



## **PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE DIGITAL ERA: CASE STUDY OF THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY GOVERNMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS IN ANRI**

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### A B S T R A C T

In the digital era, public organizations are inevitably required to adapt interactions with the public and manage information through online communication. This activity became one of the tasks carried by government public relations (PR). The objective of this research describes how the use of micro-level social media in public organizations to achieve PR objectives. The research locus is the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI). The research method used is qualitative. Data were collected through interviews and document studies. The result indicates that micro social media has been used ANRI since 2014, namely: Twitter and Facebook. In managing of social media, it is found that the PR model is asymmetric, the PR strategy is dominated by the proactive strategy with transparent communication type. The reactive strategy used deliberate inaction strategy. Social engagement in social media is still considered minimal. There is some information content that has significant attention, which is considered to have relevance to current issues, humanist and has a high historical value. PR in ANRI have realized the importance of managing social media and communication models that should be implemented, but in reality, hasn't been able optimally. This is because there are obstacles related to the organization policy, the capacity of social media managers.

### INTRODUCTION

The advancement of information technology has a tremendous impact on society. According to data from the Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers in 2016, the penetration of internet users in Indonesia reached 132.7 million people from the total population of 256.2 million people (APJII, 2016). This means that 51.79% of Indonesia's population is already using the internet.

In the digital era, public organizations are inevitably sued to adapt and balance the use of information technology and make online communication. This is nothing but a form of

organizational adaptation to the digital environment (Kartikawangi, 2015) as well as a requirement for the organization to remain able to maintain its existence in the digital era.

Interaction between the public with the organization as well as organizational information management through online communication becomes one of the tasks carried by government public relations (PR) in public organization. The presence of PR in the virtual world is important, because in the digital environment there is a variety of potentially ambiguous information flows, especially when determining whether the government or outside

organization is delivering the message (Gregory, 2005; Kovacs, 2006; in Hopkins, 2015).

Various social media platforms have become a tool for PR practitioners to perform their duties (Vercic, Vercic, and Sriramesh, 2015). Therefore, many areas of work related to public relations, information technology and communication with various job locus and this becomes an opportunity for researchers to conduct research.

In this paper, the authors will examine how the use of social media, especially microblogging and social networking in public organizations to achieve PR goals. The research locus is the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI). ANRI is chosen because ANRI assumes state duty in the archive field, where one of its tasks is to manage the archives of information-rich history and is likely to have potential for the image and reputation of the organization if it is well managed through social media.

## LITERATURE AND METHODS

### Definition of Public Relations

PR is the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance (Grunig dan Hunt, 1984). Government PR focus on the use of public relations functions by public organizations to achieve the vision and mission of public organization (Grunig, 2009). Therefore, government PR have an important role in evaluating public attitudes towards government policies, implementing program planning and action so that the public understand and accept the policies set by the government.

PR is very important at all levels. The most effective PR position in public organizations is where government PR is involved in the participation, consultation, or strategic decision making within the organization. In such a position, PR is in a strategic position because it can identify stakeholders who will be affected by the organization's decision or who will influence the decision (Grunig, 2009). In other words, the PR

position in the "neck" organizational structure. In the context of government PR in Indonesia, Rakhmadi (2015) states that there are four fundamental issues, namely the gap of public expectations with government performance; organization and human resources; public relations infrastructure; as well as internal and external support.

### Digital Public Relations

The use of internet technology for public relations activities, also known as cyber PR or digital PR. There are various definitions of digital public relations, according to Onggo (2004), digital PR is a PR initiative that uses the Internet as a medium of publicity. Digital PR is also seen as the implementation of PR function in cyberspace (Doherty, 1995; Galloway, 2005). Therefore, digital PR is the implementation of PR programs by utilizing digital media to communicate with the public (Laksamana, 2015).

### PR Model

Grunig and Hunt (1984) said there are four public relations models (Rusfian and Nurhajati, 2015). Press agency model keeps the information moving in one direction from the organization to the public. The public information model raises the understanding that communication must be built with truth and accuracy, although in practice the implementer of this model is still as a distributor of information and one-way communication. A two-way asymmetric model, which the implementer of this model seeks to pay attention to the organization, but the organization not to the stage of paying attention to the interests and needs of the public. A two-way symmetrical model shows the role of PR as mediator not only for persuasion, but create a mutual understanding and two-way communication, so that the organization and the public adjust to each other.

