

# Cyber Public Relations Readiness of Private Universities In West Sumatera to Welcome the Industrial Era 4.0

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## ABSTRACT

The emergence of the industrial era 4.0 requires practitioners of Cyber Public Relations Private Universities to participate in the transformation. The practice of Cyber Public Relations is needed very much by Private Universities to be able to build a brand and crisis management by utilizing technological developments. This study aims to see and to analyze the readiness of Cyber Public Relations Private Universities in West Sumatra, in welcoming the industrial era 4.0. This research was conducted with a descriptive qualitative method, with data collection techniques in the form of interviews, observation, and literature studies. The results of this study indicate that practitioners of Cyber Public Relations at Private Universities in West Sumatra still do not have the readiness to face the coming of the industrial era 4.0. The practice of Cyber Public Relations is still adapting to the digital era 3.0, where each Private University has begun to utilize social media such as Instagram and YouTube as a means to build brand image and crisis management.

**Keywords:** *Cyber Public Relations, the Industrial Era 4.0, Branding Image, Private Universities*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Digital technology, which has a massive impact on human life, is the culmination of the birth of the industrial revolution. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), revolution means a change that takes place quickly. Meanwhile, industry means an effort made to carry out the production process. The industrial revolution is a change in the production process that takes place quickly, where if the process was originally carried out only by humans, but now it can be replaced with the help of machines.

Currently, the world is in the era of industrial revolution 4.0, constituting the fourth phase of the revolutionary era which began in the 18th century and this term first appeared in Germany during the Hannover Fair 2011 [1]. Era 4.0 is a continuation of industry 3.0 which is marked by the use of computer technology and automation using machines [2]. The industrial revolution 4.0 is also known as the Cyber-Physical System, meaning that all application concepts will center on automation with the help of information technology so that human involvement in an activity will be reduced, in order to create effectiveness and efficiency in a work environment [3].

Industrial Revolution 4.0 is not only applied in the economic, industrial, or educational fields, but this era also has an impact on the field of public relations or public relations. This is in line with the opinion expressed by Rob Franklin et al [4] where the emergence of internet

technology will have a major impact on media institutions and the world of public relations. If in the previous industrial era public relations activities focused on analogous matters only, nowadays the presence of social media has also revolutionized Public Relations practitioners in carrying out communication practices and is able to change thinking patterns through the development of internet-based communication technology. The development of technology today will facilitate communication activities with a wider audience reach and are not limited to geography [5].

The development of digital transformation in the 4.0 era requires public relations practitioners to utilize technology more creatively so that it becomes an opportunity for public relations practitioners to place the PR profession as a strategic role in the management function of an institution or company [6]. Public relations practitioners in the 4.0 era do not only serve as a bridge between institutions/companies and the community or stakeholders, but this profession is also required to have more than just communication skills. The current public relations professionals also have responsibilities in management, branding, and advertising, so the ability to utilize communication technology to social media is needed. The use of social media is able to encourage public relations practitioners to carry out their various communication activities, thus giving rise to many terms in the world of public relations.

The terms electronic PR, online public relations, PR on the Net, Digital PR, and Cyber PR are terms given to

public relations practitioners with the ability to utilize digital media which are very popular today. Even though there are so many terms that have sprung up, basically all of these terms have the same meaning, namely the practice of public relations that utilizes internet media. According to Haig [7], cyber PR or e-PR comes from the word "e" meaning electronic media, i.e. "P" means public or audience, while "R" means relationship.

Not only the ability to take advantage of the development of internet technology as a means of publicity, but cyber Public Relations initiatives are also able to contribute to building interactive relationships with the public so that they are able to build brands and online crisis management [8]. According to Susan [9], branding is an action taken to make a brand so that it has the characteristics of an individual, product or institution that can be manifested into the form of visualization, gesture, and sound so that it can construct meaning. In the era of revolution 4.0, branding activities can be realized by the use of digital-based communication technology so that Cyber Public Relations management is needed in this case because, when talking about branding, it is not only talking about what is printed on a package or product but also how consumers associate a brand or brand in their minds.

The practice of cyber public relations in the era of revolution 4.0 is not only needed by large companies and institutions but is also needed by higher education institutions including private universities. Private universities need to be managed like a company so that they can continue to grow because private universities have to bear their own finances, unlike other public universities. The presence of a large number of prospective students is an advantage for private universities because as is well known, the financial strength of a private university depends on the tuition fees assigned to students. The more the number of students study there, the greater the income of the college to survive and develop. Therefore, the presence of cyber public relations practitioners is expected to be able to contribute to the branding activities of a private university, in order to strengthen the introduction of institutions and promotions to the public, especially prospective new students.

