

".....providing information that is not half-assed and based on facts, do not report hoax news, and do not report news that badmouths other agencies or people." (I03)

Public relations communicate to improve the image of the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency by conveying excellent and factual information. Openness of information can increase public trust in formulating policies and steps from government institutions related to the interests of the community (Azka & Najicha, 2022). The East Java Regional Development Planning Agency must comply to statutory regulations, including Law No. 14 of 2008 on Public Information Openness, Article 2(1), which states, "Every public information is open and accessible to all users." (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2008 Concerning Openness of Public Information, 2008). This means that information needs to be published to the public so that they can study it to evaluate performance (Kapahang et al., 2020). However, the published information helps to increase society's active role in making public policies, not excluding information that could endanger the security of society and the state.

Based on this data, it is known that East Java Regional Development Planning Agency has used digital media to publish content, which can be videos or image designs and convey information. Combining the elements of action and communication creates a strategy as a program. At East Java Regional Development Planning Agency Public Relations, the program implemented is in the form of content produced and then published based on a structured

posting schedule so that essential days are not missed for publication. As stated by the following informant.

"The pattern for uploading activities is conditional, adapting to existing agendas/activities. But usually, there are always posts at least once a day. Meanwhile, content outside activities, namely greeting content for important days, will adjust the date." [I01]

Based on the information obtained, East Java Regional Development Planning Agency Public Relations has implemented strategies, including action strategies, communication strategies, and programs implemented using social media. However, East Java Regional Development Planning Agency also adheres to its principles and complies with the law regarding disseminating information to the public.

Evaluation of Public Relations Strategy

The final planning step evaluates feedback to ensure efficiency and prepares for strategy implementation and outcomes (Wulandari & Widyasanty, 2021). Adjustments were made based on feedback regarding the success of the public relations strategy in improving the image of the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency. Program evaluation is a systematic measurement of the effectiveness of each plan that has been implemented to determine whether it has achieved the stated objectives. The program evaluation consists of three stages: implementation report, progress report, and final evaluation (Nurrahayu & Chatamalah, 2020). In the implementation report stage, public relations conveys information and various activities carried out by the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency, including the Head of the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency. Examples include the achievements achieved by the Province of East Java, published via the website, and the activities of the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency, uploaded via Instagram. The aim is to provide a complete picture of the actions and steps implemented in the public relations strategy.

At the progress report stage, public relations evaluates the progress of the strategies implemented. This report contains information regarding the development of the strategy implemented and whether it shows significant improvement and can achieve the targets set by the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency. Evaluation at this stage of the progress report helps identify initial successes in strategy implementation and gaps that need to be adjusted. In the final stage, namely the final evaluation stage, public relations carries out a

comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of all strategies that have been implemented. Based on this data, the researcher obtained a statement from the interview results on whether the strategy implemented had effectively improved the image of the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency. The results of the interview statements conveyed by the informants are as follows.

"Quite effective, so far the content we have created in our data shows that the growth of Regional Development Planning Agency followers shows positive numbers every year... (I01)

"The strategy implemented is quite effective, especially for content that involves many people. For example, employees who are in the frame of the content tend to share it on their respective Instagram stories immediately." (I02)

"Of course, it is effective; we are also expanding our content by collaborating with the East Java Provincial Government OPD to provide a lot of information so that the whole community knows all the information easily on our social media..." (I03)

At the evaluation stage, data were collected by observing the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency's Instagram account to assess whether uploaded content engaged the public and encouraged participation, aspirations, or support. Instagram was chosen for its higher activity compared to other platforms. However, in recent months, most posts received no public comments. On average, each Instagram reel garnered 1,000 views, while the account had 7,336 followers as of June 7, 2024, indicating a disproportionate engagement relative to its follower count.

In addition to Instagram, the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency manages a website to share news, planning documents, and performance and accountability reports with the public. This aligns with Othman et al. (2011), who emphasized that websites are crucial channels for organizations to communicate and demonstrate openness and responsiveness to community concerns. Observations show that the agency regularly publishes news about activities and annually submits accessible accountability reports. However, public engagement with website articles remains low. A thorough evaluation could help the agency's Public Relations team improve strategies, reorganize efforts, or innovate to maintain a positive reputation, improve its image, and strengthen public trust.

Regional Development Planning Agency also creates an optimal strategy: to maintain public trust in preventing hoaxes or distorted news, as happened in Regional Development Planning Agency East Java, with parties spreading fake news on behalf of Regional

Development Planning Agency East Java. In response, Regional Development Planning Agency East Java made a strategy to prevent the spread of fake news or hoaxes; the first is by clarifying quickly and precisely when hoaxes or fake news is found on behalf of Regional Development Planning Agency. Regional Development Planning Agency must provide official clarification through the website, social media, and mass media. Because quick and responsive clarification will help minimize the negative impact of the hoax. Second, Regional Development Planning Agency has a multimedia team, one of which is tasked with actively monitoring news circulating in the community, especially on social media. If there is hoax news that has the potential to damage the image of development or cause unrest, this team immediately provides clarification. Third, Regional Development Planning Agency posts open and transparent publications about every project, program, or activity on social media. Through a comprehensive strategy, Regional Development Planning Agency will be better prepared to handle challenges such as spreading hoaxes or fake news using East Java Regional Development Planning Agency. The success of this strategy lies in rapid response and transparency in the delivery of information to maintain public trust in Regional Development Planning Agency East Java.

CONCLUSION

Public relations is vital in building a good image of East Java Regional Development Planning Agency, characterized by public relations work closely related to the community. East Java Regional Development Planning Agency Public Relations has utilized digital media to improve Regional Development Planning Agency's services and image, namely through Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and the Website. However, East Java Regional Development Planning Agency is more active in using Instagram and its website. The use of digital media aims to show the transparency of East Java Regional Development Planning Agency's performance to the public, reduce fake news, and convey information and facts to the public. Public Relations at Regional Development Planning Agency East Java has also carried out its role by implementing various strategies to improve the agency's image and reputation. Thus, the strategy implemented by prioritizing aspects of information disclosure according to facts packaged using post designs that are attractive, contemporary, and have philosophical value is quite adequate, as marked by an increase in the number of Instagram followers. As time passes, the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency can collaborate with various Regional

Apparatus Organizations of the East Java Provincial Government to provide more information to the public.

Despite regular activity on Instagram and the website, public engagement, such as comments, remains low, showing limited effectiveness in fostering interaction. However, the consistent efforts of Public Relations in disseminating information with transparency and validity are expected to maintain the East Java Regional Development Planning Agency's positive image. These efforts also aim to prevent negative perceptions and avoid the spread of misinformation, ensuring the agency's reputation remains good image in the public eye.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank the Universitas Negeri Surabaya, East Java Regional Development Planning Agency, all experts, and all friends who helped us finish this study. We hope that this research can be helpful for readers such as students, lecturers, researchers on the same topic, and others.

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