The presence of social media forces public organizations to apply a two-way symmetrical public relations model (Grunig, 2009). However, there are still government PR who continue to use a two-way asymmetric model in spreading messages, promoting events and announcements (Grunig, 2009).

## PR Strategy

Smith (2005) states there are two public relations strategies, namely proactive and reactive. The proactive strategy allows the organization to launch a program based on the timeline that best suits the interests of the organization. This strategy can be most effective because it is done based on organizational planning. There are two types in this strategy, namely action and communication.

Reactive strategy is a response to the influence and opportunities of the organization's environment. When countless allegations and criticisms strike an organization and put the organization into a difficult and deteriorating state, the PR strategy is transformed into a reactive mode. When organization will do this strategy, they must develop objectives to gain public understanding, restore reputation, rebuild public trust and support. Reactive strategy consists of pre-emptive action, offensive response, defensive response, transfer response, vocal commiseration, rectifying behavior, and deliberate inaction.

## PR and Social Media

There are various social media platforms (Kartikawangi, 2015) that can be used in the management of a digital PR, namely: (i) blogging, an integral component of social media marketing, where information is published on a world wide web; (ii) microblogging, is a blog in a smaller format, the best known on this platform is twitter; and (iii) social networks, in which organizations/companies and individuals are connected by dyadic networks through cyberspace social networking. Based on research results (Wright & Hinson, 2015, Laksamana, 2015) it was found that the presence of social media has changed the way public relations work. There are two social media platforms most commonly used by public relations practitioners, namely Facebook and twitter, next followed by LinkedIn and YouTube.

There are various conditions that public relations practitioners must understand in managing social media, among they must understand and be able to adapt quickly to the latest technological developments as well as various types of gadgets and their applications; understand the number and characteristics of the

public involved/incorporated in managed social media; availability of adequate infrastructure; organizational policies and support of public relations practitioners to utilize social media (Laksamana, 2015). In addition, the digital PR also has pay attention to aspects of spreading the message to the public as suggested by Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006), that there are 7C aspects, namely credibility, context, clarity, continuity and consistency, channel, capability of the audience.

The use of social media can provide many benefits to an organization in building relationships with the public and stakeholders (Grunig, 2009). However, a strategic approach is needed in terms of objectives, roles, responsibilities, policies and guidelines on management of social media between management/higher policy and public relations practitioners (Bashir and Aldaihani, 2017).

Macnamara notes that public relations practitioners are unable to utilize social media efficiently because of the lack of a strategic approach (Bashir and Aldaihani, 2017); social media is still used ad hoc and blames higher management, as it does not devise policies to use the potential of social media. In addition, there is still a lack of knowledge, familiarity, policies, guidelines and training in the use of social media for public relations practitioners (Bashir and Aldaihani, 2017).

In this study, researchers used qualitative research methods. The purpose of the study is descriptive, which presents a specific description of the situation, phenomenon (Neuman, 2011) implementation of digital PR in ANRI. The research is cross sectional or also called one-shot research (Neuman, 2011), because data collection is done at one time span, that is during September-October 2017. The data collection is done through document study and interview. Document studies are conducted both conventionally and digitally. The criteria of informant selection in this research is based on affordability of the researcher's access to the informant, the informant experience in the field of public relations and the responsibilities and duties of the informant. In this study there are two informants interviewed by the researchers.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### PR organization structure in ANRI

The PR organization structure in ANRI has changed over time. Based on internal policies as outlined in Director General of ANRI Regulation Number 14 Year 2014 about Organization and Working Procedure in ANRI, the nomenclature of PR is attached with the unit functions of Bureau of Planning and Public Relations (echelon II). This echelon II has the task of coordinating, developing program and budget plan, coordination and administration of cooperation, preparation of evaluation and reporting, as well as implementation of PR and administrative management. In addition, it also assumes duties as Information Management and Documentation Officer whose has task is the service and access of public information. Nevertheless, the technical function of PR is at the level of echelon III, namely the Public Relations and Administration Division, where there are two echelons IV considered to carry out the task of PR, namely Sub-Section Inter-Institutional Relations and Protocol and Sub-Section Publication and Documentation.