In West Sumatra, branding activities by utilizing digital media are still minimal by private universities. This can be seen from a significant downward trend in the interest of new student candidates at several existing private universities. Based on a report from LLDIKTI Region X, out of 97 private universities in West Sumatra, only 13 private universities experienced an increase in the number of new students each year, the rest experienced a drastic decline in student number, especially in 2015 to 2018 [10]. In addition, based on preliminary observations made, the practice of cyber public relations has not been widely applied by private universities in West Sumatra. Only a few private universities with over 3000 students have a cyber public relations division and carry out branding activities using digital media. This is the background of this research to see and to analyze how the readiness of Cyber Public Relations of Private Universities

in West Sumatra in welcoming the era of industrial revolution 4.0.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on cyber public relations in facing the era of the industrial revolution 4.0 have actually been carried out by many researchers in the field of communication, especially in Indonesia. Meranti (2018) has discussed the transformation and contribution of industry 4.0 to the public relations strategy. Then Rio Pambudi's research Dalimunte et al (2018) on the challenges of new digital communication and the industrial revolution 4.0. In addition, research by DasrunHidayat and Anisti (2019) on communication strategies in planning public relations programs in the era of technology 4.0 and research conducted by Dina Mizanie and Irwansyah (2019) discussed the use of social media as a digital public relations strategy in the era of industrial revolution 4.0.

Based on references from these studies, encouraging researchers to study the practice of Cyber Public Relations at private universities in West Sumatra, this research focuses on the readiness of private university cyber public relations practitioners in facing the era of the industrial revolution 4.0. Although there are many studies that discuss public relations strategies in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0, there is very little research that specifically focuses on private universities in facing the 4.0 era. This research is expected to be able to analyze the readiness of cyber public relations practitioners of private universities in West Sumatra so that later strategies can be made in university branding activities through the use of information technology developments.

## 3. METHODS

This research was conducted using qualitative research methods with a descriptive approach. Through descriptive research, it will allow researchers to explain the readiness of cyber public relations practitioners in facing the era of the industrial revolution 4.0, so that the contribution of cyber public relations in West Sumatra can be illustrated in facing this era. According to Kriyantono [11] through descriptive research, it is hoped that researchers are able to make systematic, factual and accurate descriptions of the facts and characteristics of certain populations or objects, and be able to describe the reality that is happening without explaining the relationship between variables.

The object of research consisted of three private universities in West Sumatra that have PR practitioners and have taken advantage of the development of digital-based communication technology or cyber public relations in carrying out their communication functions. As for the informants in this study are practitioners of cyber public relations at the three private universities in West Sumatra that have been determined, as well as the public who come

from students and prospective new students from the three private universities.

The data collection technique used in this study was to observe the activities carried out by cyber public relations at the three selected private universities. In addition, the researcher also made observations on the social media of the three private universities that had been established, in order to be able to analyze the interactions that were built between cyber public relations and the public. In addition to making observations, researchers also conducted in-depth interviews with informants and used the documentation method by collecting the required information through books, previous literature and voice recordings from interviews.

The data analysis technique in this study was carried out by reducing data or collecting data in the form of interview transcripts, observation results and research documents, and then the researcher compiled relevant data according to the research problem and then classified them based on the formulation of the problem and the research objectives. Finally, the researcher would present the data using narrative text and draw and test conclusions.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### ***4.1. Cyber Public Relations in the Industrial Era 4.0***

Cyberpublic relations is part of a public relations initiative that utilizes internet media as a means of publicity, builds one to one relations interactively with the goal so that it can produce relations (build relationships and corporate image), reputation (build online reputation) and relevant (relevant between the activity and the target) [12]. The existence of cyber public relations practitioners in an institution, especially private universities, will be able to help balance the long-term relationship between the organization and the target group through interactions [13]. Although cyber public relations practitioners are considered to have great advantages compared with conventional public relations, basically the activities carried out still have to synergize with offline public relations activities [14].

The presence of internet technology is the result of the world industrial revolution where previously the world experienced an industrial revolution 1.0 at the end of the 18th century which was marked by the presence of the first mechanical loom in 1784, in that year the world was introduced to production facilities using steam and water power. Then there was industry 2.0, the era known as the mass production revolution, next, in the industrial era 3.0, the world was introduced to the use of electronic products and information technology for production automation, and in the end we are currently in the middle of the industrial revolution 4.0.