The first and second informant state that the PR position in ANRI has now changed, because the PR nomenclature has been attached to the Bureau nomenclature, this is different with the previous organizational structure. Both informants also stated that currently PR in ANRI still have involved in protocol task and administrative management of leadership. It is considered to make PR task in ANRI not focus. If we look this matter, the PR position in ANRI is still technical and not yet strategic as Grunig (2009) said, where strategic PR positions have been able to carry out the task of participating, consulting, or engaging in strategic decision making within the organization or in the other words they are in the "neck" of organizational structure.

Nevertheless, the two informants realized that the PR position should be independent, not involved with many activities which outside the task or function of PR. Even the second informant has understood regulation of Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform, which stipulates that the position of PR in organizational structure should independent, but the informant acknowledged that he has not the ability to make it happen.

### The Use of Social Media by PR in ANRI

Currently there are two accounts microblogging and social networking types which often used by PR, they are Facebook (social network) and twitter (microblogging). For Instagram and YouTube is new and not yet managed. Based on document studies, the official account activation of Facebook and twitter has been done at the beginning of 2014. According to informants, both social media were chosen because it is considered to be a social media that is widely used by the society. That is in line with the results of research Wright & Hinson (Laksamana, 2015) which reveals that social media is often used by PR is Facebook and twitter.

Facebook and twitter are used by PR in ANRI, because it can help PR tasks as well as social media is considered cheap, able to reach broad public, and increasing social media users in Indonesia become an opportunity for ANRI to convey information about the institution or archives.

In utilizing both social media accounts, ANRI's PR still faces various obstacles. Currently, internal policies or guidelines governing the management of social media in the ANRI still do not exist and this is a barrier for PR to manage social media. If we understand the informant statement, they have realized that social media is important for digital public relations, but the absence of internal policies governing the management of social media, became one of the obstacles of social media management.

If there is an internal policy which governing the management of social media, the informant states that PR as the implementer becomes clear in managing the information. In this regard, the researchers consider that there should be support and attention from leaders within the policy-making level (at least the Head of Bureau who receives input/review about management of social media ideally) to propose the creation of internal policies of social media management and they must consistent to run it. It is as revealed by Laksamana, he said that the policy and support of the organization to PR practitioners is very important to utilize social media (Laksamana, 2015). This phenomenon has also been put forward by Bashir and Aldaihani (2017) who

reviewed the absence of policies and guidelines on social media management between higher management/policy makers and public relations practitioners become a barrier to social media management in an organization.

In addition, the first informant states that the human resources in PR division have different educational backgrounds and this impacts on different delivery styles when they post the information in Facebook or twitter. This is also the researchers encounter in social media accounts ANRI, where the communication style of each posting of information is different. The researcher considers that all of the human resources that will be assigned to manage social media, especially those not based on communication science education, should be given knowledge or knowledge sharing about information management in social media account of public organization. Furthermore, they must understand the amount and characteristics of public that will be involved in a social media account (Laksamana, 2015).

In addition, standard operating procedure are required, and kind of communication style agreement will be used when PR personnel post an information on social media. This is important, so that ANRI's social media accounts are unique and show uniformity in content or information management. Thus, as well as revealed by first informant, the head of PR division should be aware to formulate a mutual agreement with the human resources who will manage ANRI social media accounts. These agreements may also consider aspects of credibility, context, content, clarity, continuity and consistency, channel and audience capabilities when managing information (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2006).

### **PR Model and Strategy in Management of ANRI's Social Media**

Based on the interviews, both informants realized that the management of ANRI's social media content isn't optimal. Both consider that the content is still dominated by institutional ceremonies (which are dominated by visualization of leaders who are opening or inaugurating the event) and a single narrative that must be disseminated by ministries/institutions /regions. The style of information

delivery varies as it depends on the personnel who charge in an event. The researchers consider that happens because there is not a standard operating procedure or shared framework in managing social media.

In addition, based on a simple content analysis conducted by researchers, throughout August until September 2017, there were 31 posts of information on August and 21 posts on September which conveyed by PR in the Facebook and twitter with the same content. The contents contain information on ANRI activities which dominated by photos (only 2 short video postings) and four single narratives in August. In both social media accounts, there is not interactive communication. It's only conveying information with different styles (some they are short or long) but dominated by the use of ANRI leaders' sentences (such as Head / Deputy/ General Secretary) who are opening events or activities. This shows that the application of PR model in management of ANRI's social media is still two-way asymmetric model. Whereas according to Grunig, the presence of social media to force government organizations to apply a two-way symmetric model of PR (Grunig, 2009), but in this case did not occur.