In order to be able to see the relationship between cyber public relations practitioners and the era of the industrial revolution 4.0, it is necessary to understand first

the definitions formulated by experts related to this concept. [15], some researchers believe that there is no specific definition of an explanation for the era of the industrial revolution 4.0. However, some experts try to formulate the concept of the 4.0 era simply as explained by Fuchs [16] that the industrial revolution era 4.0 is a concept that spreads a combination of the Internet of Things (IoT), big data social media, cloud computing, sensors, artificial intelligence and robotics in the production, distribution and use of a physical product. Another opinion is also explained by Baldasari and Roux [17], stating that the 4.0 era is a combination of software, hardware and humans in carrying out a task or job. Based on these two opinions, it can be understood that the era of the industrial revolution 4.0 is an internet device that is used in harmony with human ability to do a job. In order to be able to produce satisfying work, it does not only depend on adequate internet capabilities but also lies in human expertise to operate these devices.

Nana Novianda[18] revealed that this revolutionary era was also experienced by the world of public relations. During its development, there are four stages of the public relations era:

- a. Public relations era 1.0: in this era, public relations practitioners must perform their traditional duties, namely monitoring manually every day. This era occurred in the 1960-1970s when print media such as newspapers and magazines became the mainstay media
- b. Public relations era 2.0: This era was marked by the birth of online media where print media such as the New York Times, Kompas and Tempo switched to digital platforms. In this era, journalists are more flexible in making news, because news can be made anytime, anywhere to anyone. This is very different when compared with the era of public relations 1.0 where journalists are glued to news deadlines in the afternoon.
- c. Public relations era 3.0: in this era, social media has become a medium of interest to the public. Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and blogs have become digital platforms where everyone is free to write news or information. Public relations practitioners in this era not only monitor electronic media, but also need to monitor social media. In this era, the flow of information moves quickly and freely, so negative news or hoaxes will be very difficult to control.
- d. Public relations era 4.0: this era was marked by the presence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and big data. Although the impact of this phenomenon has not been felt at this time, in fact the existence of robots has been able to write articles on digital media and search for materials.

### ***4.2. Cyber Public Relations at Private Universities in West Sumatra***

Efforts to practice communication by utilizing technological sophistication are currently being attempted

by cyber public relations practitioners at the three private universities in West Sumatra. These cyber public relations practitioners have used internet technology through social media as a medium for communicating with the target public. Based on the information conveyed by the cyber public relations practitioners of the three universities, it can be seen that to build a good brand, it is necessary to publish information about quality, study programs and achievements that have been achieved by each of these private universities. Publication of information related to the brand can be in the form of campus facilities, collaboration with stakeholders, quality of lecturers, student achievements, and alumni profiles. At the three private universities in West Sumatra, they chose to use digital media such as websites, YouTube and Instagram in publishing information about their advantages.

At the three private universities in West Sumatra, cyber public relations practices are carried out in the form of:

a. News Making (new release)

According to Breakenridge[19], making news by utilizing social media as a means of publication is a form of transformation from news releases that are usually carried out by conventional public relations. In the past, public relations practitioners were limited to publishing them on newspapers, TV and radio, but nowadays Cyber Public Relations practitioners can reach a wide public using social media.

Cyber Public Relations practitioners of the three private universities in West Sumatra use social media websites as media for publishing news releases. The news published is in the form of important information about the university, including the achievements made by lecturers and students, important schedules, cooperation with various stakeholders who are expected to be able to form a positive image of society towards the private university so that it can build a brand. The news is also conveyed using standard Indonesian and the headline is made as attractive as possible. Information on the website is not only made in the form of writing or text, but also added with photos or videos that can strengthen the content of the news. This is in accordance with what was explained by Breakenridge that, through news published on social media, will help cyber public relations practitioners to produce different communication (audio visual), so that they can control more in-depth and accurate communication which will make it easier for the public to recognize information that is attractive according to their needs [20].

It's just that in practice, not all Cyber Public Relations practitioners have consistently published news releases on media websites such as on the website of the University of C. This can be seen from the information published on the website, the last time it was posted in 2018. In addition, Cyber Public Relations at the three tertiary institutions in West Sumatra are expected to be able to provide information not only limited to the university community, but also to the general public, especially parents and prospective new students. But in

fact, the responses obtained from several students when they were new prospective students at these private tertiary institutions, showed that the news published on the websites of each university was considered less attractive so that not so many of them visited that page. The most popular information visited on the website only consists of certain content such as information on admission schedules, scholarship information and access to the lecture portal.

b. Making News in Video Form

Information about the university is also displayed in the form of videos which are then published on YouTube and Instagram. By making news into video form, Cyber Public Relations practitioners from the three private universities will be able to make their social media attractive to the public compared to only publishing information in text form. This video news can be in the form of a video news release or a company profile.

In its implementation, University B Cyber Public Relations practitioners have not made much use of this news video as one of the content posted on their Instagram media. Unlike the Cyber Public Relations practitioners of Universities A and C who utilize news in audio-visual form as content consistently on the university's instagram account they manage.

c. Up-to-Date Information Provider

The public's need for media capable of providing up-to-date information is now so great. Instagram from the three private universities can be used as a service, which provides continuous information from organizations without having to try to find it yourself.