In addition, based on the simple content analysis above, ANRI's PR strategy in social media management is dominated by a proactive strategy with the type of strategy is transparent communication. Researchers consider classified in transparent communication because the delivery of information that is ceremonies or activities intended to open the organization's activities, so that the public can find out what activities have been done by ANRI. While the reactive strategy is only used if detected negative issues. It only applies a deliberate inaction strategy, with a type of silence strategic. In the sense that there is not response or clarification of the issue.

Furthermore, researchers offer a strategic approach for the model of public relations applied can show two-way communication and strategies used can be more varied. It requires organization policy and support for PR practitioners to utilize social media (Laksamana, 2015). Because of if we look at the statement of informants, both have realized that social media should be managed interactively so that public

participation on governance can be conducted through social media. In addition, the researchers also consider that the PR staff who assigned to manage social media need to understand and be able to adapt rapidly to the latest technological developments, gadgets and applications (Laksamana, 2015); understand the number and characteristics of the public incorporated in a social media (Laksamana, 2015). If there is nonoptimal staff, then it is necessary to increase capacity through workshops or knowledge sharing so as to build mutual consent in the management of social media.

### **Public Social Engagement in ANRI's Social Media**

Based on data, the evaluation of qualitative or quantitative nature for social media activities in ANRI has never been conducted. Though research in PR activities is very important to evaluate and plan advanced programs. Researchers see social engagement in Facebook and twitter simply by looking directly at followers, comments and sharing on twitter and Facebook accounts. Until now there are 5,704 followers on twitter and there are 7,151 fans on Facebook. This amount is still very small when we compared with the social media follower other public organizations, especially compared with the population of Indonesia.

Content information that is often delivered on twitter mostly related to the activities of institutional ceremonies that connect automatically with uploading on Facebook. Based on author searches on ANRI's social media, in 2015 and 2016 have seen interactive communication and activities, such as quizzes, live tweet activities and frequently asked questions about archival issues and various institutional information services. However, sometime last twitter account is rarely seen to build interaction with users. Where based on the simple analysis of ANRI's social media content, during August until September 2017 there were 31 posts of information in August and 21 posts in September on Facebook and twitter with the same content. It could be the next research loophole to explore why it happened.

Based on simple social media content analysis and statement of informant, the average number of shares, like or comments is still

relatively small, usually under 100 per post. But information content is also found to reach social engagement greater than usual, including content related to the Pancasila Day Exhibition, Independence Day activities, Asian-African Conference films, citizen records improvement activities, sultanates and disaster victims. It is admitted informants that information content in social media should be more varied, adjust to contemporary issues, contexts, historical day memorial and it has arranged the agenda setting which arranged by cyber team in ANRI.

### **CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION**

The result indicates that microblogging and social networking of social media has been used ANRI since 2014, namely: twitter and Facebook. In managing of social media, it is found that the PR model is asymmetric, the PR strategy is dominated by the proactive strategy with transparent communication type. The reactive strategy used deliberate inaction strategy. Social engagement in social media is still considered minimal. There is some information content that has significant attention, which is considered to have relevance to current issues, humanist and has a high historical value. PR in ANRI have realized the importance of managing social media and communication models that should be implemented, but in reality, hasn't been able optimally. This is because there are obstacles related to the organization policy, the capacity of social media managers.

The recommendations of this research are so that social media management in ANRI can run optimally, it needs strategic approach, such as arranging and determining internal organization policy, increasing knowledge and understanding of social media for public relations (especially employees who have not communication educational background) but in charge of managing information in media social, and the need for the commitment of the PR leadership initiated the agreement and framework for the social media management team and consistent in the implementation of the agreement. In addition, ANRI may consider the use of external consultants and make the cyber team from employee representatives of echelon 1. As for improving social engagement, the

management of social media should be more interactive and innovative, using a two-way communication model. In addition, when posting an information, public relations can also consider aspects that are considered to have relevance to current issues, humanist and have a fairly high historical value.

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