Instagram was chosen by Cyber Public Relations practitioners at universities A, B and C considering the trend of society in the use of social media, especially among young people who are the target of information published by universities. The implementation of Cyber Public Relations in this case is considered quite effective, if seen from the responses given by the research informants, namely the followers of each private university account. The followers just hope that the information conveyed by Cyber Public Relations, especially Buniversity, will be more up-to-date. Cyber Public Relations practitioners can communicate and invite all followers to activate the notification button on every post they publish, so that followers of the account will not miss important information conveyed by Cyber Public Relations without having to look for themselves.

d. Creating interactive and communicative news rooms

To fulfill the need for credible information regarding these private universities, Cyber Public Relations practitioners are one of the sources on which the public will rely. Therefore, in order to be connected with Cyber Public Relations practitioners, a space is needed so that good communication is established.

The Instagram media belonging to the three private universities can be used by the public, especially prospective new students, to get the information they need. Cyber Public Relations practitioners from the three private universities have carried out their

functions by trying to respond to every incoming question. The three Cyber Public Relations practitioners are considered to be quite informative by the public, especially the followers of the three accounts. However, followers of the University B Instagram account consider that the practice of Cyber Public Relations is still considered not interactive and communicative enough. This can also be seen through the uploaded content and the responses given to each response.

Based on technological developments to the 4.0 industrial revolution related to digitization, it can be seen that the practice of cyber public relations in private universities is not only limited to being able to adopt technological developments in carrying out communication functions, but also supported by the ability and strategy to reach the public. Cyber public relations in the era of 4.0 requires an understanding of how to collect and share information and be able to influence the public with information in accordance with the desired goals [21]. Therefore, it is necessary to have the right strategy in embracing the public with the use of digital media. There are several examples of public relations activities that can be carried out in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0 including [22]:

- a. Buzzer: The term buzzer is aimed at social media players who carry out word of mouth promotion activities through digital media platforms, which arise as a result of Buzz marketing and can be used as an alternative to advertising by utilizing influencers or trend setters to spread news about a product.
- b. Social Media Activist: refers to activists who spread campaign messages through social media. Activists

## 5. CONCLUSION

The industrial revolution is currently entering the fourth era or what is known as the industrial revolution 4.0 where the development of the internet plays an important role in collaborating with humans. The industrial revolution 4.0 not only has an impact on the industrial, educational and economic sectors, but also affects the revolution in public relations practices. In the past, it was only known as public relations, but nowadays the term cyber public relations is used so popularly.

Cyber public relations is a term for public relations practitioners who utilize digital media in carrying out their communication functions. The existence of cyber public relations practitioners is very important in an organization or institution, including private higher education institutions. The existence of cyber public relations practitioners at private universities is expected to be able to contribute in branding and crisis management at a university.

In West Sumatra, cyber public relations practices have been carried out by several private universities. In practice, cyber public relations in private universities in West Sumatra is considered still adapting to the digital 3.0

here include several people or groups of people who exert pressure on other organizations or institutions to change policies, practices and conditions found by activists. The use of activist social media is considered low budget because it only requires the use of the internet and website.

When viewed from the explanation of cyber public relations in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0, it can be analyzed that the practice of cyber public relations of private universities in West Sumatra is still adapting to the digital era 3.0 where each private university has begun to utilize social media such as Instagram and YouTube as tools for brand building and crisis management. This will be very far behind when compared with the ability of cyber public relations practitioners in other organizations or institutions in preparing for the era of the industrial revolution 4.0. Although the use of digital media as a means of publication of information has been applied, however, the cyber public relations practitioners of the three private universities in West Sumatra are still unable to prepare themselves to reach the target public more broadly. In addition, the ability to manage the flow of information that is so large, especially negative news or hoaxes, is still not possible.

Public relations competence in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0 really needs a unique combination of intuition, tools, emotions, empathy and unlimited creativity that cannot be trained or applied to Artificial Intelligent machines. Therefore, cyber public relations practitioners are expected to be able to have more complex skills [23]

era where each private university has begun to use social media such as Instagram and YouTube as a means of building brands and crisis management. Therefore, based on the research that has been done, cyber public relations in West Sumatra is still far from ready to welcome the era of the industrial revolution 4.0 in the world of public relations.

Through the use of existing social media, it is hoped that in the future it will be able to become a motivation for cyber public relations practitioners at the three private universities to develop new strategies in utilizing the internet, especially social media to make it even better so as to be able to reach a larger audience. If the cyber public relations practitioners of the three private universities have been able to reach a wider audience, and then to achieve the institutional goals in terms of branding will be easier to do.

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